

COUNTER INFORMATION

NO. 7 SEPT/OCT 1985 FREE

British Rail are mounting an all-out attack on railway workers' jobs and conditions.

Driver - only trains, closure of Springburn, Glasgow and Swindon Engineering works, job cuts for signal and communications technicians, all backed up by ruthless sackings.

The ASLEF - NUR division must be overcome. Different groups of railworkers must unite to spread the struggle to other sections. Ultimately the strike must spread beyond the railways to other workers.

As the miners strike showed, even powerful groups of workers can't win alone.

THIS IS THE AGE OF THE SLAVE



CLAIMANTS FIGHT BACK !

Everywhere, East and West, the ruling classes are attacking peoples' living standards. Profits are the God, and we're supposed to be the sacrifices.

The Thatcher government's cutbacks in welfare benefits are part of this wider bosses' offensive. Their claimant-bashing includes the benefit cuts for the young unemployed, and for young claimants in bed and breakfast, and now the Fowler Review - this proposes the abolition of the State

Earnings Related Pensions Scheme plus many other cuts.

However claimants aren't powerless, we can resist - the articles below describe claimants fighting back in Glasgow, Luton and London - this could and SHOULD be happening everywhere. The recent riots in Birmingham show many unemployed people won't accept poverty and police harassment lying down.

But all too often the professionals from the poverty

industry - social workers etc. - control any protests about cuts. Real discontent is smothered and diverted into reformist single issue campaigns, linked to promoting the Labour Party.

Such an approach is useless. Labour are totally committed to the profit system and would attack our living standards just like the Tories. Remember Healey wielding the axe under the last Labour government?

As for the 'Right to Work' - who really WANTS a boring

job working for some obnoxious boss? Why should we settle for a few extra crumbs?

We live in a world of potential plenty. With production for need, not profit, everyone could have the necessities of life - food, clothing, housing, heating etc. - completely FREE, as a right.

As claimants, we need to link our struggles with those of employed workers. Today's struggles should be steps

towards the day when people seize control of all the world's resources, and run things differently, without any rulers or leaders, to benefit everyone. With violent mass resistance to the state breaking out worldwide, from the British coalfields to Capetown, from Birmingham to Barcelona, this is no longer just a Utopian pipedream, it's a prospect which is giving our rulers real nightmares.

SCUPPERING THE SNOOPERS

IN GLASGOW

THE S.C.C.U. (Special Claim Control Unit) were operating in Castlemilk in Glasgow recently.

Alerted by a sympathetic member of the union at the local D.H.S.S. office local Anarchists aided by other community activists formed an anti-snooper support group. The activities of the group were conducted vigorously, both overtly and covertly.

The group quickly produced thousands of leaflets warning claimants of the S.C.C.U. presence. Sections of the group then proceeded to set up advice clinics and emergency phone numbers where instant advice and representation was given. The D.H.S.S. office was picketed daily and strong representation was made to the D.H.S.S. union and manager to refuse to co-operate with the snoopers.

As expected the manager refused to comply with our request but I am pleased to write that the union refused to co-operate leaving the S.C.C.U. to find the claimants' files themselves.

The anti-snooper support group then conducted a TAKE UP campaign where the local post offices and unemployment office were picketed and claimants informed of their entitlement and supplied with forms to apply for that entitlement. This action was the most successful as it won entitlements for claimants which totalled thousands of pounds.

The S.C.C.U. themselves were photographed and followed everywhere, even to their flats and hotel rooms. During their stay in the area they unfortunately met with a series of mishaps and just plain bad luck. Tyres in their cars mysteriously went flat or they had their windows broken. One investigator was arrested on suspicion of being a burglar. (If you see someone acting suspiciously outside your house you should phone the police...)

After three weeks of fruitless searching for victims the S.C.C.U. finally admitted defeat and left the area with their tails between their legs. A lesson must be learned from this. In any area where these people show up you must harass them as we have done in Castlemilk. The message must be loud and clear: S.C.C.U. GET OUT OR WE WILL KICK YOU OUT.

