

SCROOGE-LIKE PENSIONS MINISTER MALCOLM WICKS CRITICISES YOUNG PEOPLE FOR SPENDING ALL THEIR MONEY ON "ALCOHOL, CD'S, DVD'S AND SO ON"

Government Minister Malcolm Wicks showed a distinct lack of tact recently when he said that "young people waste money on fun". He insisted that people in their 20's and 30's should be spending their money on personal pensions and denied that they were being deterred by the burden of mortgages and top-up fees. He also suggested that workers should consider moving jobs if their current employer did not offer a good pension package and should consider taking a lower salary for a better pension.

PERTH & KINROSS PENSIONERS FORUM through personal experience have drafted "PENSIONS THROUGH THE AGES".

PENSION'S THROUGH THE AGES

AGE 20

This is the time when young people want to enjoy themselves – and rightly so. They are free to enjoy sport, partners, clubs, pubs and everything that goes with being young. If you ask them about pensions they say – you must be joking – get lost – I have no intention of paying money now for my old age. I want to enjoy life and all my money will go on a car, a flat, and a good time.

AGE 30

Pay money for a pension? I have a partner, a house, a car, and a family to look after. There is nothing left for extra's. You are telling me that I need to put £370 a month away to have a retirement pension of £20,000 per annum at 65 – and it has to start now! That's cloud cuckoo land as far as I am concerned.

AGE 40

I'm beginning to get a bit worried about this pension business all these old fogies are on about. The local pensioner's forum keep writing in the papers about pensioners poverty. Maybe I should think about a pension as the state pension is a joke and I would like to retire when I am 65. The company has a pension scheme which I have contributed to but I was late in getting in, and because I changed my job I will not get the full benefit. I have been told that a number of companies are upping the date when you can retire. Even more worrying is that if I retire early I get a smaller pension and some now say that if you retire at 60 you can get up to 40% less. I have spoken to the company accountant and he says that I can put in 15% of my salary and the company will put in more depending on what job responsibility I have in the company. He reminded me that pensions have tax benefits as the government contributes 22p for every 78p you pay in, the only drawback is that you must buy an annuity if you retire before you are 75.

AGE 50

This is getting really serious and even with the last 10 years invested in a pension plan I am nowhere near my target. There is talk of redundancy and even if I get another job it will be on less salary. Have you seen what MP's and MSP's get for a pension? I wish I had a job in the council or had joined the civil service. All this talk about pensioner's poverty and the report called "low cost but adequate" says that a couple who own their own home can live on £170 a week.

AGE 60

We are now being told that pensioners are living too long and that there is too many of them. The government says that the proportion of the population working cannot support the pension bill. So what do other E.U. Countries do? What they do is put a higher % of the wealth of the country (G.D.P.) into looking after pensioners – Italy 14%, France 12% – the U.K. a miserable 4%. In the U.S.A. companies have joint savings plans where 52 million employees elect to make voluntary contributions and the company adds 50%. This is O.K. but the money then has to be invested so that it can generate a good return. In the U.K. £200,000 invested can give an annual income of £10,000 a year.

AGE 65

A lot is known in the U.K. about the association between old age and retirement but little research has been done examining the relationship between the start of retirement and the probability of being poor. The university of Essex has produced the following which you may find of interest.

So what do pensioners of the future do to ensure a decent income in retirement.

1. Start your pension contribution early direct from your salary.
2. Pay in as much as you can afford; at age 20 pay in total 10%.
3. Do not rely on a state pension – it is inadequate.
4. Use the company pension scheme. A good company will add a percentage.
5. At a last resort take out a stakeholder pension.
6. Look at all the options – different folk – different pensions
7. Do not miss payments – high penalties ensue.
8. Try not to take your pension early.
9. Constantly re-assess your pension needs each year. Try to increase the amount each year.

PENSION CREDIT LOCAL PENSION SERVICE

The Pension Service is part of The Department For Work And Pensions and is the government organisation responsible for paying State Retirement Pension, Pension Credit and Winter Fuel payments.

