

There's so much to look forward to ...

The Health Professionals - in Scotland and UK - have been warning for a couple of months of a COVID19 'second wave'. Well, it's here and we have to fight it. It's been a difficult year - and in the short term, it's not going to get much better. Pensioners are often accused of looking back at the 'good old times', but now it's important to look to the future the pandemic aside, we'll have more than enough to keep us occupied ...

COVID19 has already had a huge effect on the UK. It's showing with major redundancies and catastrophic poverty levels. Much of the UK is under or going under new local lockdowns. If we are going to get win through, we must all continue to follow the rules .

No progress on the TV Licence

A meeting between the BBC Director and Dennis Reed, Director of Silver Voices, failed to solve the dispute over the scrapping of free licences for the over 75s. According to Dennis Reed the meeting was a "complete waste of time and the Director General was just going through the motions".

Dennis challenged the BBC to consider short-term solutions to help those most severely affected by re-introduction of the licence fee. Suggestions for consideration included

- A 'voluntary' scheme for over 75s, who could apply for a free licence if they could not afford to pay
- An extension to the exemptions policy to include (e.g.) people paying for social care, those living with dementia, blue badge holders, people receiving attendance allowances
- Licence fees graduated by age e.g. 50% at age 75 - 25% at 80 - 0% at 90

The BBC admitted that only 1.6 million over 75s had so far paid their licence fee - well under half of those required to pay (3.7 million).

With no movement from the BBC, we must reassess our strategy. The various options are

- To step back from civil disobedience
- To continue to campaign politically for the free licence to be restored
- To encourage a 'principled refusal' by all over 60s to pay the licence fee.

Silver Voices is consulting with its members to decide on where we go from here and should publish the result soon.



BREXIT - We'll have to face up to the conclusion of the disastrous 2017 referendum decision. Boris Johnson and company made too many promises at the time of the Euro Referendum. With a looming 'no deal' on Trade and Northern Ireland set to be abandoned ... there are troubles ahead! We are already hearing concerns from the farming and fishing industries.

The SCOTTISH ELECTIONS - are due in May. That's already shaping up to be a bitter struggle with the SNP using it as a platform for another Independence vote.

If we stick together we can beat the Virus! It will test us to the extreme. Remember the FACTS

- Wear Face coverings (masks)
- Avoid crowded place
- Clean your hands regularly
- Stay a two metres distance from others
- Self-isolate - book a test if you have symptoms

One bright spot might just be 'across the pond' with the good chance that Donald Trump will be dumped. Sadly - Boris Johnson may have his faults - but Trump is a dangerous lunatic!

Fuel Bonus for Scottish OAPs

More than 90,000 Scottish pensioners who claim Pension Credit will be eligible for a £140 discount on their fuel bills this winter.

PC claimants will qualify for the Department for Work and Pensions' warm home discount scheme, which is expected to save pensioners £137 million in total.

Iain Stewart, the UK Government Minister for Scotland, said recently "I'm delighted this initiative will make a difference to elderly people in Scotland."

If you are on Pension Credit, you should call 0800 99 1234 (free) to claim.

Which part of "social-distancing" do they not understand?

Most of us have rigorously followed the rules on social distancing, shopping and taking responsible exercise, but we seem to be as far back as ever. Where has it all going wrong?

Unless we all get 'Divine Intervention' like President Trump or you're prepared to take his advice to drink bleach, it looks increasingly likely that we will have to run with the virus until science finds a vaccine. That could take some time.

My heart sank when viewing the scenes in some of the cities and at some student residences. Don't they understand that social-distancing and face covering are the best ways of stopping the virus spreading?

Recent statistics show that the virus has been spreading over the entire age range. The main concern for the elderly is clear. While young folk will often (but not always) recover from the virus, they have every likelihood of spreading it in the community.

Are we still being too lenient with those who break the rules? National curfews and return to a full lockdown are inevitable unless they see sense and behave responsibly. We should stop 'suggesting' that they shouldn't do this or that. We must make it abundantly clear that the restrictions are legal and MUST be observed.

4.1% Pay Rise

Now that's a good idea!

Politicians don't have an easy job. It's nevertheless disconcerting to see that the **Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority** has proposed giving them a generous 4.1% pay increase!

Compared with 'workers' in business and financial sectors MPs are underpaid ...

How are Public Service workers who have been pegged on 1% increases through a decade of austerity supposed to feel about the 4.1% proposal?

ALL Public Sector workers are underpaid. NHS support staff, school civilian staff, cleaners and all others who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic are equally deserving of a decent pay rise. 4.1% would be a good starting point, wouldn't it!

Over the coming months UNISON will be campaigning to make sure that public service workers receive support from MSPs and MPs at Holyrood and Westminster.

"No going back to Normal" Petition to MPs and MSPs

We've launched a national petition - aimed at Politicians - calling for that decent rise. Every signature makes a difference. Make sure you sign it and please ask your friends, family and colleagues to add their names.

We can make sure that there's "NoGoingBacktoNormal" if we act together

To sign the petition - go to <https://www.nogoingbacktonormal.org/>



You have to Vote to be heard
BE HEARD
USE YOUR VOTE
 Vote in UNISON's General Secretary Election



Don't forget to complete and send your ballot paper