IN LONDON

Claimants in London have been taking action against the obnoxious DHSS 'super snoopers', the Specialist Claims Control Units members, or SCCUM.

Claimants from Hackney write: 'We at Hackney Claimants Union feel the campaign against the SCCUM has been very successful and encouraging. By being at Arcola St. DHSS from 7 am onwards on 25th March, we were able to get photos of the team which have now been printed on to the SCCUM leaflet. We also had fun chasing them arounds bit on bikes and in a van, followed by a tour of the local estates where we broadcast the message loud and clear from a megaphone that the SCCUM were here and how they could be rendered useless and harmless by refusing to co-operate with them...'

For several weeks before the arrival of the snoopers, we held campaign meetings, and

leafleted Spurstowe Terrace dole office, post offices, nurseries, women's centres, tenants groups, cafes and bookshops.

Members of the CPSA (the DHSS clerical workers Union) attended our meetings and produced some anti-snooper stickers. Most clerical workers walked out on strike in support, on the first day the SCCUM arrived.

On June 24th the SCCUM were due to go to another DHSS office in Hackney, at Bonhill St., but they never turned up due to opposition.

The SCCUM were no more welcome in Tottenham. They arrived at the local DHSS office on July 8th, to be met by 60 demonstrators, including a dozen DHSS workers. The Tottenham Claimants Union organised daily pickets for the next 9 days, then every 2 days. A Tottenham claimant writes: 'The SCCUM only returned once 3 weeks later...we put the word round and 8 people went to the DHSS. We accompanied claimants at interviews and the

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NO DISCONNECTIONS!

We do not accept that ANOTHER 1,000 pensioners will die of cold this winter, and that millions of claimants and low-paid workers must struggle to pay bills.

October is 'Right to Fuel' month and there will be many activities to assert that every household has an inalienable RIGHT to fuel supplies, whether or not they can afford the bills.

A major aim is to encourage collective opposition to high electricity and gas bills and threatened cut offs. This includes putting pressure on the workers involved with disconnections to refuse to carry them out.

One of those involved told us that in the miners strike women occupied/lobbied the electricity board and reached agreement to pay their bills at 5p a week ('a reasonable amount') in some cases.



N.E. GAS STRIKE

The following account was sent to us by one of the strikers:

We went on strike at the North Eastern Gas Board in April '85. Workers at Pontefract walked out after being told to perform certain duties, or be sent home without pay. The job in question, known as 'road saw cutting and insertion' had not been agreed to despite several months of negotiations. Therefore NEGAS issued the ultimatum.

Within the week there was over 3000 on strike and gas supplies in certain areas were having to be cut off - not something that many of the public were aware of, due to no media coverage.

To make the strike 'legal' our union, the General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union, held a secret ballot. The result was one of overwhelming support: 73% in favour of continuing the strike.

By the way, by now NEGAS had started sending their feeble lying out to all employees telling us to go back to work. Despite the official ballot it is worth mentioning that the workers at the Halifax depot took it upon themselves to scab despite picketing - so much for secret ballots!

The strike lasted a month and was a good laugh i.e. vans being turned over, dogshit smeared on the locks, setting fire to plastic piping etc., in response to the Gas Board attempting to bring in sub-standard pathetic scab labour.

However, union and management reached a compromise, which at the time seemed like a victory. However it is still a shit dangerous job, but many more workers are now more union conscious and many of my mates now want to be more active in local union activities.



REINSTATE ALL SACKED MINERS

The growing militancy in the Lothians pits, illustrated by 2 recent one day strikes, is encouraging for the local sacked miners. Organising through the Lothians Victimised Miners Association, they hold successful weekly collections outside Bilston Glen and Monkton Hall.

The members of Musselburgh SCEBTA branch have proposed a joint meeting of all NUM, SCEBTA and COSA members from Bilston Glen and Monktonhall to organise a 24 hour strike at the two collieries as part of the struggle for reinstatement of all the sacked miners. But Scottish NUM leaders oppose such strike action.

