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From The Socialist newspaper, 14 July 2021

# Defend the triple lock - Fight to end poverty pensions



Unite members at St Thomas' Hospital on strike 10 May 2012 as part of the nationwide strike of workers in the public sector against attacks on pensions , photo Paul Mattsson (Click to enlarge)

## Terry Pearce, Socialist Party and Thames Valley National Pensioner Convention

More than 2.1 million British pensioners are living in poverty after paying housing costs, a rise of 200,000 on the previous year, and the highest for 15 years. Yet the Tories, and shamefully Labour, are threatening to weaken the triple lock on pensions which keeps pension rises in line with inflation, earnings or 2.5%, whichever is the highest. Keeping the triple lock was a Tory election pledge in 2019.

According to the triple lock formula, pensioners would be in line for an 8% rise next year. The Tories have tried to drive a wedge between pensioners and young people by falsely painting pensioners as living a life of luxury on their inflated pensions. Reality is of course quite different.

The maximum UK state pension is only £179.60, just one-third of the value of the German state pension, and half of the French pension. In fact, the UK state pension is below the £212.00 minimum income required for an inner London single pensioner to not be in poverty. In other words, the UK state pension is below the official poverty line.

If the triple lock goes, pensions will fall even further. Pensioners have already seen the over 75s free TV license scrapped, and there is now talk of increasing the age at which free prescriptions can be claimed (see page

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5). Fuel poverty and winter deaths are already creating real problems for many pensioners. If the triple lock goes, how long will it be before the free bus pass and winter fuel allowance follow suit?

Labour is hinting that it will support reform of the triple lock. We need MPs who will defend pensioners from these attacks on living standards! The trade unions should remember that their members are the pensioners of the future, and if current state pensions are weakened, their members will face a miserable life in retirement. Therefore, we need to build unity between existing pensioners and workers in the trade unions, many of whom face a future with minimal or low pensions in retirement.

Trade unionists, pensioners and youth unite to refuse to pay for the Covid crisis:

- ★ Defend the triple lock, free bus passes and winter fuel allowance
- ★ Bring back free TV licenses for the over 75s
- ★ An immediate 50% increase in the state pension, as a step towards a living pension.

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The coronavirus crisis has laid bare the class character of society in numerous ways. It is making clear to many that it is the working class that keeps society running, not the CEOs of major corporations.

The results of austerity have been graphically demonstrated as public services strain to cope with the crisis.

The government has now ripped up its 'austerity' mantra and turned to policies that not long ago were denounced as socialist. But after the corona crisis, it will try to make the working class pay for it, by trying to claw back what has been given.

- ★ The Socialist Party's material is more vital than ever, so we can continue to report from workers who are fighting for better health and safety measures, against layoffs, for adequate staffing levels, etc.
- ★ When the health crisis subsides, we must be ready for the stormy events ahead and the need to arm workers' movements with a socialist programme - one which puts the health and needs of humanity before the profits of a few.

**Inevitably, during the crisis we have not been able to sell the Socialist and raise funds in the ways we normally would.**

**We therefore urgently appeal to all our viewers to donate to our Fighting Fund.**

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