

Senior Reporter

News from the 60+ Council

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION
OF
JOURNALISTS

A 'national conversation about ageing'

November 2024

NEW RESEARCH FROM AGE UK has found that a third of people aged over 65 have been discriminated against because of their age.

As a result, the charity is calling for a national conversation about ageing and later life "to reduce ageism and discrimination, and enable people in mid-life to think about and plan for their own ageing."

Caroline Abraham, Age UK's director, says it is putting the phrase 'Let's change how we age' at the core of everything it does as "a rallying cry to everyone who wants to build a society where older people are included and valued."

She adds: "Getting older can't be something we sweep under the carpet. We need to start thinking about what it means for us and our families, and to believe that together we can make the changes necessary to ensure that older age is something to embrace."

Age UK claims 12.7 million older people now will grow to 18 million by 2050 with the 85+ group growing fastest, while a Centre for Ageing Better report published two years ago found that one in 10 people in work were aged over 65, and warned that one in two adults would be over 50 by 2030.



CAB (Centre for Ageing Better) has put together a library of free-to-use positive images of older people, as part of its campaign *Age Without Limits*. Here, broadcaster Joan Bakewell chairs a panel of older women in the media (writer Sam Baker; NHS doctor, and broadcaster Dr Radha Modgil; and beauty editor Anita Bhagwandas). They discuss age discrimination in the media and the way it portrays age. (Screenshot from CAB video: bit.ly/3CsZOFw)

Five years ago (Oct. 2019) a campaign to tackle ageism was launched by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Heléna Herklots, who said: "Age is still the poor relation of the protected characteristics listed by the Equality Act (2010) and greater awareness is needed."

The 60+ Council will be reporting on the

NUJ's campaign to tackle ageism at work to its next Delegate Meeting, 2025.

Any NUJ members willing to share experiences of this (past or present), please email: dereckforrest@gmail.com

See: www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns

JENNY SIMS

Pensions issues highlighted



CAMPAIGNERS FIGHTING for a fair deal for women demonstrated outside the Westminster parliament on 30th October - Budget day. Organised by WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) in protest against the way in which changes in the state pension have negatively affected many women.

The 60+ Council has frequently reported on the work of WASPI - pensions are a major plank of the council's remit, so it is keen to learn about the experiences of NUJ members who are involved with WASPI. If that's you, please email Derek Forrest at dereckforrest@gmail.com.

On 7 November the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) organised a lobby of the Westminster parliament - this time in order to persuade MPs to reject the withdrawal of the £200 Winter Fuel Allowance to all but those on Pension Credit (the very poorest).

Women from the WASPI campaign demonstrate outside the House of Commons on Budget Day - 30 October. (With thanks to Clare Wilkins of WASPI and a member of the NPC Pensions and Income Working Party.)

Celebrating achievements

ORGANISATIONS THROUGHOUT the country held a variety of events to mark the International Day of Older Persons on 1st October. These included benefits surgeries, seated exercise classes, country dancing, health and hearing checks, crime prevention talks and home energy advice, or just simply an opportunity for tea and a chat.

The main aim of the day was to celebrate the achievements and contributions that older people make to society and the economy, as well as challenging negative attitudes and outdated stereotypes.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/older-persons-day>

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Welcome to the latest edition of the Senior Reporter, which has been produced by editorial team members Jenny Vaughan, Derek Forrest, Jenny Sims and Jim Symons. We welcome articles (250 words max.) and letters (150 words max.) for publication. Send to: dereckforrest@gmail.com

About the NUJ 60+ Council: <https://bit.ly/3021u5o>



Colin Smyth and his supporters celebrate gaining the backing needed to introduce legislation for an Older People's Commissioner for Scotland. Picture thanks to the office of Colin Smyth.

duties would include raising awareness of the rights and interests of older people.

Mr Smyth told us: "Covid-19 had a profound impact on all our lives, but for older people it was just devastating.

"A day rarely went past at the height of the pandemic without a constituent raising with me their heart-breaking experiences of not having access to their loved ones in a care home because we couldn't get our act together over testing; the removal of social care packages; the pressure of 'Do Not Attempt Resuscitation' decisions; the loneliness and isolation and the appalling death rate among those in later life."

He continued: "At this time I kept asking myself that when all the big decisions were being made, who, independent of government but with the ear of ministers, was championing the human rights of older people and making sure their voice, their views were being listened to.

"Frankly the answer was 'no one' and for me changing that is reason enough to bring forward this proposal."

