

SCOTTISH SENIORS



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Issue 42/Sept 2016

SPF ANNUAL CONFERENCE, GLASGOW 2016

The SPF Annual Conference took place on Tuesday 7th June 2016 at the City Chambers, Glasgow with over 165 delegates registered to attend.

Baillie Gerald Leonard delivered the Civic Welcome on behalf of **Glasgow City Council** and began by congratulating the SPF on its 25th conference and informing delegates that he was pleased that after so many years the organisation was still a force to be reckoned with in terms of its campaigning work and ensuring that older people's voices were heard.

Baillie Leonard stated that he was fully aware that poverty amongst pensioners was still a very real issue and that in this day and age no decision should ever have to be taken on whether to either put food on the table or to heat homes. Baillie Leonard also shared the concerns of the SPF on the welfare rights of older people, particularly during this period of austerity and he concluded by wishing delegates a successful conference and informing them that they could rely on the support of Glasgow City Council to help improve the lives of its citizens and that he hoped that other local authorities would also pledge their support.



Rose Jackson, SPF Chairperson, then delivered her speech, welcoming delegates to the conference and thanking them for their continued support throughout the year. Rose paid special thanks to the

Executive Committee for their hard work and commitment throughout the year and to the Forum Administrator for her work in supporting them.



All SPF formal business was conducted in the morning session, with motions to conference and changes to the constitution presented and considered, the presentation of year end accounts and their formal adoption by conference, the SPF Treasurers' Report, the election of external auditors for 2016/2017, the election of the Standing Orders Committee for year 2016/2017 by conference delegates and finally formal notice of the elected SPF Executive Committee for the year 2016/2017 given.

A discussion on the way forward for the SPF was put to delegates in the form of a development plan, formally proposed by its author SPF Executive Committee member Brian Martin and seconded by Tommy Brennan.

Brian delivered a short presentation on the paper's contents and after due consideration the paper was formally ratified by conference and will be considered and acted upon by the Executive Committee over the coming year. Brian indicated that if delegates wished for clarification on any points to please get in touch.

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992



WASPI

The morning session concluded with a contribution from guest speaker **Lorna Binnie** from the **Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI)** campaign who gave delegates an insight into the reason behind the campaign and how it has evolved since

it began in 2015. Lorna informed delegates that there are many misconceptions over the new state pension entitlement with many women falling well short of the conditions now being set and only now realising that they have to wait until they are 66 to retire and even then perhaps not being entitled to the full payment due to inadequate NI contributions and other issues. Lorna's engaging speech elicited much discussion from the floor and a decision was taken by conference that the SPF formally supports the WASPI campaign.



In the afternoon session, the main speakers of the day took the platform. Firstly, **Neil Duncan-Jordan** of the **National Pensioners' Convention** thanked the SPF for inviting him along to

speak to delegates on the state pension system. Neil, who has carried out extensive research in this area, informed delegates that as things stood, the UK state pension was ranked 32nd out of 34 countries sampled, with many older people living well below the official poverty level. Neil went on to say that many of today's workers do not even earn enough to pay the lowest rate of income tax and so will be struggling with poverty throughout their working lives and also into their retirement.

Neil also spoke on the demise of occupational pension schemes and auto enrolment with many workers not earning enough to even be considered for entry into a scheme. Neil remarked that an

overhaul of the private pensions systems was needed and a review done to make it clear and simple for people to understand.

On the new state pension's legislation, Neil highlighted the NPC's pamphlet "For What It's Worth" and informed delegates that under the new system, the government will be paying out far less than they currently were and even in the past the system was already seriously flawed with many older people not receiving or claiming their full entitlement with billions of pounds going unclaimed and being spent in other areas.

Neil concluded with a short question and answer session from the floor where he answered questions on the EU referendum and pensions, the social security fund and the economy.

After an open debate on "The Year Ahead", the final speaker of the day was **General Secretary of the STUC, Grahame Smith**, who also serves as Secretary for the SPF and has done so since its



creation. Grahame said that it gave him great pleasure to be addressing delegates 25 years after the SPF had first been set up and the fact that the organisation was still campaigning vigorously to safeguard older people's rights served as testament that the right decision had been made all those years ago.

