

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE JOBS NOT JSA

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ISSUE 5

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STAKES IS HIGH! 17 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT JSA

This is an exhibition of art (pictures, posters, sound, displays - including some 'banned' work) on the theme of working class struggle, and especially the JSA, organised by a local artists' group called Octopus and NCAJSA. It will run from Monday 7th October, when the JSA is supposed to come in, for about 4 weeks. It is at Units 29-35, Avenue C, Sneinton Market (the re-vamped part opposite the old fruit market). We'll be open Mon and Sat 10am - 4pm, Tues - Fri 12 noon - 4pm. We hope to be able to give out up to the minute leaflets/advice about the JSA. We'll also be open some evenings - the first is on Thursday 10th October from 5.00pm for the official opening party - so come down and meet people from the campaign then - bring your own wine and canapes!

1. You are no longer unemployed, that's right, unemployment no longer exists!! You are now a Jobseeker. With over 90 unemployed to every vacancy in real terms in some parts of Notts, all we need now are Jobs.
2. JSA is not about finding you a well paid secure and worthwhile job. It is about getting you off the dole figures.
3. By forcing you into low paid jobs you will be undermining the wages and conditions of other workers - JSA is an attack on those in work as well as those out of work, we're all in this together.
4. You must be "available for and actively seeking work", this means taking steps every week to find paid work, whether permanent or temporary, and be ready to start work immediately.
5. All new claimants will have to sign a Jobseekers Agreement, as will all existing claimants. Unlike the "back to work plan", the Agreement is a binding document. It will say what you are doing/will do to find work, every time you sign on your efforts will be checked with the Agreement, so make sure you can do what you say.
6. Several vacancies in Notts recently received several hundred applications. We would suggest that you apply for at least 2 vacancies a week, and keep copies! Some claimants since October 7th have received log sheets to record their jobseeking efforts

- Direction will be used to make you do specific things to "improve" your chances of getting a job, i.e. making you get your hair cut, change your appearance, go for that job, go on the training scheme etc. Failure to carry out a direction will lose you your benefits.
8. All previous voluntary training schemes are now compulsory.
9. Sanctions will be much harsher under JSA; what was previously only a 40% stoppage, may now be 100% cut in benefits for up to 26 weeks.
10. If you have been unemployed over 6 months, 7 minutes has been allocated for when you sign on, if less than 6 months, just 4½ minutes. Don't be afraid to ask questions, or think that you have to rush.
11. When you are called for an advisory interview you have the legal right to take a friend and/or advisor with you.
12. For the first 6 months of a new claim you are allowed to hold out for your previous salary level, and similar work.
13. After 6 months you can be pressured into taking jobs which you do not want, and at wage levels liable to cause hardship.
14. If you go for an interview for a job you cannot afford to take, then ask about Trade Union recognition, if there is none, then say you will start a union in the workplace - for all their faults most employers do not want Trade Unions.
15. Ask about sick pay, health and safety - prove that you are not suitable for the job. Ask genuine questions, don't make it look deliberate that you failed the interview - the Jobcentre may check with the employer.
16. If you lose your benefits get advice and appeal.
17. Contact Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre, Advice Groups or your local CAB for advice if you have any questions or doubts.



-fill it in.
7. Jobseekers Direction will be used far more widely than Official Recommendations have been. The

Both Notts Jobs not JSA and Nottingham Campaign Against JSA will be distributing up to date information on JSA as it becomes available. Contact them to get on the mailing lists.

THREE STRIKES PART TWO

In the previous issue of Notts Jobs not JSA we carried an article on the 'Three Strikes Policy'. With all the best campaigns there has to be respect for different backgrounds and views. So below we carry a response from the Nottingham Campaign Against JSA (NCAJSA).

The Nottingham Campaign was formed by claimants, trade unionists and people opposed to JSA. They are an active broad based campaigning group, and we would recommend people in Nottingham to contact them at NCAJSA, PO Box 192, Nottingham NG1 1FJ for information about activities, for help and advice, and to receive their newsletter - if you can afford a donation or a few stamps, great, if not, still get in touch.

