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Pensions had been 'stolen from WASPI women

Angela Rayner said, in 2019, that pensions had been 'stolen from WASPI women'. Also, that 'Labour would compensate them' as she felt it was 'their money'. In 2016, Rachel Reeves said that the women 'have been done an injustice'. Liz Kendal also stood with the WASPI women and said she would work for a fair solution for them. Yvette Cooper and Lisa Nandy both posed for photographs with the WASPI women reaffirming their support for a fair deal. Many other MPs likewise did before the election. Keir Starmer said that there needed to be an end to the 'historic injustice' faced by the WASPI women.

It is a very different story now that Labour is in power. The WASPI women are now seen as a potential 'burden' on the taxpayer. The government has ignored the findings of the government's Ombudsman and the recommendation to pay compensation.

This is a betrayal for women who very often do not have a full pension due to having breaks to have children or take up caring roles. This coupled with the likelihood that women do not make as much as men in employment further increases the chances of more women living in poverty in later life. A survey in 2006 found that only 13% of women qualified for full state pension compared to 92% of men.

The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970 and came into force in 1975. The repercussions of this act are still being felt by many councils today where mostly women have been paid less for work similar to that of men. Birmingham city council is in the process of settling claims by 6000 employees, again mostly women. This latest settlement involves many hundreds of millions of pounds after a previous settlement of more than a £1,000,000,000



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Therefore, it hasn't been an equal playing field. Women fighting for equal pay have had to wait almost 50 years. Whilst the Equal Pay Act 1970 has taken more than 50 years to implement, the levelling of male and female state pension ages was accelerated. The Ombudsman recognised these facts and recommended a small amount of compensation to women who have been disadvantaged in the workplace and society for many years

Aneurin Bevan would turn in his grave to see how the Labour government has joined the Tories and sold out these women in refusing to compensate them. The burden for the taxpayer would cost from £3.5-10.5 billion. The Tories spent £12.5 billion on PPE in 2020 that could not be used, the money mostly going to their friends. By increasing the pension age for women, the government has saved £181 billion. This dwarfs the amount needed to pay the WASPI women.

This shows what the governing establishment truly thinks of women. They will stand by them for a photo opportunity, to get elected, and then turn their backs when in power. Women who have worked all their lives in one way or another, often for low wages and in poor conditions. The vast majority have contributed to society in bringing up future generations and in unpaid caring roles. A report in 2023 showed that unpaid care saves the NHS £445 million per day in England and Wales, equivalent to a second NHS. These women are not a burden on the taxpayer but are priceless when it comes to value for money.

Sincerely,

Cathy Davis

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