

THE SHAME OF BRITAIN

The Times They Are A Changin'
Bob Dylan - 1964

Five years of independent research into the planned destruction of the British welfare state was completed in 2014 with links between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Atos Healthcare, and the influence with successive British governments of a discredited American corporate healthcare insurance giant exposed. The final reports were published by the Centre for Disability Studies at Leeds University and have since gained academic interest from across the world, which has been brought to the attention of the United Nations (UN) by a concerned UN adviser.

INTRODUCTION

From *The British Welfare State to Another American State*⁽¹⁾ confirmed earlier research that had identified the influence of corporate America with the planned welfare 'reforms' of successive British governments, whilst exposing the fact that the principal influence for the reforms lacked significant validation.

The 2006 Green Paper⁽²⁾ used by the British government to justify planned savage welfare reforms, that would negatively impact on the welfare of all recipients of DWP long-term sickness and/or disability benefits, was exposed by Professor Alison Ravetz (RAVETZ : 2006)⁽³⁾ as using published research evidence that was almost entirely self-referential and, therefore, unsubstantiated. The *Scientific and Conceptual Basis of Incapacity Benefits*⁽³⁾ failed to provide references to corroborate the findings, but was happily endorsed and adopted by the British government as it guaranteed a future significant reduction of the DWP welfare budget, which was the first step towards the planned destruction of the welfare state.⁽⁵⁾

The *Scientific and Conceptual Basis of Incapacity Benefit*⁽³⁾ was published in 2005 and authored by Professors Sir Mansel Aylward, a former DWP Chief Medical Officer, and orthopaedic surgeon Gordon Waddell. They were both based at the Centre for Psychosocial and Disability Research, Cardiff University, and the report is an impressive looking lengthy text. Yet, at the time of writing, the Professors were funded at the Centre by UnumProvident Insurance, now known as Unum Insurance, who were to be identified in 2008 by the American Association of Justice as one of the top two most discredited corporate insurance giants in America⁽⁶⁾ with a very long history of resisting disability insurance claims and causing needless distress to their claimants.⁽⁷⁾ Indeed, in 2007 in America, Professor John Langbein (LANGBEIN : 2007)⁽⁸⁾ of the Yale School of Law produced a paper identified as 'The Unum Provident Scandal' that exposed Unum's policy of disability denial that continues to be referenced to this day⁽⁸⁾ and, in November 2007, BBC News reported that the British government were being advised by an American insurance company with a reputation for 'racketeering'.⁽⁹⁾

Unum, one of the nation's leading disability insurers, has long had a reputation for unfairly denying and delaying claims. Unum's claims-handling abuses have consistently been the subject of regulator and media investigations.

The American Association of Justice: 2008 (6)

Professor Sir Mansel Aylward has been linked with Unum Insurance for a large part of his career and is considered to be an expert in the Bio-psychosocial (BPS) model of disability assessment, as first identified by Engel (ENGEL : 1980)⁽¹⁰⁾ then manipulated for profit by the private healthcare insurance industry.⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁴⁾ The manipulated BPS model of disability assessment is used by

Unum Insurance to assess private health insurance claimants⁽⁸⁾ and by Atos Healthcare, on behalf of the DWP, to assess all claimants of DWP long term sickness and disability benefit in what is described as an ‘occupational assessment.’⁽³⁾⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁴⁾ Yet the DWP claim forms for the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), that replaced Incapacity Benefit, make reference to ‘medical assessments.’ In fact, the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), as conducted by Atos Healthcare on behalf of the DWP, is neither an occupational assessment nor a medical assessment. The WCA is totally without merit, is an imported ‘assessment’ from corporate America, and is identified by both the British Medical Association⁽¹⁵⁾⁽¹⁶⁾ and the Royal College of Nurses⁽¹⁷⁾ as being dangerous and causing preventable harm. The WCA was identified long ago as being fatally flawed and was exposed in a 2012 BBC Panorama documentary: ‘Disabled or Faking It’⁽¹⁸⁾, yet the DWP continue to disregard all evidence against the WCA to ensure their only priority, which is to significantly reduce the welfare budget. Recent success in the courts⁽¹⁹⁾ has confirmed that the WCA is unfit for purpose, and it may be that more litigation will be needed before any possible social justice is found.