We are writing to you regarding your article headed "Three Strikes and You're Out" policy. This was explained to Steve Battlemuch of CPSA when he attended one of our meetings in August 1996 and expressed his and his union's concerns regarding one of our leaflets for claimants. A letter was also written to Rachel Nicholls stating the same and explaining our group's aims (namely the prevention of the implementation of the JSA).

Secondly, we have only decided not to implement "Three Strikes..." because we feel that we do not have the resources to do it effectively. You mislead readers by implying that "Three Strikes..." is intended to incite violence against 'claimant advisors' and that some members of the group are against it. Rather it is a means of making individual 'claimant advisors' who deliberately harass and victimise claimants aware of their responsibility for their actions and not just hide behind the argument that "I'm only doing my job". As you say many of us have been in the position of being unemployed and experienced unfair treatment at the hands of ES and/or BA staff who are, after all, there to provide positive support and advice and not treat claimants as criminals or

scroungers.

Thirdly, we agree with you when you say that claimants and ES/BA staff should work together to abolish the JSA. NCAJSA has been holding open fortnightly meetings since January 1996; we have organised public meetings, leafleted claimants and ES staff in Nottingham explaining how we can work together and picketed, at Steve Battlemuch's suggestion, the ES branch in Alfreton (which was the first in the area to have a full complement of staff who had volunteered to implement the JSA) among other activities. However during this period, we have received little or no support or recognition from the CPSA and all this before the "Three Strikes.." was ever heard of! At subsequent meetings since Steve Battlemuch visited us no-one from the CPSA has attended even though we thought any misunderstandings had been cleared up. Finally, we feel that CPSA seems more concerned with issue of safety screens to protect them from angry claimants than with stopping the JSA. We would like to emphasise that NCAJSA does not advocate acts of violence against ES staff. However, as you know physical and verbal assaults on staff by angry claimants have occurred, and will continue to occur given the savage nature of the JSA as a means of attacking the less powerful members of society that have no union to defend or support them. The CPSA and ES staff cannot reasonably expect claimants to support them in a struggle for security screens to protect them from the unemployed. It is policies such as this that divide us and not the activities of a non-aligned campaign group. We include with this letter a statement which was shown to Steve Battlemuch and explains further our position and other campaign material.

As always we welcome all comers to our meetings to join the campaign, express their views and contribute ideas.

STALAG JSA

The Tories are struggling in the polls, and their knee jerk reaction is to strike out at anybody who they can scapegoat. With JSA the unemployed are the target, but they have not finished yet. Mind you, with New Labour only talking of reviewing JSA - not repealing it, and promising draconian sanctions on young people who refuse to enter their dead-end schemes, the unemployed vote has obviously been written off by the mainstream parties.

Our view is that only by our own actions, unemployed and employed, claimant and ES/BA staff, can we smash the JSA.

As this piece is being written, the Tories are gathering at Bournemouth for their conference when they will announce an extension of Workfare, including Nottinghamshire as one of the areas.

Workfare is simply slave labour, working for your dole + £10. Notts Jobs not JSA totally opposes workfare. If there is work that needs doing then pay the proper rate for the job - not benefits + £10. It is that simple.

What next forced labour camps? Well, one comment I recently received was that JSA was the biggest cutback on the Welfare State since it was created following the Beveridge report. In the 1930's hundreds of thousands of unemployed men were shipped off to labour camps where they were forced to work for their keep. Is that the next policy?

We have said it before - it is not the unemployed who are the problem, the real problem is unemployment. With JSA the politicians are making you the scapegoats for their failure, cutting your benefits by between 0.7% and 60%, while giving themselves a 26% pay rise.

EDITORIAL

With JSA starting on October 7th we will be stepping up the frequency of this newsletter. We intend to carry advice on dealing with JSA, as well as promoting the campaign against JSA.

You can help:- let us know what happens to you; if you can help distribute this newsletter and/or the Nottingham Campaign -contact us.

If you can make a donation to this newsletter please send it to NJNJSa c/o MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts NG18 1EY. Telephone (01623) 424720.

JOBS NOT JSA

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include:-

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If you wish to include any articles or campaigning activities around JSA in the region, please send them to :-

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Beech Avenue Mansfield Notts
NG18 1EY (01623) 424720



The Civil and Public Services Association