

Published by the Nottinghamshire Association of Trades Union Councils

## EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

On 14 February the TUC launched a nationwide campaign on Employment Rights. The campaign will feature in national posters, cinema advertisements and the press.

The TUC is deeply concerned about the conditions in which so many employees work today. According to a recent MORI poll, 70% of British employees think that work is becoming less secure. Many are paid so little that they are eligible for income support from the State; many have to work long, often ant-social hours, with serious implications for family life. Many have little in the way of rest breaks or holidays and no benefits, for example, pensions and sick pay.

In addition, the Cabinet's Deregulation Task Force has

proposed removing the right to claim for unfair dismissal for all companies employing fewer than 10 people. It would, if implemented, affect 3.5 million employees. The TUC believes that the right to claim unfair dismissal should be available to all employees. In Nottinghamshire alone 58,372 workers are employed in workplaces employing less than 10 people.

The campaign is calling for part-time employees to have the same rights as full-time employees. Over 105,000 workers in notts are in part-time positions, with an estimated 35,000 having no right to a holiday.

Issues such as working hours are also highlighted by the campaign. In our area it is estimated that over 1 in 5 of all full-time employees regularly work over 48 hours per week.

On parental leave, the TUC is pushing for the Parental Leave

Agreement as contained in the EU Social Chapter to apply in Britain, ie, this would give the right to every parent to take 12 weeks unpaid leave during the first eight years of a child's life. In Nottinghamshire there are over 150,000 children under the age of eight.

The campaign is also raising the issue of low pay. For example, in Nottinghamshire over 80,000 full-time workers and over 100,000 part-time workers earn less than £4.00 per hour.

There is a simple task which we can all try before the forthcoming General Election. Ask your local candidates where they stand on the issue of workers rights, or long hours, on holidays, on low pay and on Equal Rights for part-timers, and vote accordingly.

Figures for Nottinghamshire

New Constituency	No. of people in workplaces employing less than 10	Part-time workers	No. of part-time workers with no holidays (estimate)	No. of children under 5	No. of children under 8 (estimate)
Ashfield	4550	9314	3105	6165	9248
Bassetlaw	4650	7995	2665	5676	8514
Broxtowe	4451	6128	2043	5802	8703
Gedling	4080	7387	2462	5367	8051
Mansfield	4860	8770	2923	5908	8862
Newark	6064	8808	2936	5230	7845
Nottingham E	5884	8423	2808	6773	10160
Nottingham N	3074	6138	2046	7911	11867
Nottingham S	11249	23096	7699	5533	8300
Rushcliffe	5466	13237	4412	5628	8442
Sherwood	4044	6539	2180	6195	9293
TOTALS	58372	105835	35279	66188	99285

**PUT A CROSS  
IN THE WRONG  
PLACE AND  
YOU CAN KISS  
EMPLOYEE  
RIGHTS  
GOODBYE.**

Whoever You Vote For, Make Sure Employees Win.

## FREE BOOZE FREE FESTIVALS

Last year over £1,000 was raised for Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre by Notts OFFA volunteers attending festivals as volunteer servers under the auspices of the Workers Beer Company (WBC).

Notts OFFA agree to provide a serving team for the bars at festivals where the bars are run by WBC. They allow our team members to get into the festivals for free, with an added bonus of free beer and food at some of the festivals. They also pay Notts OFFA for the teams work - which is usually a 6 hour shift per day.

Notts OFFA is now recruiting volunteer servers for 1997, for which our teams will be at Glastonbury and Reading, Phoenix and many more festivals. If you are interested please contact Notts OFFA at MUWC on (01623) 424720.

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## RECORD PAYOUTS FOR TU MEMBERS

In 1995 trade unions won £323 million in compensation for their members. This is a further increase on previous years.

Among the compensation claims are substantial amounts for sufferers with asbestos related cancers and occupational asthma. The main focus however was occupational stress and repetitive strain injuries, with these areas expected to increase in 1996/97.

The above compensation figure works out at just over £4.00 per member in compensation recovered.

