

# Examen d'accréditation d'interprètes de langue française 2021 – Anglais (SERIE 1)

## Anglais / discours 1

Réunion : Conférence de presse

Date : Novembre 2018

Durée : 10:43

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Difficulté : niveau 1

Introduction : Intervention du Rapporteur spécial sur la pauvreté extrême et les droits humains.  
Il sera question de la pauvreté au Royaume-Uni.

Éléments à fournir (vocabulaire) :

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Benefits       | Prestations       |
| Welfare policy | Politique sociale |

Thanks very much...

So, I do want to start, first of all, by thanking the British Government and by thanking all the officials who have made my visit smooth and easy.

The main thrust of my report is to contrast the great prosperity in Britain - the fifth largest economy, one of the leading financial capitals in the world, a thriving industrial and financial center - contrast it with the fact that a fifth of the population, 14 million people, are living in

poverty, four million of those, and more than 50 percent below the poverty line, and one and a half million are destitute. The child poverty rates are staggering and are predicted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and others to go up significantly over the next couple of years.

The picture, however, is much more complex than just rattling off statistics. What has surprised me is the extent to which there is close to unanimity in terms of the observations by think tanks, by a lot of media commentators, by independent authorities like the National Audit Office, by a whole range of parliamentary committees and others, that poverty is really a major challenge in the United Kingdom, and that not nearly enough is currently being done to address the challenges.

On the other side, what I found in my discussions with Ministers is basically a state of denial. The Ministers with whom I've met told me that things are going well, that they don't see any big problems, and they are happy with the way in which their policies are playing out. But it's of course not the story that I heard in my travels in England. What I saw - food banks, schools, community centers, job centers, libraries and elsewhere - is a lot of misery. A lot of people who feel that the system is failing them, a lot of people who feel that the system is really there just to punish them, people who feel that despite the fact that they are really down and need a little bit of help, that they could always have counted on in yesterday's Britain, they are just not able to get.

And so, what I've tried to do in my report is to ask why? What's the motivation for the main policies that seem to be problematic in the benefits area? And the answer that most people come up with is: "Ah, it's austerity". In other words, the implication is that there was no choice, there was a financial crisis, there was a need to make immense budget savings and benefits was one of the key areas where that could be done. The truth is that, first of all, there haven't been a great many savings from what I can see. A lot of it has involved the transfer over from one set of items to another, a lot of it has been pushed off to the community, to families, to emergency rooms, and to even governmental emergency services, rather than in the benefits system itself.

I don't see that the motivation has been to create a more compassionate, a more caring benefits system, and one that actually produces better life outcomes for people. Instead, the motivation is, very clearly, I believe, an ideological one. I don't say that in a necessarily critical way, because governments have different ideologies, governments think of social welfare in different ways, and this government and its predecessor have both been remarkably successful in bringing about a revolution in British welfare policy.

They have transformed the nature of the system and particularly the underpinnings of it. The problem that I see is not in terms of the worthy objectives. It is true that employment is a key to getting people out of poverty. It is true that the previous system was confused and confusing. It's true that there are efficiencies that have been found. But what's also happened is that the system

epitomized by universal credit - about which I'll talk more in a moment - but not at all limited to that, is in fact driven by the desire to get across a simple set of messages.

The State does not have your back any longer. You are on your own. The Government's place is not to be assisting people who think they can't make it on their own. The Government's place is an absolute last emergency order. And so, what goes along with that is the sense that we should make the system as unwelcoming as possible, that people who need benefits should be reminded constantly that they are lucky to get anything, that nothing will be made easy. And linked to that is what I would think of as the command-and-control approach reflected in universal credit: that sanctions should be harsh, should be immediate, should be painful.

And yet, all of the evidence that I've seen indicate that sanctions are usually counterproductive. That they create fear and loathing among claimants. That they impose immense hardships on people who might have been five minutes late for an appointment, might have **screwed** up in some other way. But instead of trying to work through with people who are already under immense stress, there is this sudden ton-of-bricks approach. And the ton of bricks goes from 3 months to 6 months, and can go into the years, and I think that sort of punitive approach to benefits is utterly inconsistent with the essential underpinnings, not just of what I would see as human rights, but of the whole British sense of community and the values of justice and fairness.

My report also focuses on Brexit, which is an issue that seems to be of current interest. I make the argument, which is not going to be all that unfamiliar, that almost no matter what outcome Brexit achieves, other than the utopian one which is most unlikely to happen, is going to leave Britain worse off economically. There is going to be a fall in GDP. There is going to be a fall in tax revenues.

The problem is that there has been almost no discussion about what impact that's going to have on low-income groups. They will, if present policies are maintained, bear the brunt of the economic fallout from Brexit. And to the extent that most commentators think that the Brexit vote itself had an element of economic alienation, of insecurity underpinning it, in fact Brexit is going to make that worse because those in the lower income levels are really going to suffer.

Thanks very much!