A sacked Lothians miner stressed that action was needed, the NUM leaders' toothless campaigns would never get everyone's jobs back.

And, he emphasised, more contact is needed between sacked miners from different areas.

'We need to get a national sacked miners meeting. And it shouldn't just be delegates, it should be the rank and file up there speaking' he said.

Sacked miners in Durham and Yorkshire have been contacted and are keen on such a meeting.

Predictably, direct contact between sacked miners from different areas, even on a Scottish basis, is discouraged by the Scottish NUM bureaucrats. They care more about maintaining their own power than about the sacked men getting their jobs back. They don't want rank and file miners from different areas meeting and discussing together outside of the official Union structures. Because that could well lead to the miners realising that the only way forward is to ignore the Union bureaucrats and take control of the struggle themselves.

FREE THE PRISONERS

ON JULY 19th over 100 people demonstrated outside Maidstone Prison in solidarity with Terry French, the Kent miner jailed for 4 years.

In September demos are planned for Brixton Prison and the Appeal Court in support of the 2 Welsh miners serving life sentences. The solidarity action will take place the day Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland have the appeals against their sentences heard.

Around 60 miners and supporters are rotting in jail, and prison sentences are still being passed. The weak N.U.M. motion passed at the T.U.C. - calling only for a 'review' of the prisoners' cases by a possible future Labour Government under Scab Kinnock - does little to help.

Practical solidarity is needed NOW, leading towards mass industrial and other action to free the class war prisoners.

Info on solidarity activity, addresses etc., from:

FITZWILLIAM PRISONERS AID COMMITTEE C/O 4 ROCKINGHAM STREET FITZWILLIAM, NEAR PONTEFRACT, W. YORKS. Donations are much needed.

COUNTER INFORMATION aims to spread knowledge of resistance in all aspects of life. We receive and publish reports from correspondents. From time to time these may not be in complete harmony with our revolutionary ideas. A case in point is the idea that greater involvement in the Unions is necessarily a good thing. Workers have to beware of the role of Unions as negotiators over their rate of exploitation and that Unions inhibit the development of class solidarity through emphasising and reinforcing the sectional organisation of workers. They also seek to direct grievances through the 'proper channels', and stamp down on the self-organisation of workers' resistance.

We also emphasise that struggles will achieve a new dimension, and pose a threat to the system itself, when divisions such as employed/unemployed, work/community, national/international, are replaced by new bonds of solidarity and the will to win.

COUNTER INFORMATION, BOX 81, C/O 43 CANDLE-MAKER ROW, EDINBURGH. (16/9/85)

B & B BACKLASH IN LUTON

In response to the new DHSS bed and breakfast regulations which have made many young people homeless, a B & B Claimants Action Group was set up to organise resistance.

The campaign started with over 40 people staging a sit-in at the local DHSS. After a couple of hours we were removed by the police.

Three council meetings have been disrupted, highlights including a Tory having a plastic bag put over his head and a Labour councillor getting smacked in the face for calling a protestor: 'a mouthy, little bitch'. Unfortunately at the third meeting, which ended with scuffles and flying cups of tea, one person was arrested and charged with assaulting a Liberal councillor. Council meetings now take place under police protection.

Other activities have included a sit-in at the local Anglia TV office, opposition to the visit of Royal parasite Prince Charles to Luton and leafletting DHSS workers to persuade them not to co-operate with the Government offensive against the unemployed.

FOWLER FOILED

Benefit staff in DHSS offices are refusing to distribute Government leaflets which try and cover up proposed cut backs in benefits. The leaflets are intended to 'inform' claimants about the Fowler Review of Social Security. Staff condemn them as 'deliberately misleading political propaganda'. (info Guardian 16/8)

REMEMBER, REMEMBER...

The 5th November is international 'Stop Business As Usual Day'.

Tottenham Claimants Union are urging all unwaged and unemployed people to picket, leaflet, occupy and disrupt places which cause and profit from our poverty - supermarkets, estate agents, fuel boards, private pension funds etc. etc.