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## MAY DAY ISSUE

**Our next issue is due for publication on May Day. The closing date for articles and letters will be Friday, 21 April.**

You can also help Notts TU News by taking out fraternal greetings for the May Day issue. If we are to continue distributing Notts TU News for free, we need some income. Cost of the ads will be £12.50 for one eighth page, £25.00 for ¼page and £50.00 for ½page. Please send artwork to arrive before 20 April.

Some TU branches are now paying a regular donation of 10p a copy to receive Notts TU News. This helps the newsletter to survive. To find out more phone Ian Juniper on (0115) 9582369.

Notts TU News, % MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 1EY. Telephone (01623) 424720.

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## MAY DAY CENTENARY EXHIBITION

(Copy of letter from Richard Stevens of 41 Holborn Avenue, Sneinton, Nottingham, NG1 4LY, dated 25/1/97)

Dear Brother/Sister

This year marks the Centenary of Nottingham being granted City Status. As part of the City's Centenary Celebrations, Nottingham TUC is organising an exhibition of Trade Unionism in the city and district from the early 1800's to the present day. This will be held in the Community Exhibition Area on the first floor of the Central Library, Angel Row, during the week commencing 28 April - the week leading up to the annual May Day March and Rally on Saturday, 3 May. The Trades Council feel that this is an ideal

opportunity to publicise the Trade Union Movement locally. The Exhibition Area is quite small, but is well-placed to attract the attention of visitors. In addition to wall space, we have obtained a lockable glass case for various objects, and a table for publicity materials. It is hoped that we will be able to have members of the Trades Council staffing the Exhibition and available to answer questions throughout most of the week.

Therefore we are appealing for the loan of materials for display in the exhibition, preferably of a local nature, but including more general items such as union badges, journals and other memorabilia. Photographs are especially welcome - perhaps a photograph of your Union's banner. The covers or first pages of documents, agreements, membership cards, minute books, etc. could be photocopied and we could laminate the copy for mounting on the wall. Although we hope to staff the Exhibition most of the time, and the Library has its own security staff we cannot guarantee the safety of all items. Consequently, anything of value -historical, sentimental or otherwise - will either be placed in the locked case, if appropriate, or it should be photographed or photocopied.

We are also appealing for present-day publicity materials, including, if you wish, membership application forms.

Please contact me at the above address, or telephone ( daytime, Mon - Tue, 9123239), (daytime, Wed - Fri, 9156870). Alternatively, contact Ian Juniper at 118 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3HL (daytime Tel: 9582369) or Leo Keely (daytime Tel: 9703135).

Thank you. Yours sincerely,

Richard Stevens, on behalf of the Nottingham TUC May Day Centenary Exhibition subcommittee.

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If you want to be heard - speak in

# UNISON



*Regional Secretary*  
**Nick Wright**

*Regional Convenor*  
**Vicky Easton**

**UNISON East Midlands Region**

15 Castle Gate, Nottingham NG1 6BY. Tel. 0115 956 7200

## REPORT FROM NOTTINGHAM

The last week of February saw a successful whistle-stop tour of Nottingham County by sacked Liverpool docker Terry Barrett, making a last minute substitution for the indisposed Freddy Roberts, who mumbled something about being home-sick (anyone would think he was from Middlesbrough). Terry took the field by storm, scoring with a wide range of strikes on target about the on-going dispute as the sacked 500 men look to grind out a result in anticipation of the final whistle from the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company - they have refused to leave the field without.

Among the spectators were the FBU Notts Brigade Committee, UNISON Social Workers (Child Protection), staff including NATFHE members and students at the Nottingham Trent University Clifton stadium, Lenton Branch Labour Party, two Spanish students visiting Loughborough College, UNISON Ashfield AGM with away supporters from the NUT, NUM and GMB, Mansfield Labour Party GC, Nottingham City & Notts County UNISON, and Nottm North Labour Party GC. Terry also spoke to students on courses at the Hygate Trade Union Education Centre, and delivered a tactics talk to the Trades Council EC. Although complaining of fixture congestion, two further appearances were organized for the Saturday with an afternoon kick-off at a national Troops Out Movement meeting in Sheffield, and an evening fixture at a fund-raising testimonial at the Italian Community centre back in Nottingham, where he did a lap of honour after a celebrity appearance.

