

SPEAKING OUT!

Newsletter of the National Pensioners Convention
Minority Elders' Committee
Winter 2020

Centuries of colonialism have added to the climate emergency



We recognise that slavery changed the lives of millions of people, but have we properly recognised how the owners of agriculture, industry and governments in Europe laid the basis for today's climate crisis? This is where we should now take the lead of young people clamouring to understand the results of the rise of capitalism in Europe and its subsequent colonisation of vast areas of the world.

Modern incarnations of colonialism are continuing to wreak havoc on the people.

Documentary films reveal the enormous crisis of global warming with the destruction of the Amazon forest – often described as the “lungs of the world”. Plundered for the lucrative world timber markets and cleared for animal farming, the loss of this forest is acknowledged as a crisis for the whole of humanity. But this is an old story. The invasion of the American continents and the almost total annihilation of the native populations, not only meant the unrestricted take-over by Europeans of political and economic power, it also meant that local agriculture was replaced by a system of large plantations to grow sugar, cotton and tobacco for the European market. Forests were cleared and in some cases water systems were diverted.

These plantations were found to be harmful to the soils, leaving crops vulnerable to diseases and the production of (often lethal) fertilizers to combat these. But it did not stay there. single-crop farming was also imposed in Africa, India and Far East countries by the Europeans to provide inexpensive goods and raw materials to the rising industrialisation of the home market. Sugar cane, tobacco, cotton, tea, rice and coffee were

some of the main products grown in European colonies, and, since the plantations took up to 80% of the land, this meant that food had to be imported.

Small farmers were driven out, the soil was quickly depleted, water became scarce and more and more forests were destroyed. But the later independence of colonial countries did not end their dependence on their previous European masters. Financial support is often dependent on these countries continuing colonial agricultural systems, accompanied by the imposition of contracts to buy fertilizers for the damaged soil. Also poverty and the export of industries from Europe in search of cheap labour has led to the exit of millions from rural areas to big cities and enormous pressure on water systems from the increasing needs of industry and the growing population in these cities.

And what about the raging Australian fires? There are reports that people are beginning to question the import of European-style animal and crop-farming in that continent. The universities are now seriously studying the farming methods, and the native crops of the all-but-wiped-out native Aborigines as well as their knowledge of land and fire management!

Let's hope that the politicians take heed !

Today, internationally, school children and students are leading the way to save our planet, and we have a responsibility to actively join them in this endeavour. In the report of a young people's seminar in Brighton to prepare for their campaigning activities, they acknowledge that putting profit before people – the insatiable thirst for corporate growth – is leading to the total destruction of the planet and they are determined to change this.

NPC ME Annual Seminar. Speakers on Windrush and adult social care.
For booking details email info@npcuk.org, or call 0207 837 6622
Date: 17 February 2020
Time: 12:30–15:00
Location: Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, SW2 1RW

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EU citizens' rights after BREXIT

The British government reached an agreement with the European Union on EU citizen's rights. This agreement will protect their rights after the UK leaves the EU and enable them and their family to live in the Country as they do now. In order to secure their rights, the EU citizens will need to go through a process, which will confirm their status in the UK.

The UK *"does not want anyone here to have to leave, nor does it want families to be split up"*, said the former Prime Minister Theresa May.

Rights for EU citizens and their families.

Listed below are the main points of the agreement reached with the EU:

- * People who have been continuously and lawfully living here for 5 years will be able to apply to stay indefinitely by getting 'settled status'. That means they will be free to live here, have access to public funds, services, and go on to apply for British citizenship. "Lawfully" does not cover the long-term unemployed, disabled, carers, stay at home parents, pensioners and many others unless they met the lawful conditions for a full 5 years before they became economically inactive.
- * People who have not been living here lawfully for 5 years when we leave the EU, will be able to apply for a "pre settled status" to stay until they have reached the 5 years threshold. They can then apply for settled status.
- * Family members who are living with, or join, EU citizen in the UK will also

be able to apply for settled status, usually after 5 years in the UK.

* Close family members (spouses, civil and unmarried partners, dependent children and grandchildren, and dependent parents and grandparents) will be able to join EU citizens after exit.



More likely, applicants have to provide proof of their exercise of treaty rights in the UK, which are: working, being self-employed, job-seeking, a student or self-sufficient. To exercise treaty rights as students or self-sufficient, EU nationals must also have Comprehensive Sickness Insurance (CSI), a Home Office requirement for UK permanent residence, and that they have sufficient resources not to become a burden on the UK welfare system.

EU citizens with "settled status" will have the same access as they currently do to healthcare, pensions and other benefits in the UK.

The application process is fully digital. There is also risk that the elderly and people who do not have access to a computer will struggle to apply.

INAS (Italian Welfare) offers assistance with this matter to all EU citizens.

*Article supplied by FNP
(Italian Pensioners)*

Adjudicator to review Windrush compensation decisions

The UK government has announced that it has appointed an adjudicator to review Windrush compensation decisions and how complaints about the handling of claims have been managed. A 45-page document detailing the scheme stated that those wrongly deported are entitled to £10,000 in compensation. Those who were wrongfully detained would be offered £500 an hour

and those denied access to free health care and education could receive £500 in compensation. The first payments have been started to be made but recipients have not been happy with the amounts. Campaigners in Britain say victims of the Windrush deportation scandal have still not received compensation payments, with many of their claims not even acknowledged by the Home Office.

Voter ID plans to hit ME elders

Plans to make all UK voters prove their identity will disproportionately discriminate against ethnic minorities and older people, when there is simply insufficient evidence to show that there is any widespread issue that needs such a heavy-handed approach. The Electoral Commission found that there was just one conviction for voter personation in 2017.

3.5 million citizens in the UK do not have access to photo ID and 11 million do not have a passport or driving licence.

Figures from 2017 indicate a huge demographic divide in who has a full driving license in England. Black, Asian and mixed communities are far less likely to possess one. Allowing non-photographic ID, simply doesn't address the issue, as they do not prove identity. Furthermore, it excludes those unable to get ID, for instance those affected by the Windrush debacle, leading to people being further disenfranchised from the political process.

The government has promised that a free ID card would be available from local councils on request, but the Electoral Reform Service suggests this "represents another barrier to voting that will put many off".

To receive Speaking Out! for free, contact NPC, Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1N 1AB or email info@npcuk.org