

Political Blind Faith

Hello everyone.

Thank you to the Disabled Students' Committee for the invitation to speak at the NUS Conference today, and thanks for taking the time to attend this panel contribution.

"Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive" is a famous quote from the C17th by Sir Walter Scott, but is very apt for today's politics, as the British government successfully deceive the British public.

I have called this presentation *"Political Blind Faith"* to highlight the fact that the most damaging policies in the history of British welfare were brought to the statute by MPs who, in the main, had no knowledge of the significance of the policies, or the inevitable preventable harm they would create. MPs merely voted through each policy when using their blind faith and blind allegiance to their political party.

"Political Blind Faith" also refers to the electorate, who gain most of their news from the Tory dominated national press, and believe what they read, so the public are very easily manipulated. This guarantees that the ordinary working people, who are the backbone of British society, will not use their vote in a general election. They don't recognise any political party who represents their interests, as New Labour under Tony Blair represented the middle classes, and betrayed the working people the original Labour Party was formed to support. Without the vote of millions of working people means that the British

state opens the door to either a Conservative dominated coalition government, as in 2010, or to a Conservative government, as of 2015, and the people who need political support the most are abandoned to their fate. Corbyn may help...

Consequently, the most vulnerable people in this nation are now dominated by an extreme right-wing Conservative government. There is no limit to the amount of preventable harm they are causing in the name of '*welfare reforms*' and '*austerity measures*', when using neoliberal politics. Care, concern and compassion for chronically sick and disabled people are relegated to the history books, as greed replaces need.

It was my generation who benefitted from the creation of the Welfare State in 1942, and it is your generation who are now witnessing its destruction, based on relentless political propaganda, spin and rhetoric, which has successfully convinced the British public that the UK can no longer afford the costs of our world famous NHS, or our legendary Welfare State.

Needless to say, these claims aren't true, but it does all depend on political priorities when it comes to spending resources. The political priority of the present right-wing Conservative government, still run by £millionaires, is the destruction of public services on route to the involvement in social policy of more and more profit motivated private companies. How many people will die on route to this destruction of the Welfare State is of no consequence and, with the support of the majority of the national press, the rising death totals linked to the ongoing welfare reforms are easily dismissed.

As an independent researcher, working voluntarily, I have spent the last eight years researching the history behind the introduction of the welfare reforms, in 2008, exposing the fact that the demolition of the UK welfare state was planned long-ago; and the present suffering of so many chronically ill and disabled people is on route to the introduction in the UK of welfare via private healthcare insurance.

It was the New Labour government headed by Tony Blair in 2006 who identified the need for future UK welfare reforms and, in 2008, Blair's replacement Gordon Brown introduced the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), which replaced Incapacity Benefit as the long-term sickness and out-of-work disability benefit. The ESA introduced the unsuspecting chronically sick and disabled public to the dangerous and totally bogus Work Capability Assessment (WCA), to be conducted by the unaccountable corporate giant known as Atos Healthcare, funded at a then cost to the public purse of £500million per annum. This from a government who claimed to want to reduce welfare costs funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)...

In the words of the late, great Martin Luther King Jnr: "*Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity*". Never a truer word was spoken with reference to the present Conservative government, and the Coalition government before them, who introduced unimaginable horrors claiming that '*austerity measures*' were needed to reduce the deficit. In 2010 the DWP began the reassessment of 2.68 million people claiming Incapacity Benefit, who were being migrated to the new ESA, but first had to endure the WCA which guaranteed that many chronically ill and disabled people would

have their financial support removed, regardless of diagnosis, which is totally disregarded by the WCA.

Using their collective “*blind faith*” in the DWP, when demonstrating their “*sincere ignorance*” and “*conscientious stupidity*”, Conservative MPs blindly vote in favour of any new welfare policy the Cabinet wish to adopt, when guaranteed to cause more preventable harm to sick and disabled people who claim financial support from the State. Most MPs have no idea what the human implications are of the vote they are supporting, as they are simply obeying the Tory Party whip regardless of dire predictable human consequences. So, using their collective ‘*blind faith*’, MPs have successfully brought to the statute book welfare policies which were always guaranteed to kill many sick and disabled people. And they have.

