

Personal Statement by Pensions Minister, Ros Altmann

19 March 2016

I am extremely shocked by the news of Iain Duncan Smith's resignation and the way he has behaved.

Having worked alongside him as a minister in the Department for Work and Pensions, I have seen that he championed the very package of reforms to disability benefits he now says is the reason he has resigned.

I simply cannot understand why he suddenly chose to quit like this when it was clear that Number 10 and the Treasury had told him they were going to pause and rethink these measures. I'm particularly saddened that this really seems to be about the European referendum campaign rather than about DWP policy.

From a personal perspective, for months I have been silenced by him and what I have said has been strictly controlled. I have had to accept that this is part of being in Government, but am therefore horrified to see him abuse the freedom to take sides the Prime Minister has generously offered to ministers. In particular, I was astonished that he attacked his own government for producing what he called "dodgy dossiers" on the EU situation, which simply sought to set out the facts about this vital issue for our country's future.

He seems to want to do maximum damage to the party leadership in order to further his campaign to try to get Britain to leave the EU.

As far as I could tell, he appeared to spend much of the last few months plotting over Europe and against the leadership of the party and it seemed to me he had been planning to find a reason to resign for a long time.

I have found him exceptionally difficult to work for. It has been a hugely challenging time for me as he was preventing me from speaking to the public and has often been obstructive to my efforts to resolve important pension policy issues such as on women's pensions.

I am looking forward to working with new Secretary of State, Stephen Crabb.

Pensions Minister, Ros Altmann