

SCRAP THE WELFARE REFORM BILL

'We shouldn't pay for the banksters' bailouts'

Mark Wright

Harlow Socialist Party

Like many disabled people, I have followed the course of the Con-Dems' Welfare Reform Bill (WRB) with dread. As well as capping benefits to £500 a week which, it has been predicted, will make 800,000 children homeless, the bill would replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

DLA supports working disabled people, and has been a great help to me as I work part time on very low wages.

I was granted DLA after being told that I may not see ever again following a traumatic loss of sight in 2004. PIP will be harder to claim with stricter tests.

For example, under PIP wheelchair users will be treated as having no trouble getting around at all, as if everywhere has good wheelchair access.

DLA also provides supervision, for example, for people who may have fits and put themselves and others in danger. The draft PIP criteria does not mention such supervision!

From April 2013 all DLA claimants aged between 18 and 65 will be reassessed for PIP. No doubt prof-

Disabled abused due to Con-Dem lies

Attacks on disabled people have increased as a result of the Con-Dems' attacks on benefit claimants, according to six charities, with more people being taunted on the street and accused of 'faking' their disability.

While the mass media are also guilty of misleading and inflammatory coverage, the charities say

that the government is the main criminal with ministers constantly talking about a massive 'abuse' of disability benefits.

However, the government's own figures say DLA fraud is just 0.4%.

One charity, Scope, found that two-thirds of disabled people questioned in September had suffered abuse – up from 41% in 2010.

iteers such as Atos will be carrying out the tests.

Atos is already being paid £100 million a year to question 11,000 Employment and Support Allowance (a benefit for people unable to work) claimants each week, with the aim of 'reducing the benefits bill'. Hundreds of thousands of people have appealed against their benefits being stopped. Two-fifths have been successful.

I know of many cases of people who have already been through such tough screening and have lost out. They have missed out on benefits that help them live independently, while still not being able to find work. I fear for myself and others whose benefits could be slashed.

Disabled activists may have been

heartened by the house of lords' amendments to the WRB, but they only opposed part of the bill.

All seven amendments were overturned by the house of commons, as the bill was effectively voted into law.

Socialists oppose the whole bill as it is a vicious attack on working class and disabled people. All three main capitalist parties, Tories, Lib Dems and Labour, agree with the principle of the bill – that benefits should be slashed to pay for the bankers' bailouts.

It is time disabled people, along with others in society, say enough is enough and stop attempts to divide us. The disabled, workers, the unemployed, students and young people must unite to fight all cuts.



A Yorkshire demo - one of many protests against disability benefit cuts that have taken place across England and Wales photo Iain Dalton

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 and 'free schools'!
- 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 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!