CORPORATE INFLUENCE & CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Professor Sir Mansel Aylward remains oblivious to all reported suffering and continues to tour the world to lecture about the (modified) BPS model of disability assessment. Sir Mansel is also a Director with The Health Claims Bureau(HCB)⁽²⁰⁾, which is indirectly linked to Unum Insurance via another Director by the name of Al Hemond. Hemond spent 23 years with Unum Insurance, and is considered to be ‘a recognised expert and world leader in disability claims management.’⁽²⁰⁾ The HCB is ready and waiting for the anticipated very lucrative high volumes of references as the British government introduce an ‘occupational health assessment’ requirement for any worker off sick from work for four weeks or longer.⁽²¹⁾ It is anticipated that the ‘assessment’ to be used by the HCB will not be accessible for consultation or investigation by the nation’s occupational health experts, and time will tell how many more people with a life threatening diagnosis will be required to return to work, as routinely happens following the WCA,⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹⁵⁾ due to this new requirement for an occupational health assessment after 4 weeks absence from work due to ill health. This latest assessment requirement is an effort by the DWP to resist funding access to long-term sickness benefit, regardless of diagnosis, as the United Kingdom (UK) moves ever closer to the American system of welfare to be funded by private insurance, as planned since 1982.⁽¹⁾⁽⁵⁾

The Scientific & Conceptual Basis for Incapacity Benefits⁽³⁾ was, essentially, the blue print for the planned destruction of the welfare state using a totally discredited model of disability assessment to, effectively, justify the dismissal of claims of all but the most severe victims of chronic ill health or profound disability. It was arguably the most damaging report in the history of British welfare as it permitted the introduction of the WCA, which was identified as being Unfit For Purpose in 2010 by a Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) report.⁽²²⁾ Therefore, terminally ill patients have had vital welfare benefits removed and instructed to find work⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁴⁾⁽¹⁵⁾, hostile and irresponsible press commentary has encouraged a dramatic rise in disability hate crime⁽²³⁾⁽²⁴⁾⁽²⁵⁾⁽²⁶⁾ as encouraged by the often disturbing rhetoric by poorly educated DWP Ministers⁽²⁷⁾, as some victims of this imported American insurance medical tyranny have turned to suicide to escape injustice.⁽¹¹⁾⁽²⁸⁾

Bureaux report of some clients who are made to attend WCAs despite rules stipulating that they should be part of an exempt group that is put straight through to the Support Group and not be subjected to an assessment. In one case, a client who was so severely ill that he should have been exempt from WCA entirely was not only made to undergo the assessment, but was actually found fit for work by it.

Unfit For Purpose: CAS : 2010 (22)

<http://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/Unfit-for-Purpose.pdf>

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This report has highlighted the cases of many clients with serious health conditions, such as Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, terminal cancer, bi-polar disorder, heart failure, strokes, severe depression, and agoraphobia who have been found fit for work. It is worth noting that the JCP's guide to applying for ESA states that those who "would have no difficulty working" will not be paid ESA. While some of the clients in the examples above may be capable of limited work, it is very unlikely that they would experience no difficulty in doing so.

Unfit For Purpose: CAS: 2010 (22)

<http://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/Unfit-for-Purpose.pdf>

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***The DWP urgently needs to examine what happens to clients who are found fit for work** – there is a worry that many clients will struggle to find and maintain employment after being taken off ESA, while some will find themselves ineligible for JSA. It is important to find out what is happening to this client group – whether former claimants are finding employment, claiming JSA, or falling out of the benefits system altogether.*

Unfit For Purpose: CAS : 2010 (22)

<http://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/Unfit-for-Purpose.pdf>

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There is no evidence that anything has improved since the 2010 Unfit For Purpose report was published by CAS(22), despite claims to the contrary by Ministers. Atos Healthcare continue to conduct the WCA and benefit from an exclusive £112 million per annum contract, that has never been audited, as exposed by the Public Accounts Committee in January 2013.(32)

Poor decision-making causes claimants considerable distress, and the position appears to be getting worse, with Citizens Advice reporting an 83% increase in the number of people asking for support on appeals in the last year alone. We found the Department to be unduly complacent about the number of decisions upheld by the tribunal and believe that the Department should ensure that its processes are delivering accurate decision-making and minimising distress to claimants. The Work Capability Assessment process has a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable claimants.

The standardised "tick-box" approach fails to adequately account for rare, variable or mental health conditions and this can lead to greater inaccuracies in decision-making for these particular claimant groups. We welcome the efforts made to improve the process and encourage the Department to continue to review the operation of the work capability assessment for vulnerable groups.