MINERS RESIST

Miners continue to resist the N.C.B.'s attacks. Recently several short local strikes have taken place against sackings, unhealthy working conditions, speed-ups, bonus cuts and threatened suspensions.

And on August 28th the visits to Yorkshire by Coal Minister David Hunt turned into a fiasco - miners at Silverwood, Thurcroft, Barlborough, Manton and Manvers all either

threatened or took strike action to stop him visiting their pits.

On strike in the period July to mid September included: Bilston Glen near Edinburgh, Ireland and High Moor in Derbyshire, Kersley near Coventry, Dawdon Ellington and Westoe in N. E. England, Amthorpe, Barnsley Main, Wistow and Markham Main in Yorkshire.

CLAIMANTS BEWARE!

Claimants beware! The Special Claims Control Unit could be in your area.

It is absolutely imperative that claimants and all organisations which serve claimants differentiate between the DHSS Fraud Squad and the DHSS Special Claims Control Unit (SCUU). They differ only on the degree of ruthlessness in the way they operate and where their funding originates.

The Fraud Squad: These are ordinary members of DHSS staff and are based in every local office. Their main source of information comes from tip-offs from disgruntled or jealous neighbours. When they act on these tip-offs they do so in the most vicious of manners. Claimants are called to the office and often grilled in locked rooms by 2 members of these units. These interrogations are conducted in the most callous of manners where claimants (often single parents) are bullied and threatened into signing incriminating statements. In most cases after investigation and benefits checks by Claimants Unions and Welfare Benefit officers it is discovered that only were the claimants innocent of any fraud but they were actually underpaid.

Special Claims Control Unit (SCUU): This unit differs from the former in only one or two areas but these areas are so fundamental to Claimants Rights that they must be singled out as Public Enemy No.1. They are a group of employees used by the DHSS to travel round the country and their sole remit is to SAVE MONEY at the claimant's expense. It could almost be described in Industrial terms as Piece Work, as their continued existence depends on results. No grassing from disgruntled neighbours or suspicion of fraud is necessary for these scum. They investigate all as a matter of course. All claimants to these people are frauds and they leave no stone unturned in their investigations. Their main area of investigation is centred around one of the weakest sections of society, the single parent, who when assailed by these people have to undergo investigation whose intensity borders on interrogation tactics used by Police Officers. Not content with verbal harassment and spying on its victims, the SCUU will go through your house looking for proof of CO-HABITATION, even to the extent of looking into your litter bin for used male contraceptives.

SNOOPERS IN LONDON CONTINUED

SCCUM were nice as pie. They managed to sneak out after 2 hours and were not seen again. Staff refused to co-operate with them and as far as we know no-one was cut off or intimidated. Leaflets were distributed, urging claimants not to co-operate with the SCCUM, advising people to claim extra benefits, to which many are unknowingly entitled.

Tottenham Claimants Union wrote: 'The real 'fraud' is the non-payment of £10,000 million last year to which people are officially entitled. ALL OF US ARE ENTITLED TO ALL THE THINGS WE NEED. WE DEMAND AN END TO HARRASSMENT, WHETHER BY THE DHSS, FUEL BOARDS, LANDLORDS OR OTHER AUTHORITIES.'

More info from T.C.U., 628 High Rd., London N17.



DHSS INTERVIEWS

There are fairly simple rules to follow if a claimant is faced with either a letter from the Dept. or a visit.

(1) Do not be involved in any discussion with the DHSS alone. Always have either a friend or preferably someone with a basic knowledge of claimants rights.

(2) If you are visited by representatives of the DHSS without prior warning of at least 24 hours then you have every right to refuse to allow

least one days advance warning of a visit from their officers.

(3) Refuse to accept anything they tell you as the truth. It is only their interpretation of the Regulations which they rigidly adhere to during any interview. The ratio of Appeals against DHSS decisions is well over 60% in favour of the claimant which proves that all DHSS offices have a policy of misinformation when it comes to letting claimants know their rights and entitlements.

them into your home. The DHSS must legally give you at