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Budget 2014

Professor Karen Rowlingson

We asked a leading University of Birmingham academic to respond to George Osborne's 2014 budget, and how it might impact on ordinary people.

Read full opinion (/research/impact/perspective/post-budget-2014-rowlingson.aspx)

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This debate has now closed.

Feedback

M on 27 March 2014, **Helen Hancock** wrote

'Or will they continue to protect pensioners' benefits and cut those of the working-age population?'

The contrast of definitions in this question is inaccurate. Whilst there is an age at which the population becomes eligible for the state pension, this can no longer be contrasted with 'the working-age population'. There is no statutory retirement age. Indeed, as financial conditions make it increasingly difficult for people to retire to a decent standard of living – unless they have worked in higher education, the public services, etc – increasing numbers of people both draw the state pension and continue to work part or full time.

The paragraph on pensioners' benefits echoes recent publicly voiced attempts to foment discord between younger adults and older ones. It is natural enough for third rate journalists like Howker and Malik ('Jilted Generation', 2010) to do this in order to raise their profiles and their bank balances. It is worrying – frightening even – when academics seem to be backing them up with allusions of the 'the richest pensioners' type (everyone knows there are mechanisms for clawing back the money). How long before journalists of the Howker and Malik ilk are calling for older people to be pushed out of their jobs, as they have already called for them to be pushed out of their homes? And how long before academics lend them their support?

This seems particularly unfair as many older workers started their working lives at 14. Whose taxes have paid for a massive increase in secondary and higher education – an increase in which the social sciences have done particularly well? The recent Birmingham University Commission Report on 'Healthy Ageing' suggested that one way of older adults staying healthy was to avoid conflict with younger generations. What are they supposed to do when the conflict is brought to them?

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