DWP: Contract Management of Medical Services: 2013 (32)

The Public Accounts Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmpublic/744/744.pdf>

The Scientific & Conceptual Basis for Incapacity Benefits was an influential report(3), was exposed by Professor Ravetz (RAVETZ : 2006)(2) as totally lacking independent references for its findings that suggested that the numbers of people in receipt of long-term sickness benefits could be reduced by as much as two-thirds; demonstrating a priority with welfare cost reduction rather than welfare need.(2) This priority has been relentlessly pursued by the DWP regardless of identified significant suffering. Meanwhile, the numbers of deaths, suicides and claimants suffering from the onset of mental health problems, due to the anxiety created by the enforced WCA, has reached disturbing numbers(29), and will soon be the subject of new research.(29)(30) Yet, regardless of the identified and significant suffering, the UK government continues to resist all calls for an accumulative impact assessment for the impact of the deluge of welfare reforms negatively impacting on chronically sick and disabled people, as introduced since the last general election. The only concern is the reduction of the welfare budget, with total oblivion to the human consequences of removing financial support without warning, from some of the poorest people in the country, who are least able to help themselves due to chronic illness or profound disability.

The final absurdity is to use a fatally flawed WCA assessment to force chronically sick and disabled people to look for paid employment at a time when in excess of 2.32 million able bodied

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unemployed people can't find work due to the very limited numbers of jobs available nationwide.⁽³¹⁾

The Scientific & Conceptual Basis for Incapacity Benefits⁽³⁾ actually pronounced that the numbers of people claiming benefit for long-term sickness was due to the fact that, historically, doctors used the 'wrong model' of disability assessment and that, by using the (manipulated) BPS model of disability assessment, claimants would be encouraged to 'think themselves well'.⁽³⁾⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁴⁾ Aylward and Waddell actually presumed to be better informed than any medical consultant regarding long term sickness and disability, and no-one in Government it seems deemed it necessary to challenge such dubious claims that suggested that hi-calibre medical professionals disregarded the very obvious psycho-social impact of long-term chronic illness or disability of their patients.

Effectively, detailed medical reports by GPs and Consultants were to be totally disregarded by Atos Healthcare, to be replaced by a compromised computer assessment, known as the WCA, designed in consultation with Unum Insurance to totally disregard diagnosis, prognosis, life limiting illnesses and the impact of prescribed drugs. The DWP welfare benefit claimants were very much seen as a problem to be removed and the WCA, as conducted by Atos Healthcare, was the weapon to be used against the chronically sick and disabled British people, to make sure that the problem was permanently removed and the welfare budget was permanently and drastically reduced. This system of medical tyranny is guaranteed by using DWP 'Decision Makers' who are basic administrators and **totally unqualified** for the work they do. By their own admission, Decision Makers are incapable of comprehending medical reports provided by the claimants' doctors and so 'rubber stamp' any WCA as conducted on behalf of the DWP by the private contractor Atos Healthcare at a cost of £112million per annum.⁽³²⁾ The inevitable death toll of such dangerous DWP administrative incompetence is rising.⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹⁵⁾⁽²⁸⁾⁽²⁹⁾

Discredited in America and accused of 'racketeering', as exposed in a 2007 BBC News report⁽⁹⁾, the expectation by Unum Insurance and successive British governments was that the British people, *en masse*, would purchase Income Protection Insurance (IPI) as Unum's high profile TV adverts explained the possible serious consequences of becoming chronically sick or disabled without the DWP welfare safety net for protection. Disability activists reported the company to the Financial Services Authority and their TV adverts were stopped due to 'insider knowledge' as Unum Insurance had been 'advisers' to the British government regarding welfare reforms since 1994. Subsequently, with the planned mass take-up of IPI prevented, the company removed their individual IPI from the market in March 2012⁽³³⁾ and now try to promote IPI via the work place.⁽³⁴⁾

Professor Sir Mansel Aylward was working with representatives from UnumProvident Insurance during his time as the DWP Chief Medical Officer(CMO), when the company were government advisers for welfare reform. He resigned as the DWP CMO to take up his post at Cardiff University, when funded by UnumProvident Insurance, and his research report⁽³⁾, produced when funded by the American insurance giant, was guaranteed to be adopted by the British government. Subsequently, using self referential evidence from the Professor's unsubstantiated research⁽³⁾ the government would destroy the security of the welfare state, many hundreds of thousands of people would suffer due to the introduction of the WCA based on the Professor's research, and the general public would be encouraged to use Income Protection Insurance (IPI) to guarantee to replace the government safety net needed when illness strikes, that his report guaranteed would be destroyed. The Professor is also a Director of the HCB⁽⁶⁾, together with another Director whose former employers have spent a lifetime manipulating evidence to prevent funding disability insurance claims⁽⁷⁾⁽⁸⁾; and these people are trusted by the Government to oversee yet another private company responsible for the welfare of chronically sick British workers. When will government be challenged for accepting influence from a notorious corporate insurance giant, whose guidance was clearly a conflict of interest as Unum Insurance fully expected to gain financially from the welfare

reforms?? With their disturbing reputation for disability denial practises Unum Insurance should never have been appointed as government advisers.

GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE:

The entire British national press **have been silenced and refuse to expose** the influence of an infamous American corporate insurance giant with the ongoing destruction of the British welfare state, as publicly identified at the 2012 Liberal Democrat conference by the young and very courageous George Potter.⁽³⁷⁾ Without evidence to the contrary, the British public react to the often disturbing and dangerous reported rhetoric from government Ministers, referring to excesses of fraudulent claims that are actually less than 1% of the welfare budget, and constantly making reference to claimed significant numbers of ‘skivers’ for which there is little evidence.⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹³⁾⁽³⁵⁾⁽³⁶⁾ Consequently, disability hate crimes are at a record high and chronically sick and disabled people now live in fear.⁽²⁴⁾⁽²⁹⁾⁽³⁰⁾ BBC News have also been silenced, and now refuse to acknowledge the many thousands of people who have publicly protested against this government’s attack on the most vulnerable, whilst Liberal Democrat politicians continue to be co-conspirators against the chronically sick and disabled British people as they have permitted this foreign medical tyranny to continue to create fear and despair, amongst those least able to protest, in exchange for a seat at the top table of Government. Of course, no-one is challenging the identified government interference with the national press and the state news broadcaster....

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE DESTROYS BOGUS GOVERNMENT CLAIMS:

There is now a growing catalogue of distinguished academic research exposing the detrimental results of government and media propaganda, that have influenced the general public regarding the welfare reforms, with the mind set clearly divided between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ sick and disabled community.⁽³⁵⁾⁽³⁶⁾ Recently published in February 2014, *Shifting the Goalposts* – a longitudinal mixed-methods study of the health of long-term IB recipients by Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite *et al*, at Durham University, (GARTHWAITE *et al* : 2014)⁽³⁵⁾ is of special significance as it confirmed that the often scathing attacks on the long-term chronically sick and disabled community, by politicians and the media, were not based on any quantitative longitudinal studies of those in receipt of the former Incapacity Benefit (IB):

‘In direct contrast to much media and political opinion, for the majority of people in this study, being on IB was certainly not a lifestyle choice. Poverty and insecurity was a harsh and unavoidable reality for some, particularly in the case of people who were living alone and managing on IB as their sole income.’ (35)

Shifting The Goalposts:

Garthwaite *et al*

[GARTHWAITE *et al*: 2014 <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=9161745>](http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=9161745)

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‘These extracts together illustrate the context in which current ‘reforms’ are shifting the goalposts for sick and disabled people by compounding the life limiting consequences of incapacity with a regime that can potentially aggravate their stigmatisation, shame and isolation.’ (36)

No Longer Deserving?

Bambra *et al*

http://www.socialpolicy.ed.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/58713/No_longer_deserving_sickness_benefit_reform_2010.pdf

CONCLUSION:

The tide is very slowly turning but at a very high cost in human suffering, deaths and suicides of the UK’s chronically sick and disabled community attempting to survive without the security of the hallowed UK welfare safety net. Success in the courts⁽¹⁹⁾ has exposed the British government and confirmed that the WCA is totally unfit for purpose as identified long ago by academics, national

charities, medical and nursing professionals, legal experts, and the many hundreds of thousands of chronically sick and disabled victims who continue to live in fear of this American imported bogus assessment system. The most outstanding question remains unanswered: how many more chronically sick or profoundly disabled people must die in the UK before the welfare 'reform' medical tyranny, using the confirmed totally bogus WCA assessment, as designed and executed by totally unaccountable corporate giants, will there need to be before the British government stop this human slaughter, copied from America, as exposed by CBS News? (38)

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DEDICATION:

This research is dedicated to all chronically sick and disabled British people, dependent upon DWP sickness and disability benefits for their financial survival, who now live in fear of the WCA, as conducted by Atos Healthcare, which is totally unfit for purpose and should be cancelled without delay to prevent more unnecessary suffering, suicides and premature deaths.

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