

# STOP GOVERNMENT ATTACKS ON DISABLED

Mark Wright

In the coming weeks the much talked about Welfare Reform Bill gets voted on in parliament. As for myself and many other disabled people this is a deeply worrying time.

All we know is that cuts are coming our way and this is just another attack on disabled people. We are being made to pay for an economic and financial crisis that is not of our making.

One of the bits in the bill I have picked out is the proposal to scrap the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and replace it with a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in April 2013.

This change, from the government's point of view, is to reduce the case load by roughly 20% of claimants. But the fact that the fraud rate for DLA is a tiny 0.5% means it's increasingly likely that many disabled people will be losing out.

It is estimated to result in an overall loss of £2.1 billion to disabled people - valuable money they need during these tough economic times with rising costs of living.

The criteria for gaining PIP are likely to be stricter and tougher. If you can't walk but can get about using a wheelchair you will be deemed mobile enough to not receive the payment. This is even if no wheelchair is available for them to use.

The Tories are making out that people want to be independent as a ploy to remove

some off benefits. This is a cruel tactic. I've not yet met a disabled person who does not want to work or contribute to society in anyway they can. But changing the goalposts to reduce the cost to the state seems to me a cynical tactic being used by the government.

The tight rules and regulations disabled people have to go through to claim nowadays is getting some media exposure at last. Claimants who have tried to claim the Employment Support Allowance, for example, have reported feeling demoralised and at the end of their hope when being turned down the right to benefits to help them due to minor issues with their claims.

And let's not forget that the private company ATOS, which was brought in by the last Labour government, is especially contracted to move claimants off disability benefits into more mainstream benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance, saving the government millions if not billions of pounds. But the affect on disabled people, mentally and physically, is huge.

I know many in the disability movement who feel victimised for being disabled and being made to feel like a criminal for needing help and support. The vicious right-wing media does not help lessen the stigmas that are flung around bracketing all benefit claimers as workshy and feckless.

It is time government minister Iain Duncan Smith and his Tory millionaire chums are told what life really is like for disabled people before rushing head long into attacking us.



photo Paul Mattsson

- No cuts in benefits, jobs and public services. No privatisation of services
- Oppose the Welfare Reform Bill
- Decent benefits, education, training or work for all, without compulsion
- Sack Atos Origin and scrap the Work Capability Assessment
- A living wage and provision of respite for all family carers
- Provide free health and social care services to all who need them
- Massive investment in social housing, services and infrastructure to create jobs and meet need
- Support the 30 November strike as the next step in the campaign to defeat all the cuts
- For a socialist society that puts the needs of the millions before the profits of the millionaires

## Support Remploy workers

The Remploy factories, which employ thousands of people with disabilities, are threatened with closure. Many, including some charities, try to argue that Remploy factories somehow confine those workers to a "ghetto".

But Les Woodward, GMB union convenor and one of the leaders of the campaign to save the factories, refutes this: "Remploy workers do not work in ghettos, neither are we institutionalised. The fact that we choose to work with other disabled people is our choice. We were not forced into Remploy and we will not be forced out."

"Closing the factories would see 2,800 people added to the benefit claimant list. In 2008, 2,500 people lost their jobs in Remploy."

"In 2009 the GMB surveyed those members who had left and found that most of those workers were living on benefits or were in jobs with poorer pay and conditions."

"The results vindicate the Remploy trade union position that keeping Remploy factories open and supporting them by providing meaningful work through public procurement is a better solution for disabled people than closing them down and putting people onto benefit."

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## What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people. As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

### Our demands include:

#### Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state

retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

#### Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under

democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

#### Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

#### Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

#### New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

#### Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!