

## We were never in this together!

**W**HATEVER happened to the Tory led governments slogan 'We are all in this together'? No longer do we hear on a regular basis that Tory gospel fall from the mouths of the coalition elite and their followers. Could it be that maybe, just maybe, with a general election on the not so far horizon that there is a realisation that the effects of pandering to popular prejudice, and the demonization of particular groups in our society such as the so called work shy, the disabled, immigrants, single parents and those on benefits have started to leak from their political colander as the data and true human misery cost starts to come to the fore.

As the poverty gap now starts to widen and expand, with food banks becoming the norm. The eat or heat misery caused by energy pricing. Benefits cuts that now engulf single parents, the young, those in part time work, the disabled and those on zero hours contracts just to mention a few, is creating a society more unequal than ever and a class of have not's and have yachts.

With a population of some 63 million people, the latest data shows that by 2030, 16 million people in this country will be

over the age of 65. Today we have nearly 11.5 million pensioners with 2.5 million of them living below the official poverty line, and rising. One in five people retiring in Britain this year will fall below the income poverty line, one in seven (14%) who planned to retire this year will depend on the state pension. The number of people aged 65 or over in work today increased by 30,000 to more than a million during 2013 according to figures from the office for national statistics and are set to rocket in the next decade.

At the end of last year former Tory minister Paul Burstow had suggested means testing for pensioners. The spin doctors are already at it, dropping hints about well-off pensioners while young people and others are struggling. This is yet another attempt to split society and example of popular prejudice and demonization.

Up for grabs among the political elite in 2015 (election year) are the dilution or abandonment of pensioners rights, such as bus passes, prescriptions, winter fuel payments and a free TV licence at the age of 75 all fought and paid for by previous and current pensioners which should be a



**Some politicians will attempt to dilute the rights of pensioners at the next election**

legacy for the new generation. Older people are now in the firing line of austerity, long term cuts in local authority spending affecting care and mobility, and privatisation of the NHS by stealth. All this while the financial elite start to get back to normal with their massive salaries, share options and pay off's. This Tory led government penalises the poor while the evaders and corporate profiteers run away with the stolen wealth of the country.

I am reminded of a recent letter I read that was a response to the shrug your shoulders brigade (there is nothing we can do about it before the election) that response reads

"we all have the ability and responsibility where we see injustice taking place to organise, petition, lobby MPs or take direct action. People are not powerless between elections". Thankfully we do all of those things within our own trade union and the broad Labour and trade union movement. We work with and affiliate to other progressive minded groups such as the National Pensioners Convention fighting not just for pensioners today but for the legacy we leave behind for a new generation of pensioners.

**Tony West**  
National Secretary, RMS

## New poll reveals that young back pensioner benefits

### THE NPC REPORTS

A new poll from Demos/IPSOS MORI reveals that people born after 1980 are three times as likely to support benefits for the over 65's as for the unemployed.

Qualitative research found that, across generations, people supported welfare spending on those in need through no fault of their own, as well as those who

have contributed to the system, and because pensioners match both of these spending on their welfare was strongly supported.

What is interesting is that the findings challenge the idea of the 'grey vote' only applying to over 65's.

The high levels of support for spending on pensioners across generations suggests that attitudes towards the

welfare state are not just based on self-interest but personal values. Similarly, those in older generations (Pre War and Baby Boomers) thought that young people deserve more help from the government in order to get jobs.

The findings challenge those who are trying to argue that older people have escaped the austerity measures of younger generations.