The result was that a fee of nearly £6,000 was transferred from Nottingham to Liverpool (which thinking about it is what some of our brothers in the PFA earn in a week) including an inflationary transaction of £5,000 from East Midlands UNISON, and getting on for £400 being taken on the gate at the Saturday evening fixture, with the music over the tannoy being pumped out by Stevie B. and Dr. Richard. In all fairness, I'll hold my hands up to Terry who played a blinder, but all credit to everyone involved. As Bro Lambert from the TGWU put it on our badges in 1984: "SOLIDARITY CAN WIN". Hats off also to the Nottingham Evening Post which printed the letters from our PRO publicising both Socials and to the Italian Community Centre for letting us in to play.

HOWEVER - we have to take each tour as it comes: if you want to fetch them down again, either give me a ring on 958 2369 (and ask for Ian, don't yer know) or contact:-

Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, c/o T.G.W.U., Transport House, Islington, Liverpool, L3 8EQ  
Phone: 0151 207 3388

Fax: 0151 207 0696

Internet No.

**GCOYNE@CIX.COMPULINK.CO.UK**

and/or organise a workplace weekly levy. Don't let them be defeated in extra time - make the employer experience the Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty.

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## YOUNG PEOPLE, BENEFITS AND TRAINING - PART 2

Losses Greatly Outweigh the Gains.

There have been some policy gains. More 16 year olds are staying on in education; and more young people are gaining qualifications equivalent to an NVQ level two or above rose from 12 percent of leavers in 1991 to 31 percent in 1994.

However, even this gain must be qualified by the considerations that official statistics show that in the Nottingham area between April 1994 and December 1994 only 47 percent of trainees completed their training; and all together 59 percent found work.

The training and benefits systems for young people must be altered to incorporate more incentives and fewer disincentives if increased numbers are to enter and complete their Youth Training placements. In particular, there is a clear need for substantially increased training allowances; better supervision and support for trainees, especially those with special needs; and more incentives to employers to provide training placements of higher quality and real job opportunities to young people who complete training.

Against the gain of more young people staying on in education and gaining qualifications must be balanced some very clear losses. First youth employment remains high and is certainly not falling, even though numbers of 16 year olds are declining because of the so-called 'demographic time bomb'; second, the youth training guarantee is not being fully delivered; third, the system unfairly penalises young people who cannot live at home; and fourth, and most worrying of all, the result of limiting the access of 16 and 17 year olds to benefits, and the levels of benefits paid to under 25's, is the poverty and deprivation evidenced in this Report. The unemployment rate amongst 18 - 25 year olds has remained high. In July 1995 there were estimated to be 3,416,500 or 11.5 percent of the total economically active people who are unemployed.

Since 1988 there have been many changes in benefit entitlement for those under 25 years old. Most of these changes have been to the claimants detriment.

### Sept 1988

Social Services Act 1988 raises the normal minimum age for claiming Income Support (IS) from 16 and 17 years (some exceptions for the most vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds for whom benefit entitlement remained). Also introduced a lower rate of IS for those aged under 25 compared with the rate for other adults.

### June 1989

Extra help for 16 and 17 year olds in receipt of IS who have to live independently (includes those genuinely estranged from their parents or in physical or moral danger); this group now get the personal allowance appropriate for 18 to 24 year olds.

### June 1989

16 and 17 year olds Housing Benefit claimants increased to the same personal allowance as 18 to 24 year olds.

### July 1990

Higher rate of IS for disabled 16 and 17 year olds introduced.

### April 1992

IS made available for 16 and 17 year olds leaving local authority care.

### April/July 1995

Government stated its intention to restrict benefit to 16 and 17 year olds who are estranged from their parents. New guidance issued in July. This increases the emphasis on the need to contact parents, whether or not the young person is living with them, to confirm the evidence provided.

### October 1996

Housing Benefit for under 25's to be restricted to average rent for shared accommodation.

### October 1996

Jobseekers allowances restricts access to payments for 16 and 17 year olds as these will no longer be made automatically, claimants will have to show there will be hardship. The Jobseekers Allowance will also limit unemployment benefit to 6 months, formerly it was 1 year; this will particularly affect under 25's as there rates of IS are already lower than the other adults.