Coming from a healthcare background, I can confirm that any claimed ‘*fit for work*’ assessment model that routinely disregards diagnosis, prognosis and the claimant’s past medical history is guaranteed to create preventable harm and many deaths. Thanks to the DWP published ESA mortality statistics, over 92,000 deaths of sick and disabled people in the UK are recorded following a WCA , from November 2011 to February 2014, including the deaths of 2,380 people who had been declared ‘*fit for work*’.

Naturally, Ministers insisted that the data could not be used to link claimant deaths to the welfare reforms, but failed to explain why 2,380 people died after being declared ‘*fit for work*’ following a WCA. Given that the DWP have since refused to publish updated ESA mortality

figures, it can be assumed that deaths linked to the WCA will now be closer to 100,000 people or probably many, many more. Ask yourself why this isn't common knowledge, why you didn't know that and why the DWP will not publish updated ESA mortality totals?

Politicians relentlessly feed the national press with claims later proven to be unfounded, only after the damage has been done, which has successfully transformed a nation which once supported the less fortunate, to a nation that resents funding financial support for people who are too ill to work. Thanks to the savage propaganda, all claimants of the ESA are presumed to be bogus and, using the fatally flawed WCA, many who need that financial help are prevented from accessing it.

The excessive use of sanctions, used against people too ill to attend a planned interview with the Job Centre, means we now actually have chronically ill people starving to death in the UK, to this nation's everlasting shame. And more suffering is guaranteed as the DWP have just reduced the funding of the ESA to the equivalent of Jobseekers Allowance, which is the unemployment benefit, with a cash reduction of £30 per week for new ESA claimants.

We were told that the country can't afford the welfare bill, yet when it comes to spending priorities it seems the country could afford £3.6 million for Margaret Thatcher's funeral in 2013. There was no justification as to why this former Prime Minister was afforded something that closely resembled a State funeral, when chronically ill people were having their financial support removed by the DWP, as

thousands died when trying to find a job, because the State disregarded the fact that they were ill.

Using austerity measures introduced in October 2010, justified by the 2008 global banking financial crisis, the British government led by David Cameron knowingly misled the British public when using the politics of fear. They terrorised chronically ill people for the great crime of not being well enough to access paid employment, with sick and disabled people vilified and demonised as they are identified as being nothing more than a financial burden to the State.

The nation's chronically sick and disabled population, who are dependent upon State funded welfare for their financial survival, have experienced an unprecedented political attack against their wellbeing, especially between May 2010 and March 2016 when Iain Duncan Smith was the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

This man, who is apparently a Catholic, was almost single handedly responsible for the transformation of a nation which once demonstrated care and concern for those less fortunate, to a nation where the number of prosecutions for disability hate crimes increased by 213% during the Coalition government's term in office.

For someone who claims to believe in the word of God, to stand centre stage at the Tory party conference and snarl at the cameras, as he lectured about disability benefit fraud and disabled people '*languishing on benefit*', to also claim to be '*concerned*' about the wasted opportunity for sick and disabled people surviving on benefit was, and still is, very difficult to accept.

But it isn't difficult to manipulate the British public when supported by the majority of the national press. Banner headlines claiming that '*75% of Incapacity Benefit claimants are fit to work*' certainly attracted attention; with Chief Constables at seven constabularies reporting that it wasn't at all unusual for a disabled person to be dragged out of their wheelchair, and kicked to death in a shop doorway, yet fail to get a mention in the press.

How did we arrive at this relentless political attack against those least able to defend themselves, and where chronically ill and disabled people now live in fear of the UK government? We arrived at it because in 1982 Margaret Thatcher decided that the UK needed to remove the welfare state, and every administration since that time has worked towards that goal. The 2008 banking crisis was simply the excuse needed to justify the start of the demolition of the Welfare State. The Cameron governments moved this Welfare State demolition on much faster, with the introduction of additional austerity measures in 2010, which increased the inevitable suffering created by the welfare reforms.