Mr Smyth said this wasn't just about standing up for the rights, services and care of older people, it was about challenging the "negative stereotypes of ageing and celebrating the immense positive contribution of those in later life, such as older workers".

DEREK FORREST

A Commissioner for Scotland

SCOTLAND HAS TAKEN A GIANT STEP towards creating a commissioner for older people, following similar paths already trod by Northern Ireland and Wales.

As highlighted previously in Senior Reporter, Labour MSP Colin Smyth has been campaigning to introduce legislation at Holyrood which would result in the country's senior citizens having a far stronger voice.

At the end of last month it was announced that Mr Smyth had secured support from enough MSPs to introduce a bill that would establish an Older People's Commissioner for Scotland, whose

Future of the NPC

THE APPEAL TO AFFILIATE organisations, including the NUJ, from the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) to help overcome its financial deficit has failed. It will not be able to survive in its present form.

A proposal to create a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee has been sent to affiliates and NPC regions to consider before its November Executive. An emergency executive gathering will follow next month.

Jan Shortt, General Secretary, said in a letter: "This is a crucial time in the history of the NPC ... Whilst we have received most welcome donations from some of our affiliated bodies, these alone will not sustain us through the future year.

"It is the responsibility of officers to ensure that the NPC, officers, staff and its remarkable history are protected, and they are of the view that this can only be done by changing our organisational structure."

The 60+ Council has forwarded the letter and document to the NUJ's General Secretary for advice.

JENNY SIMS

Making a difference

In our last issue, reader T Collins, Birmingham branch, voiced a suspicion about Older People's Commissioners - asking whether, where they exist, they have made an "iota of difference".

In response, *Jenny Sims* supplies some evidence.

"Helena Herklots, CBE, recently-retired OPC for Wales, produced a report in January this year on the digital exclusion of older people and called for a range of actions.

"In July she published a report showing how she had taken forward a range of work to raise awareness of her findings and

recommendations among decision makers, highlighting why upholding older people's rights to access information and services is so important."

See <https://bit.ly/3UXabYw>

'Trusted throughout the labour movement'

REMINISCENCES OF A WORKER CORRESPONDENT by Roy Jones, former industrial reporter and NUJ activist.

Roy Jones has published a memoir of his life before and after, as his publisher explains, "his life as a militant trade unionist ... prepared him to become a Morning Star industrial reporter - where he spoke the direct language of workers, familiar with their lives and struggles and trusted throughout the labour movement".

Reminiscences of a worker correspondent is published by and available from Manifesto Press, £15.

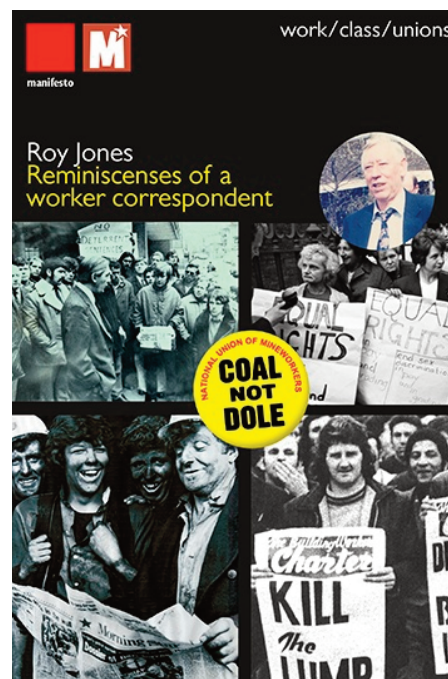
<https://www.manifestopress.coop/product/pre-order-reminiscences-of-a-worker-correspondent-by-roy-jones>

Delegate meeting in Blackpool

THE NUJ'S BIENNIAL DELEGATE meeting (DM) will be held in Blackpool from Friday 25 April - Sunday 27 April. Issues the 60+ Council hope to raise include digital exclusion and pensions - the latter, especially among freelancers. Thoughts from readers are welcome!

The Global Campaign to Combat Ageism

World Health Organisation (WHO) has published a "tool kit" designed to equip you with the necessary resources to learn about ageism. See: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-campaign-to-combat-ageism-toolkit>



New NUJ General Secretary

Laura Davison has been elected to replace Michelle Stanistreet as NUJ General Secretary.

Currently the union's national broadcasting organiser, she polled 1,976 votes

in a two-horse race against the 644 amassed by NUJ president Natasha Hirst.

Turnout was 12.3 per cent - 21,410 members were eligible to vote.



Laura Davison: picture © Mark Thomas