Grahame went on to talk about the new social security powers being devolved to the Scottish Government and hoped that these would be used to ensure equality and fairness for all.

Grahame concluded by informing delegates that the STUC and the SPF would be organising a joint event to mark the UN international Day of Older Person's on 1st October 2016 and hoped that as many people as possible would lend their support to the event.

FUEL POVERTY: SPF CONFERENCE MOTION PASSED

At our Annual Conference a motion was put forward by UNITE Scotland Retired Member's Branch, worded as follows:-



'We call on conference to campaign and lobby Parliament for the abolition of Standing charges (approximately £180 per annum dual fuel) and for the restoration of a single and fair market for the supply of gas and electricity. Furthermore we demand the removal of the additional tax levied by the Exchequer on top of energy prices to the consumer. These measures would extinguish major forces causing fuel poverty and they would mend the broken regulation and market in the supply of gas and electricity to the British people.'



This motion was passed by our conference and the Scottish Pensioners' Forum have now committed themselves to calling for meetings with government ministers and representatives from the 'Big Six' to discuss the very serious issue of fuel poverty in older people and the immediate abolition of standing charges on dual fuel.

Our aim is to engage in these discussions over the coming months and we are also currently considering a campaign strategy on this issue.

If you are interested in discussing this further, please get in touch



TTIP MOTION UPDATE



You may remember at our 2014/2015 conference, we passed a motion tabled by GMB Scotland Retired Members on TTIP which saw us working with local groups such as Stop TTIP Dundee, St Andrew's Action on TTIP and larger organisations like Global Justice Now to make our views and voices heard on these secret deals. As of September 2016, these talks have all but broken down from a European perspective however there is still a very real threat from CETA. We will continue to keep our eye on developments over the coming months and input your views when appropriate.

SPF ELECTED OFFICE BEARERS 2016/2017

As always, our Executive Committee members are elected each year at our annual conference and are made up of representatives from local forums, faith groups, ethnic minority groups, affiliated organisations and individual members. This year, in particular, has seen many new and welcome faces now serving on our Executive Committee and we hope that with their help and the adoption of our new development plan we can continue our campaign work with a renewed vitality in the years ahead.

At the first meeting of the new Executive Committee in July 2016, the following members were elected as office bearers for the year 2016/2017:-

Chairperson:	Rose Jackson (STUC Unison Scotland)
Vice Chair:	Jim Bradley (Individual Pensioner Member)
Treasurer:	Surjit Chowdhary (Central Gurdwara Singh Sabha)
Secretary:	Grahame Smith (STUC General Secretary)
Asst. Secretary:	Maureen Gardner (STUC Unite)

OUT AND ABOUT

Over the past several months, the SPF have been in attendance at several conferences and events including the NPC Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool and have also held and participated in hustings events prior to the recent Holyrood elections and launched our election manifesto in City Square, Dundee.



As well as this, in line with our obligation to our members, we have also held several outreach meetings on TTIP, alongside our affiliates and other organisations, as well as providing evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee on demographics and devolution. We have also engaged in meetings and consultations on the new Social Security Bill and what it means for older people in Scotland which we will

report on in future issues.

Our information stall has also been seen at several events throughout Scotland and we will continue to be out and about over the coming months..

If you have any forthcoming events you would like us to attend with our information stall, please get in touch. We would be more than happy to come along.



The Scottish Pensioners Forum are always interested to know what our affiliates are getting up to in their local areas, whether it be campaigning on local issues within their communities or on a larger scale, we're keen to know what you're doing on behalf of older people.



If there is something you would like us to include in our next newsletter, for example a certain forthcoming event or a particular issue you are campaigning on, please get in touch with us to have your say.

We can be contacted with any articles through e-mail on spf@stuc.org.uk or if you prefer, we are also on social media: On Facebook, Scottish Pensioners Forum and Twitter @ScotPensForum, so please get in touch.

Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum
Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992
333 Woodlands Road,
Glasgow G3 6NG
Telephone 0141 337 8113
or at: www.scottishpensioners.org.uk