Of course, when preaching to the nation the biggest spin in political history, when claiming that most sick and disabled people are capable of work, it was essential to give some credibility to the argument. To do that, Atos Healthcare were contracted by the DWP, to conduct the fatally flawed WCA. Ministers could then demonstrate just how many of these bogus claimants had been thrown off long-term sickness benefit, and forced to look for work, whilst using state crime by proxy. Any complaints about the WCA were aimed at the private

company, so the politicians could distance themselves from any potential ramifications of their dangerous welfare reform policies.

To justify the welfare reforms, successive governments have referenced two DWP commissioned reports. *The Scientific and Conceptual Basis of Incapacity Benefit* was produced in 2005 by former DWP Chief Medical Officer Mansel Aylward, and former orthopaedic surgeon Gordon Waddell, when funded with £1.6million by the American corporate healthcare insurance giant, then known as UnumProvident Insurance. This commissioned research was the evidence used to justify the use of the totally discredited biopsychosocial (BPS) model of assessment, as used for the WCA, which all claimants must endure to gain access to minimal State financial support when too ill to work.

However, the modified BPS model of assessment is the invention of the healthcare insurance industry, used to resist funding claims for income protection insurance, and was adopted by the DWP when UnumProvident Insurance were official UK government advisers on future '*welfare claims management*'.

Mansel Aylward is very influential and has toured the world as an acknowledged 'expert', lecturing about the value of the BPS model as more and more nations adopt similar assessments to limit welfare funding. However, by 2012, Mansel Aylward had changed his mind and confirmed that he now considered the BPS model to be "*unsatisfactory*" as it "*no longer addresses the real needs of disabled people and the exclusion of disabled people from society*". So the co-author of the DWP policy based commissioned research, used to justify the use of the BPS

model for the WCA, has changed his mind. But the DWP continue to use the WCA when demonstrating that reducing the welfare budget, regardless of need, is their only priority.

More disconcerting is the fact that distinguished academic research by Professor Tom Shakespeare and colleagues, not commissioned by the DWP or funded by a notorious American insurance company, identified in 2016 that the Waddell and Aylward BPS model of assessment had “*no coherent theory or evidence behind this model*” and demonstrated “*a cavalier approach to scientific evidence*”. I have never before seen academic research condemning the work of other academics so strongly, whilst citing my research and exposing the BPS model as having no authentic authority or credibility.

Another significant DWP commissioned report, used to justify the welfare reforms, was “*Reducing Dependency, Increasing Opportunity*” as reported in March 2007 by former city banker, David Freud. Commonly known as the “*Freud Report*” this was another DWP commissioned report that claimed that 1 million claimants of Incapacity Benefit could be removed from the 2.68 million total of claimants, and was another DWP commissioned report that was to be subsequently discredited by academic excellence.

By May 2007 Professor Danny Dorling exposed the identified flaws in the Freud Report. It seems that Freud had “*got his numbers wrong*” and had misinterpreted his own references. So, there never was going to be the predicted massive fall in claimant numbers, as Incapacity Benefit claimants were migrated to the new ESA when using the WCA.

The DWP had based their future welfare reforms on two totally discredited DWP commissioned reports, and hundreds of thousands have suffered, and many thousands have died, with Coroners inquests now linking suicides to the WCA. Ennobled, never elected and appointed as the DWP Shadow Minister for Welfare Reform in 2009, in 2010 David Freud was appointed as the DWP Parliamentary under Secretary of State for the Coalition government, and was reappointed as the DWP Minister for Welfare Reform in the 2015 Conservative government. This totally unqualified man was given far too much authority, and any funding cut he recommended was adopted by the DWP, regardless of the inevitable human consequences. Savage sanctions were his idea.

More distinguished academics, such as Professor Martin McKee, will tell you that the austerity measures introduced by the Coalition government in 2010 are “*a political choice and not a financial necessity*”. But how many people know of his work, or the revealing evidence offered by many academics who are not commissioned by the DWP to create policy based research, as used to justify the inevitable preventable harm created by the welfare reforms and austerity measures.

