

Dear

I am writing to you regarding the Welfare Reform Bill, which will be debated on June 13, and to ask you to demand the government abandons the Bill because it will create poverty, division and despair in our communities, and because this attack on some of the most vulnerable people in our society, is an ideological and vicious attack on the working class by people whose only concern is profit.

The existing attack on working people and the coalition government's failure to have any strategy for growth and job creation is bad enough, along with the dire shortage of jobs, all of which will damage the future life chances of thousands, not least young people – this will result in thousands forced into joblessness, poverty and despair.

But to add insult to injury the government is proposing £18 billion of cuts to welfare benefits while big business is awarded a £24 billion tax break, and that is disgusting – The government is feathering the nests of the rich while attacking the poor.

Some of the most vulnerable people in society are vilified as malingerers and scroungers, yet benefit fraud costs us, according to the DWP, £1.5 billion, but unclaimed benefits account for a massive £16 billion.

Add to that the tax gap from unpaid and evaded tax, estimated by the Tax Justice Network to be over £120 billion, and your government's plans can only be described as stealing from the poor to give to the rich.

The government has suggested that the Bill is “to simplify the benefits system in order to improve incentives to work”, yet there is clear evidence carried out by the British Social Attitudes Survey that shows “work morale is actually stronger in countries with more generous welfare states”.

The study of 13 countries in Europe, North America and Australasia found that “Britain has the weakest work commitment of all these countries”. Norway had the highest level of work commitment; it also had the most generous welfare state, along with Sweden.

Research author, Ingrid Esser states: “it is clear that work morale has not been undermined by generous welfare states. Given the political controversy that

has raged about this issue, this is an important finding . . . it appears to be quite possible to maintain strong work morale within a generous welfare state.”

If people feel like the welfare system demeans them and signifies failure they will experience low personal worth and react against the system that oppresses them.

It is therefore entirely logical that more conditionality, more stigma, and a low financial reward will decrease work morale.

The government’s plans will exacerbate disincentives to work by further stigmatising and degrading those on benefits, which will ultimately result in increased discrimination against the most vulnerable in our society.

There are real barriers to work – none of which have been addressed by the government.

These issues are access to affordable childcare – which this government has already made worse with its cuts to Sure Start.

Low pay prevents people going to work – the minimum wage, for the last three years, has risen below the rate of inflation, while transport costs are soaring, making it unaffordable for many to get to work.

Employer discrimination from lack of awareness of intermittent health conditions to outright discrimination is rife – employers see those with disabilities as a burden. With the governments cuts to legal aid these issues will become even harder to tackle.

Your government’s Bill is an affront to democracy and decency and will open the doors to mass exploitation by the private sector of the most vulnerable in society.

Your government is unravelling our welfare system in an ideological attack on working people will damage lives, and I, along with millions of others will hold you and your party wholly responsible for that.

As Mark Serwotka said recently: It's the mark of a civilised society to support people when they are in need, whether they are ill, disabled or unemployed. Welfare is there to provide a decent existence. "

Your government's proposals are the opposite of that.

Yours sincerely