

# Tony Blair Institute urges UK government to accelerate welfare state cuts and abandon the pension “triple lock”

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The Tony Blair Institute (TBI), a think tank created by the founder of New Labour, is urging the UK government to scrap the pension “triple lock”, which guarantees an annual rise in pension payments each April by whichever is highest: inflation, average wage growth, or 2.5 per cent.

The TBI’s proposals were set out on May 1 in a report titled: “Lifespan Fund: Reforming the state pension for a more affordable, flexible and fair future”.

Thomas Smith, Director of TBI economic policy, said in launching the report: “Pension spending must be contained, and that means the triple lock cannot continue after the next election.”

State pensions are currently funded by National Insurance (NI) contributions from workers and employers and topped up by general taxation when needed. The TBI’s proposals would affect those on the old and new state pensions (the latter is paid to those retiring after April 2016 who have made NI contributions for 35 years).

The triple lock has protected the value of state pensions since its introduction in 2010 by Chancellor George Osborne, as part of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. It was supported by all the major parties and was previously described as untouchable. But inflation shocks triggered by the COVID pandemic, war in Ukraine and the war against Iran have led to growing calls to break the triple lock.

The TBI’s proposals would destroy living standards for millions of people in their final years. Almost two million pensioners (one in six) live in relative poverty in 2026, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation,

The poorest pensioners will be hit hardest, namely those without savings or a private or work pension. Even with the triple lock in place, pensioners who qualify for the basic state pension receive just £184.90 per week

Under the existing “pay-as-you-go” scheme, all workers fund current state pensions, with everyone guaranteed a minimum. Under the TBI’s proposals, workers will be responsible for financing their own retirement through contributions to a personal pension savings pot.

Britain’s current system of state pensions was established following the 1942 Beveridge Report as a contributory, non-means-tested, universal benefit. The pension age was fixed at 60 for women and 65 for men. It was a major reform conceded to a militant working class after the Second World War.

But the right to retirement has been under steady attack over the past two decades. The pensionable age is currently 66, with phased increases to 67 and then 68 by 2044-46. Under the TBI, the universal state pension age (SPA) would be scrapped.

The report advises that the state pension scheme is “no longer fit for the future” and is “increasingly unaffordable”. Improvements in life expectancy since World War II are cited as a major problem. Horrified, the TBI states that the number of pensioners “is set to rise from 12.6 million today to more than 18 million by 2070. On current projections, spending on the state pension will rise from around 5 percent of GDP today to 7.8 percent by 2070.”

This translates to a more than £85 billion increase in pensions, “more than the annual defence budget.” In other words, pensioners must be reduced to penury to pay for increased military spending.

The TBI argues that the triple lock should be replaced by a system that links pensions to median wage growth. With massive surges in US tariffs and expanding geopolitical conflict, this portends a rapid fall in the real value of pensions.

A Pensions Commission is proposed by the TBI that

should “broker a pre-election pact in which the main parties commit to this change”. This would save an estimated £66 billion a year by 2070, the report finds.

The TBI’s scheme is complex and cumbersome. Workers would pay into a personalised Lifespan Fund. After 40 qualifying years from age 16, including years in work, caring, education, or ill health, you would be entitled to 20 years of pension entitlements.

Instead of being universal, the SPA would be specific to each individual, based on a cold-blooded actuarial calculation determined by projected age at death minus 20 pensionable years. This would be accessible on a digital Lifespan App.

An individual’s projected lifespan would be controversially derived from personal data, including National Health Service medical records. The algorithms used to calculate projected deaths are not specified.

Those who decide to retire early would receive smaller instalments, based on projections that they will live longer than 20 years. Those who retire later would receive higher instalments, as the lifetime fund would be divided by fewer remaining life-years.

Workers could access part of their Lifespan Fund to cover periods of unemployment or ill health before they retire to top up their benefits, but on returning to work, they would pay higher contributions. This sets a dangerous precedent for doing away with benefits for the unemployed or those on sick leave.

With the triple lock gone, amid rising inflation and falling wages, many older people would be incentivised to keep working until they drop. People in poor health or manual workers worn out by physical labour might drag themselves to work rather than scrape by on a pension that does not cover basic living costs.

Tony Blair, unindicted war criminal and friend of the super-rich, has no such worries, with combined annual pensions worth £100,000 and a wealth of around £60 million, he embodies his former close colleague Peter Mandelson’s infamous declaration that New Labour was “intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich.”

TBI has the necessary credentials for pushing through this frontal assault on state pensions. Founded by Blair in 2016, it has promoted reactionary pro-business policies in more than 40 countries. As prime minister (1997–2007), he presided over record social inequality, pushed through sweeping privatisation and stampeded Britain to an illegal war against Iraq based on lies.

Blair has worked with Donald Trump and his son-in-law Jared Kushner on the so-called reconstruction plans for

Gaza, aimed at turning it into a “Riviera of the Middle East” predicated on a second Nakba.

The TBI is also urging the government to slash health and disability benefits and create a new category of “non-work-limiting conditions”. Those with debilitating mental health problems, such as anxiety or stress-related disorders, will be dragooned back into the workforce. The TBI has suggested that musculoskeletal problems, such as back pain, should be added.

Keir Starmer’s government has already halved how much new claimants can receive for the health-related element of Universal Credit.

While the Department for Work and Pensions has stated that the triple lock will remain for the life of this parliament, Chancellor Rachel Reeves has spoken of “difficult choices” needed to increase military spending.

Labour MP for Dunfermline and Dollar, Graeme Downie, spoke for both sides of the House when he said, “If we’re going to look at welfare spending as a way of funding defence, we need to make sure there are no sacred cows. We should be looking at the largest welfare spend, which is the [state pension] triple lock.”

While NATO allies have agreed to increase defence spending to 3.5 percent of GDP by 2035, this is not fast enough for Britain’s military chiefs and their political mouthpieces.

The assault on pension rights has provoked widespread opposition among workers over the past decade. Teachers, lecturers, rail workers and health workers have all taken strike action to defend their pensions, but the unions have divided and dissipated this opposition. In France, Italy, and Belgium, workers have also engaged in general strikes to oppose government proposals to raise the retirement age and attack pensions.

The 50 richest families in the UK own as much as the poorest 34 million people. While pensions are “unaffordable”, there is no limit to the wealth squandered by the super-rich. It is not pensions that must go, or welfare spending that must be ended, but capitalism.



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