The day to day administration of claims is handled from a Pension Centre in Dundee (Tel 0845 6060265), although a Local Service for Perth & Kinross does exist.

The Local Service carries out Home Visits where required, has Information Surgeries and arranges talks to any interested groups, all with the sole aim of ensuring that all Pensioners are claiming all their entitlements.

In Highland Perthshire there are Information Surgeries in Kinloch Rannoch (monthly - 1st Tuesday of the month 10 am to 12 noon in the Health Centre), Pitlochry, (Wednesday mornings 10 am to 12 noon - fortnightly in the Local Authority Housing Office), Aberfeldy (Tuesday afternoons 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm - fortnightly in the Health Centre) and Blairgowrie (Tuesday mornings 10 am to 12 noon - fortnightly in the Local Authority Housing Office).

For more details on the Information Surgeries or arranging a talk The Pension Service Local Service for Perth & Kinross can be contacted on 01738 412105.

If you need to contact The Pension Service:

By Telephone:
0845 60 60 265
Monday to Friday between 8 am and 8 pm

By Post:
The Pension Service
PO Box 10141 DUNDEE DD1 9PS



In Person at any of the following local surgeries:

- A. K. Bell Library, Perth**, every Thursday 10 am to 12 noon
- St. Margaret's Hospital, Auchterarder**, Wednesday's 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm, 26th May, 9th & 23rd June
- Kinloch Rannoch Medical Centre**, Tuesday's 10 am to 12 noon, 25th May & 22nd June
- Aberfeldy Health Centre**, Tuesday's 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm, 11th & 25th May, 8th & 22nd June
- Pitlochry Housing Office**, Wednesday's 10 am to 12 noon, 19th May, 2nd, 16th & 30th June
- Blairgowrie Housing Office**, Tuesday's 10 am to 12 noon, 18th May, 1st, 15th & 29th June
- Crleff Learning Centre**, Wednesday's, 10 am to 12 noon, 12th & 26th May, 9th & 23rd June
- Kinross Health Centre**, Thursday's, 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm, 20th May, 3rd & 17th June

If you are a **HOUSEHOLDER** getting any of the following:

Attendance Allowance	Council Tax Benefit
Disability Living Allowance	Family Credit
Disability Working Allowance	Housing Benefit
Disabled Persons Tax Credit	Income Support
Working Families Tax Credit	Aged 60 or Over
Income Based Jobseekers Allowance	
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	
War Disablement Pension	

You are ENTITLED to a Government Grant of up to £500 for CAVITY WALL INSULATIONS and/or LOFT INSULATION up to 200mm

Whichever you choose, you would also be eligible for DRAUGHTPROOFING, ENERGY ADVICE, HOT & COLD TANK, PIPE INSULATIONS.

Even if you are not getting any of the benefits listed above, stay with us! call TAYSIDE ENERGY on FREEPHONE 0500 549139 or 01738 633344 for a FREE NO OBLIGATION QUOTE

Driving Licences

Age Concern considers the policy of making people renew their driving licences at the age of 70 and every subsequent 3 years to be discriminatory. We have consistently made this point in the annual consultation on driving licence fees since 1997. The Government's counter argument is that the DVLA must be self-financing. The renewal fee is needed to cover the costs incurred when the DVLA has to make further investigations to ascertain the fitness to drive of a person who has advised them they have one of the prescribed medical conditions. However, they did listen to our representations that they should take into account the specific burden that any increases in licence fees have for older drivers. With exception of renewals for driving buses or lorries, theirs is the only fee that is recurring, being payable every three years. In 1999, the Government agreed that the renewal fee should be reduced from £8 to £6.50 and, unlike other licence fees, this fee has not been increased since then. We are pleased to advise that following latest consultation on driving licence fees it has been decided to abolish all fees for older drivers, although they will still be required to renew their licences at the age of 70 and every three years thereafter. Also this can only be introduced 'when suitable legislative opportunities arise' so we will need to keep an eye on this.

Source: Age Concern