Dignity in retirement

By Brian Rye
Acting General Secretary
UCATT

“We’ve all got to work longer” is a phrase undoubtedly coined by someone sitting behind a desk. If you’re a construction worker this phrase is just a plain, old-fashioned threat.

The pension age is rising to 67 by 2026 and 68 by 2044. This would be a joke to a construction worker, if it was remotely funny. Recent TUC research shows that currently half a million workers have left work five years before they can collect their pension due to medical reasons. Nearly half of 60 to 64 year olds have stopped work before their official pension age.

Construction workers cannot work till they are 68 years old. It’s not physically possible. Like professional sportspeople, construction workers can feel their physical abilities start to wane from their mid-30s. The only difference is – construction workers have to stay in the game. Not only that, given the increase in the pensionable age – the game just went into extra time.

We are told one in four people in Britain will now live to 100 – but what about the other three? At what age will they be checking out? And what jobs are they doing? Government statistics show doctors and accountants are outliving builders and cleaners by as much as eight years, which is why UCATT is fighting for a flexible pension age.

As Jeremy Corbyn has said: “Living longer doesn’t mean we are able to work longer in physically demanding jobs. Construction workers cannot be expected to work into their 60s.”

We are asking party conference to support our contemporary motion this week in order to ensure Labour adopts the principle of a flexible pension age for physically demanding professions. It’s a campaign we need to win otherwise thousands of construction workers’ latter years will continue to be blighted by poverty, misery and depression. What price the cost of dignity for the British construction worker?

Report from CAC Chair:
Support Reference Back! Support the East Devon delegate!

Yesterday, after the report from the Chair of CAC, several delegates challenged the CAC’s recommendations. In particular, the delegate from East Devon objected to the unjust ruling out of her CLP’s rule change. (Delegates are unable to verify this because, having been ruled out, the rule change has disappeared into a bin in the CAC’s room.)

The rule change would make the selection of PPCs much more democratic. Constituency branches and TU branches would have the right to interview candidates before making a nomination to the long list. The reason the CAC has given for putting East Devon in the bin is that it is ruled out under the three-year rule. According to the CAC East Devon’s proposal was covered by the Collins Report and this was discussed in 2014.

But the new three-year-rule says “When Conference has made a decision on a rule change” no rule with the “same or similar primary objective” shall be admissible for three years. The CAC does not have a leg to stand on – Collins did not involve a decision or vote on a rule change with the same or similar primary objective. The delegate from East Devon is fully justified in objecting and moving Reference Back.

Monday
National Auditor elections:
Vote for Sina Lari

Advance notice - Tuesday
National Constitutional Committee:
Vote for Chris Williamson
Speaking out

How can Labour translate its large ethnic minority vote into meaningful representation, equal opportunities and engaging the marginalised in inclusive policy making? Without real commitment to empowering BAME members, simple lip service to anti-racism is superficial at best and actively damaging at worst. Transparency in democratic structures will help engagement in communities disenfranchised by the “white, male bubble” of Westminster.

A vital first step has to be a genuinely democratic and accountable Annual Conference which gives members faith that the decisions they make will have an impact. Especially in the wake of Brexit, communities like mine are failed by expensive passes pricing them out, attempts to manipulate and fix votes by staff, and confusing procedural manoeuvres like “take it or leave it” votes.

Join CLPD to be part of that democratisation!

Huda Elmi

Campaign for Trade Union Freedom, The Institute of Employment Rights

A Manifesto for Labour Law

Monday 26th Sept, 2.30pm
Hall 3A, Liverpool ACC
Speakers:
Ian Lavery MP; Prof Keith Ewing; Len McCluskey, Unite; Andi Fox, TSSA/LP NEC
Chair: Carolyn Jones, IER

15 Years of the “War on Terror”
Why are the wars continuing?

Monday 26th Sept, 7pm
Friends’ Meeting House, 22 School Lane, L1 3BT
Organised by Stop the War Labour Supporters’ Network
Diane Abbott MP; Brian Eno; Harry Leslie Smith, WWII veteran; Claudia Webbe, NEC; Steve Turner, Deputy Gen. Sec., Unite the Union; Kate Hudson, CND; Carol Turner, StWC; Murad Qureshi, StWC (Chair)

See Peter Willsman’s Guide to Conference on: www.clpd.co.uk

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The Yellow Pages will have a cover price of £3 for the week.