

Letter from Colin Small to Mr Colin Beattie MSP September 2014

Dear Mr Beattie

I hope your visit to the Benefits Cuts Support Group proved informative. Certainly the opportunity to speak directly to an MSP was most welcome.

As I am sure you are aware the 'disabled' vote will play a key role in the independence referendum and could be the deciding factor between a YES or NO vote.

My own opinion is that currently the SNP are making huge mistake - Welfare Reform is not just the Bedroom Tax. It is PIP and Work Capability Assessments, Sanctions, Welfare to Work Programmes, media propaganda, and the contempt that anyone who has to deal with the DWP has experienced and I don't think the SNP are adequately dealing with these matters.

Those suffering from either mental, physical or both disabilities have been treated appallingly for years by the UK Government and the private companies they have hired while at the same time. This has been over the same period that UK Ministers and politicians have time and time again shown themselves to be morally bankrupt, corrupt and their policies incompetent.

I would point out that early day motion 295 in Parliament as far back as 2012 highlighted

(extract) 1,100 claimants died while under compulsory work-related activity for benefit and that a number of those found fit for work and left without income have committed or attempted suicide;

Any search through Hansard going back years reveals that MP's including the SNP (who supported the above motion) have been fully aware of the way the disabled in the UK have been treated. This treatment continues to this day and those in the disabled community that are not simply trying to survive on a daily basis are more than just angry over this. We want things to change.

This anger includes not just those directly affected by health problems but for every disabled person there are those that have had to pick up the pieces from Welfare Reform – family, friends, carers, support workers, healthcare professionals, charities, and third sector organisations. We have votes and so do all of the people who have seen decent people being treated with utter contempt.

I doubt that's it's even possible to know definitively how many YES votes will be cast as a result of this anger but it will be significant and the Independence decision may very well depend not on votes cast for financial or nationalistic reasons but on those from people just wanting to be treated with some dignity.

This will be a double edged sword for the SNP, both before and after the vote, if you do not grasp the significance and depth of the feeling in the Disabled community.

Currently the evidence is that the SNP don't. Scotland has this opportunity to start afresh, to bring integrity, decency and most of all accountability into its Government and this is the message you need to take back to Holyrood. Start as you mean to on - we want change, real change not more of the same from Holyrood.

Colin Small