

Welfare for who?

A welfare reform bill is due to be considered in Parliament at the end of March which contains a wide range of new regulations which will put more conditions on job seekers, lone parents and sick or disabled persons claiming benefits.

Incidentally, the bill also contains various ‘get out’ clauses for the Government as well as sweeping clauses which will allow the Government to repeal any act or regulation which contradicts the new Bill. At the same time, nowhere in the bill does it question the adequacy of the existing benefits. Currently, Job Seekers Allowance is paid at less than £10 a day, if it had increased with earnings over the past 30 years; the rate for a single person over the age of 25 would be more than £100 a week.

With millions already kicked off Incapacity benefits and onto Job Seekers Allowance, thus swelling the number of ‘unemployed’, who will benefit from this new reform bill? It’s definitely not claimants.

Key areas of the bill include:

- Privatising more of Jobcentre Plus to companies on ‘payment by results’ schemes
- Forcing US style workfare schemes called ‘Work for your benefit’ – forcing people to work for a quarter of the minimum wage
- Increased data sharing between government agencies, police, prison services and health services and employment agencies

The bill doesn’t make any effort to provide support to get into jobs with fair pay and decent condition or set out to secure adequate incomes for those who have been made redundant or unable to find work, such as in times of recession.

What this means for Glasgow is the same across the country. Many will be forced to work when they are either incapable due to long term sickness or to take roles which do not match their skills or requirements. As public funds continue to be siphoned off, those employed in the public service sector will inevitably be made redundant from services which are desperately needed and the work contracted out to “save money”. Already, services are being handed over to companies in the private sector, such as Glasgow libraries and public attractions now being managed by Culture and Sport Glasgow, companies more preoccupied with cutting corners to increase profits than providing an effective or even adequate service.

The Bill essentially signals the end of the principle that those in need deserve help and those who are sick deserve to be looked after. Instead, the message is that the Government will engineer conditions to provide free labour for the capitalists. However, more disturbing is the blatant manner and openness with which they are actively encouraging the profits of private companies to the detriment of the safety, security and general wellbeing of those whom they say they serve with their best interests in mind.

← This article uses parts of the London Coalition Against Poverty’s The Welfare Abolition Bill information pack. See it along with other resources at:-
www.lcap.com

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