

Kendall's performative callousness

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Liz Kendall claimed yesterday that the benefits budget will fall by £5 billion by 2029, which is mysteriously the supposed sum by which it is being suggested that the Office for Budget Responsibility thinks Rachel Reeves will miss her balanced budget targets in 2029.

The OBR projections for the economy are, I can guarantee, wrong. They are not only wrong, but are massively so. Every budget for four years hence is. That's a statement of fact. National budgeting cannot even come close to being that accurate. There are vastly too many factors involved for there to be any chance that such a forecast is right within £50 billion or more that far out. After all, who knows what will happen in the meantime?

Nonetheless, Liz Kendall, in an act of performative cruelty delivered with such obvious delight that she could not stop quite literally shouting all day, even when she reached television studios, decided to deem all people under the age of 22 fit and healthy for work, even when very obviously they are not. And she deemed a great many more people to not have needs requiring support to ensure they can quite literally live.

The plan is that large numbers of people - maybe a million or more of them - who receive Personal Independence Payments (PIP) will have some or all of the daily living expenses element of their support withdrawn.

The claim is that this will remove an obstacle to work, which is where, apparently, dignity in life is to be found. Kendall obviously knows nothing about the many shit jobs people are forced to take on minimum wages, working for overstressed and abusive managers, themselves overworked and overstressed by organisations - including the DWP - to achieve goals that have as their core objective the dehumanisation of those who work for them.

Kendall, callously and with indifferent contempt, refused to provide the details of who will be impacted yesterday. My confusion on this point when listening to her was not by chance. It was created by her choice. The result is massive stress for many people least

able to manage that stress.

But they can do the maths. If £5 billion is to be saved, some from under 22s, but most from about 1 million PIP recipients, then each such PIP recipient involved will be maybe £4,000 a year worse off.

Kendall is a very wealthy women. This sum is maybe a weekend away with a shopping trip thrown in for her. A little discretionary spending, in other words. For the average PIP recipient - and I know what I am talking about from personal experience - this is a sum more than big enough to break a household budget to the point where making ends meet becomes virtually impossible, not least because many of those living with disabilities have significantly higher costs of living than other people do, of which fact it would appear that Kendall is entirely unaware.

The commentary offered by Kendall to justify her actions, including the claim that the benefits system prevents people from working - which is completely untrue in the case of PIP because it is payable independent of a person's employment status - was profoundly offensive. It played to the lowest common denominator of the Reform agenda, which denies that such a thing as mental ill health exists. My anger at her behaviour is real, unlike her faux outrage.

Any Labour MP is free to vote for this if they so wish, but they should forever thereafter hang their heads in shame, whilst carrying a heavy burden on their shoulders for the rest of their lives, because they will be responsible for the calamitous consequences of this action. I will not forgive them.