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As pensions minister, I was told to ignore women facing hardship from state pension age changes

Iain Duncan Smith refused to engage with the 1950s women. I was told they would go away sooner or later



by **Baroness Ros Altmann**

1 month | Thursday October 11th 2018



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Women tend to be worse off than men in both state and private pensions. Nevertheless, I did not object to the measures passed in 1995 to **equalise the state pension age between men and women**.

This would control the costs of state pension support for our ageing population and also recognise women tend to live longer than men. The 1995 Act set a timetable for women's state pension age to rise from 60 in 2010 to gradually reach age 65 by 2020, giving up to 25 years notice of the change to allow time for women to adjust their financial plans.

However, in 2011, Coalition ministers announced plans to increase women's state pension age even further before changes already legislated for in 1995 had finished.

This was wrong

Having spent many years trying to persuade successive Governments to remedy

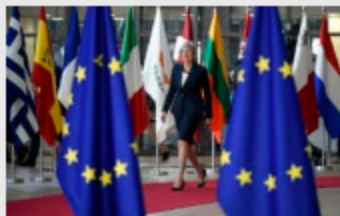
pensions injustices, I could see this was wrong.

As the legislation was passing through Parliament, I campaigned to keep to the previous timetable, but the Government ploughed ahead anyway.

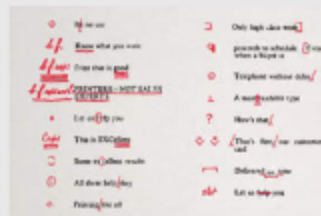
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Ministers kept insisting this was about correcting a long-standing gender 'inequality' in state pension age and, as life expectancy had been rising, the changes were needed to make the state pension affordable in the long-term.

But those arguments rang hollow when, soon after the 2011 legislation was passed, the Government announced that it would be unfair to give public sector workers less than ten years' notice of changes to their pensions.

I was told these women would just go away sooner or later





Iain Duncan Smith. (Photo by Carl Court/Getty Images)

As Pensions Minister, I kept trying to find a way to alleviate the unfairness of these short-notice changes. Unfortunately, there was no sympathy for these women. Iain Duncan Smith, as Secretary of State, refused to engage with the 1950s women adversely affected and I was instructed not to speak to them. I was told the women would go away sooner or later.

I explained that I believed the Government's changes had been wrong, leaving many of these women no real chance to build resources to replace the state pension they would not receive.