This is the limitation of academic research, always published in academic journals, which the general public don't access. Therefore, the book “*Cash Not Care*” was created over a period of seven years of independent research, to offer access to academic excellence to the general public, and to sick and disabled people in particular. Since publication in September 2016, “*Cash Not Care*” has been adopted by a

number of Professors working in social policy, and recommended to their students, and has been supported by the disabled community.

According to Bernadette Meaden of Ekklesia: *“The current government’s Work, Health and Disability Green paper takes us further down this road [to private healthcare insurance] as Theresa May has appointed John Godfrey as her Director of Policy, previously corporate affairs director at the insurance company Legal and General. In that capacity in 2015 he outlined a private insurance policy, “a form of cover for people who are unable to earn because they fall sick”. If people who have worked for decades find that when they become too ill to work the welfare state offers them the equivalent of Jobseekers Allowance, such insurance will begin to look more attractive, even necessary”.*

You’d better make sure that any adopted or enforced future private healthcare insurance policy will actually pay out when a claim is made... Don’t be surprised if it doesn’t. Thank you.

Relevant references:

Research by Mo Stewart, published via ResearchGate:
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mo_Stewart/publications

State Crime by Proxy: most recent report
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314045256_STATE_CRIME_BY_PROXY_corporate_influence_on_state_sanctioned_social_harm_An_independent_report

Book: *‘Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state’* Mo Stewart 2016
Published by New Generation Publishing in September 2016, and available from various online bookshops and suppliers:
<http://bookshop.blackwell.co.uk/bookshop/product/Cash-Not-Care-by-Mo-Stewart/9781785077838>
<https://www.waterstones.com/book/cash-not-care/mo-stewart/9781785077838>
<https://www.whsmith.co.uk/products/cash-not-care-the-planned-demolition-of-the-uk-welfare-state/9781785077852>
https://www.amazon.co.uk/d/Books/Cash-Care-planned-demolition-UK-welfare-state/178507783X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1492101971&sr=1-1

Book reviews of 'Cash Not Care':

<http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/disabled-researchers-book-exposes-corporate-demolition-of-welfare-state/>

<http://www.independentliving.co.uk/guest-blog/cash-not-care-reviewed/>

<http://www.aberdeenaction.com/reviews/review-cash-not-care/>

<http://voxpolygonline.com/2016/09/15/landmark-book-released-to-expose-government-welfare-policy/>

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/books/reviews-new-and-noteworthy-3-november-2016>

<https://katharinequarmby.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/review-of-cash-not-care-mo-stewart-new-generation-publishing-2016/>

'Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state'

London book launch, October 2016: Recorded via Periscope (42 minutes)

<https://www.pscp.tv/w/1OwxWqXloAWGQ>

Welfare Weekly: links to articles by MS

Welfare reform is killing people, but the Tory press don't want you to know: 22nd Feb 2017

<http://www.welfareweekly.com/welfare-reform-is-killing-people-but-the-tory-press-doesnt-want-you-to-know/>

Demolition of UK welfare state planned with corporate America: 5th March 2017

<http://www.welfareweekly.com/demolition-of-uk-welfare-state-planned-with-corporate-america/>

American 'disability denial factories' flourishing in the UK: 16th March 2017

<http://www.welfareweekly.com/american-disability-denial-factories-flourishing-in-the-uk/>

Disability News Service: links to MS research and opinion

Disabled researcher's book exposes 'corporate demolition of welfare state'

<http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/disabled-researchers-book-exposes-corporate-demolition-of-welfare-state/>

History month launch hears of Cameron's 'broken promise' to disabled veterans

<http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/history-month-launch-hears-camerons-broken-promise-disabled-veterans/>

Mental health charity sparks concerns after Unum link-up

<http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/mental-health-charity-sparks-concerns-after-unum-link-up/>

Unum bragged about 'driving government thinking' on incapacity reform

<http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/unum-bragged-about-driving-government-thinking-on-incapacity-benefit-reform/>