

Labour is becoming the enemy of the vulnerable

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Labour is delivering its sickening messages as fast as it can right now. The one that has its MPs most worried right now is the news that disability benefits are going to be subject to significant onslaughts, presumably to fund defence spending.

Starmer apparently said last night in defence of this plan, which will fall mainly on the vulnerable claimants of Personal Independence Payments (PIPs), the total payments of which are increasing significantly, saying, [according to the Guardian](#), that the current system was “discouraging people from working”.

They added that he noted:

The numbers of young people out of work meant “a wasted generation”, with one in eight young people not in education, employment or training. “The people who really need that safety net [are] still not always getting the dignity they deserve.

“That’s unsustainable, it’s indefensible and it is unfair, people feel that in their bones,” he said. “It runs contrary to those deep British values that if you can work, you should. And if you want to work, the government should support you, not stop you.”

Starmer also said:

“This is the Labour party. We believe in the dignity of work and we believe in the dignity of every worker, which is why I am not afraid to take the big decisions needed to return this country to their interests whether that’s on welfare, immigration, our public services or our public finances.”

Let me unpack that.

First, it emphasises what Labour has been saying of late, which is only working people matter. Unless you are a cog in the machine, Labour thinks you are unaffordable, a burden and a cost to be reduced. This is, of course, pure neoliberal thinking. [Elon Musk would be proud of it](#). This is a policy of dehumanising those with disabilities, which those with PIPs have, because, as many tales told on this blog and elsewhere make

clear, it is very hard to claim. From my own experience I know how hard it was for someone with Parkinson's to get it. Labour has not the slightest concern for such people. It is as if ministers have had an empathy bypass.

Second, if there are so many young people with disabilities, the role of Labour is not to berate them or to pretend that they are faking their situation. It is to ask why that is the case. In fact, this goes for the population as a whole. Could it be, for example, that well over four decades of ultra-processed foods might be the cause of this problem, and that we have a population that is being progressively poisoned by our food industry to the point that many simply are unable to work? The evidence for this is very strong, but Labour is in complete denial of it, both on the issue of benefits and in the NHS. The cost of that denial is reaching the point where action is demanded, but the required action is not to punish the victims, but is instead to ban the processes that are making people sick, even though they do happen to deliver considerable profit for the manufacturers of toxic foodstuffs.

Third, Labour was never about the dignity of work. It was set up to deal with the exploitation of the worker, and not to extol the virtue of work, come what may, even if it degraded and abused the person forced to undertake it. What Starmer is defending is the right of the employer to extract value from the person who they engage because that person is given no choice but to work through their suffering because Labour is planning to deny them the benefits that they need.

Once upon a time Labour stood up for people. Now it stands up for those who abuse them, ministers included. They really are charlatans who are a disgrace to their forebears in that party who would, I am quite sure, be ashamed of what these people are doing in the name of the political cause that once had pride, but now is the enemy of the vulnerable.

And, as I keep saying, none of this is necessary. The total cost of the benefits that Labour is so aggrieved about is £70 billion, which happens to be the exact cost of the subsidy to the savings of the wealthy that Labour is happy to provide to them each year without fuss being raised. £5 billion of that subsidy goes to ISAs and £65 billion to pensions. As I note in the [Taxing Wealth Report](#) (page 67):

In total tax and national insurance contribution relief on pension contributions by the highest [10 per cent of] earners in the UK are likely to amount to £38.6 billion per annum (£13 billion of national insurance and £25.6 billion of tax per annum). The remainder of the population enjoy a subsidy of £28.7 million between them. In other words, the wealthiest enjoy a subsidy of more than £8,750 per annum on average towards their pension savings each year and the rest of the population enjoy a subsidy of almost exactly £1,050 per annum each based on the number of taxpayers in 2020/21.

To put these figures in context, the basic universal credit allowance a year is £4,416 per

annum in 2023/24 for a person over the age of 25 and the basic old age pension in that year is £10,600 per annum, or not much more than the subsidy given each year to increase the value of the pension of the top income earners in the country, on average.

If there is a group in society who need to forego their state benefits, it is the wealthy. Labour is choosing to make the poorest and most vulnerable do so. The question that needs to be asked is why that is the case.