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3 July 2020

Dr. Thérèse Coffey
Secretary of State Work & Pensions
Department for Work & Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: State Pension Retirement Age

The National Pensioners Convention is the largest campaigning organisation in the UK for older people. We work for the benefit of all pensioners, now and in the future.

The state pension age is due to reach 66 for men and women this October and continue rising thereafter. The NPC has always opposed any increase to the state pension age of 65 and this is still our policy.

We are writing to urge you to suspend the planned increase in October and to work on a strategy to help those young people who have lost their livelihoods through the COVID-19 crisis to be brought back into the employment market.

There are a number of areas we ask you to consider and act on in light of the economic impact of the global pandemic:

1. Increases to state pension retirement age (SPA) already implemented have raised the number of older people in work, but have also significantly increased poverty rates for those just below state pension age.
2. Many workers in their sixties struggle with health conditions and, at a time when they would rightly expect to retire and take life a little easier, their quality of life and ability to cope is diminished.
3. Many people in their sixties are unable to work because of ill health, while others struggle to find new work after either being made redundant or losing their job for other reasons. They find themselves on the relentless merry-go-round of claiming Universal Credit and meeting the criteria to maintain that benefit.

4. The long term increase in Life Expectancy has slowed down or even stalled. Moreover, the average length of time an older individual will spend in ill health has increased. In view of these changes, it is urgent to review plans to increase the SPA.

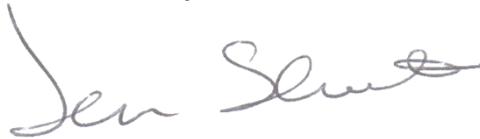
With unemployment expected to be even higher as a result of COVID-19, pushing ahead with retirement age increases is illogical and highly questionable.

The NPC would rather the department (in co-operation with Ministers for Business and Employment) put their energies into a strategy that enables those of pensionable age that wish to retire to do so and a planned replacement for each vacancy being made available to a young person needing employment.

By involving the TUC, Trade Unions, and Employers, we believe there can be a 'guaranteed jobs scheme' that gives a benefit to both the younger and older generations. We would ask you to make approaches to these bodies as a matter of urgency.

We would be very much interested in meeting with you and representatives of the above named departments in order that we can have a dialogue on a positive way forward. If this is an invitation you wish to accept, please respond to info@npcuk.org as our office is currently closed and our staff working from home.

Yours sincerely



Jan Shortt
General Secretary

- cc. Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Anneliese Dodds, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer
Jonathan Reynolds, Shadow Secretary of State for Work & Pensions
Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
Ed Milliband, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
Mims Davies, Minister for Employment
Seema Malhotra, Shadow Minister for Employment