# Parliament security sparks outrage by confiscating disability rights book during PIP debate



Amid the ongoing debates regarding disability benefits, a recent incident at the UK Parliament has heightened tensions between disabled activists and security forces tasked with maintaining order at the venue. Three activists—Paula Peters, Andy Mitchell, and a woman referred to as Anna—faced intrusive questioning and a concerning confiscation of political materials as they attempted to observe discussions regarding cuts to personal independence payment (PIP).

The activists were taken aback when a parliamentary security officer confiscated not only their political leaflets but also a copy of *The Department*, a critical book authored by John Pring, the editor of Disability News Service. The book sheds light on the harrowing links between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the deaths of numerous disabled benefit claimants—an issue that has provoked significant public outcry and concern. Anna remarked, "It was literally what we were going to hear MPs talk about," highlighting the vital relevance of the book in the context of the debate.

The security staff justified their actions by labelling the confiscated items as "too political". This has raised questions about what constitutes permissible literature within the parliamentary estate. Peters expressed her frustration, saying, “We are disabled people, disability activists, and you’re treating us like criminals. This is not OK.” Such policing of activists and their materials represents a troubling escalation in the restrictions surrounding public discourse on policies affecting disabled individuals.

This incident is symptomatic of a broader atmosphere of hostility towards dissenting voices, particularly regarding austerity measures which have been linked to a tragic increase in deaths among disabled individuals. The book *The Department* provides an in-depth examination of these systemic issues, corroborated by personal accounts from twelve individuals who have tragically succumbed due to DWP policies. As austerity measures continue to expand, the fallout from such policies has left indelible marks on the most vulnerable in society.

Despite the parliamentary press office confirming that there had been no recent changes to policies governing what can be taken into the parliamentary estate, it was notable that the same group of activists had earlier faced no issues when passing through security at another parliamentary building, Portcullis House. The inconsistency in the application of security measures has only added to the activists' feelings of being under undue scrutiny.

The implications of these cuts were starkly addressed during the recent debate on PIP. Veteran Labour MP Diane Abbott highlighted the harsh realities associated with reducing financial support for disabled individuals, warning that such measures not only diminish the quality of life for those affected but could ultimately lead to devastating psychological impacts. Fellow MP Rachael Maskell echoed these sentiments, stressing the need for solidarity with disabled people facing such dire circumstances.

Sir Stephen Timms, the minister for social security and disability, defended the necessity of these cuts, arguing that the government aims to make PIP costs more sustainable while addressing rising expenditures tied to the benefit. Yet, the advocates maintain that the costs of such austerity are borne by the most vulnerable, raising crucial ethical questions about the direction of social policy in the UK.

In light of this incident, activists such as Peters, Mitchell, and Anna stand firm in their commitment to advocate for the rights of disabled individuals and ensure their voices are heard in the corridors of power. They have articulated a clear determination that, regardless of security obstacles, they will continue to challenge austerity policies and demand accountability from lawmakers. As Peters concluded, “They can take all the leaflets and badges and books they like, but it won’t stop us; we have a right to be in parliament and lobby MPs.”

The future of activism in the UK Parliament may very well hinge on how these attempts to suppress essential discussions around disability and welfare reforms are navigated in the coming months.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6, 8
2. Paragraphs 3, 4
3. Paragraph 7
4. Paragraph 7
5. Paragraph 7
6. Paragraph 8
7. Paragraph 8

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/parliament-security-confiscates-political-book-on-dwp-deaths-from-activists-before-pip-cuts-debate/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/parliament-security-confiscates-political-book-on-dwp-deaths-from-activists-before-pip-cuts-debate/> - An article detailing an incident where three disabled activists were stopped by parliamentary security while attempting to attend a debate on disability benefit cuts. Security confiscated political materials, including a book titled 'The Department' by John Pring, citing them as 'too political.' The activists expressed concerns over invasive questioning and the suppression of information related to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and its links to deaths of disabled benefit claimants.
3. <https://www.foyles.co.uk/book/the-department/john-pring/9780745349893> - A listing for 'The Department: How a Violent Government Bureaucracy Killed Hundreds and Hid the Evidence' by John Pring. The book examines the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and its role in the deaths of disabled individuals, highlighting systemic issues and the impact of austerity measures. It includes personal stories of twelve individuals who died due to DWP policies and the subsequent fight for justice by their families.
4. <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-department-john-pring/1144546496> - A product page for 'The Department: How a Violent Government Bureaucracy Killed Hundreds and Hid the Evidence' by John Pring. The book investigates the DWP's involvement in the deaths of disabled benefit claimants, detailing systemic failures and the consequences of austerity policies. It features in-depth research and personal accounts, aiming to shed light on a significant but often overlooked issue.
5. <https://www.nsun.org.uk/book-review-the-department-how-a-violent-government-bureaucracy-killed-hundreds-and-hid-the-evidence/> - A review of 'The Department: How a Violent Government Bureaucracy Killed Hundreds and Hid the Evidence' by John Pring. The review praises the book for its thorough research and accessible writing, highlighting the personal stories of individuals affected by DWP policies. It emphasizes the book's role in validating the experiences of disabled people and its contribution to understanding systemic issues within the DWP.
6. <https://www.thecanary.co/trending/2024/09/02/dwp-protest-parliament/> - An article covering a protest by disabled activists who staged a sit-in outside Parliament after being denied entry to deliver copies of 'The Department' by John Pring. Despite prior arrangements, security refused to allow the books into the parliamentary estate, leading to a peaceful demonstration. The activists aimed to ensure MPs received the book, which critiques the DWP's role in the deaths of disabled individuals.
7. <https://www.vitalsource.com/products/the-department-john-pring-v9780745349909> - An eTextbook listing for 'The Department: How a Violent Government Bureaucracy Killed Hundreds and Hid the Evidence' by John Pring. The book provides an in-depth analysis of the DWP's actions leading to the deaths of disabled benefit claimants, exploring systemic issues and the impact of austerity measures. It includes personal narratives and research findings, aiming to expose a significant public policy issue.