The main change concerned the eligibility of 16 and 17 year olds to income support in 1988. This following a 1987 manifesto commitment to deny benefit from any young person under 18 who deliberately chose to remain unemployed. A number of amendments were made in the light of the operation of this rule in practice so that some of the most vulnerable were brought back into benefit. More recently, however, the government has introduced and is about to introduce measures "which will further curtail benefit to young people". (Letter to Alan Simpson MP, 12 April 1996, from House of Commons Research Division).

The Income Support system also incorporates a boost to benefit entitlement called "Premiums" such as those for people with disabilities or people with children. These premiums are denied to people with no roof over their head.

Income Support payments can be further reduced by deductions from benefits at source. Some claimants will therefore be forced to live below the poverty level. Deductions are made for a wide range of reasons including:

Leaving work without just cause

Repayment of Social Fund crisis or budgeting loan  
Rent arrears

Council Tax arrears

Water Rate arrears

Fuel debts

Maintenance contributions under the Child Support Act

Court fines under the Criminal Justice Act.

Unemployed people also suffer from a disadvantage in the administration of the Income Support system. It is paid fortnightly in arrears so an unemployed person who does qualify for Income Support will have to wait at least two weeks before getting any money.

### The Impact in Nottingham

These policies have a cruel impact on Nottingham. Nottingham Youth Peoples Benefit Campaign - a group of volunteers working for and with young people have produced three surveys on the implications of the policies at an individual level.

'It Makes You Sick',

grew out of concern expressed by hostel workers who reported a high illness rate among residents, many of whom could not afford to eat. Nottingham Hostels Liaison Group took up the issue by carrying out its own research, which not only confirmed this concern but reinforced evidence that many young people were indeed inadequately nourished for long spells of time. It further highlighted the inadequacies of the system of benefits. Among the findings from the diaries and other survey data we discovered that:

Income was between nil and £35.00 per week and the majority spend between £1.00 to £2.00 a day on food. There was a heavy reliance on convenience food, particularly when cooking facilities were lacking or food might be stolen. 35 percent reported a variety of physical or mental disorders ranging from fractures to illnesses such as diabetes, epilepsy, chest and skin infections. 12 percent of young women reported that they had previous

miscarriages.

THE OVERWHELMING CONCLUSION DRAWN FROM THE DIARIES WAS THAT LACK OF SUFFICIENT INCOME WAS A FACTOR IN POOR EATING HABITS AND THAT THERE WAS A CAUSAL LINK BETWEEN POVERTY AND ILL HEALTH.

**'It Still Makes You Sick'**

was a survey to find out the types of problems young people were experiencing as a result of poverty. This involved finding out about their weekly incomes and outgoings, health problems and finally asking respondents how they would describe the effects of poverty on their lives.

All participants were under 24, 51 percent are between 16 and 17 and just under half are young women. All are unemployed or on Youth Training and a few young women were pregnant or had small children. Most lived in temporary accommodation, either in hostels or Board and Lodge dwellings; about a third had their own flat and 16 percent said that they were homeless or staying with friends.

The following figures emerge from this survey:

Over a quarter (26%) have a NIL income

The amount of housing costs paid from their basic living allowance ranges from £2.00 to £15.00

Fuel Bills are exceedingly high - sometimes as much as £13.00 for electricity with water charges as high as £7.23

Court Fines range from £3.00 - £15.00 per week

Eleven say that they spend under £10.00 per week on food whilst most do not mention it at all  
Thirty different complaints and illnesses were recorded

Outgoings exceed weekly income, even when food is not mentioned.

**INCOME**

Just over half said their income was between £21.00 and £35.00 per week. Five percent were recorded as having income between £36.00 and £50.00. A small number had over that amount.

**'Beg, Borrow or Steal'**

is the latest of the surveys produced by Nottingham Young Peoples Benefits Campaign. The message of this report is simple. Many vulnerable young people beg, borrow or steal when they have inadequate income on which to survive. The Income Support rate of £36.15 per week for under 25's is not enough for those living without parental support.

Nottingham Young Peoples Benefits Campaign does not condone offending and is particularly concerned for the victims of crime. However we have to recognize the difficult social circumstances which can push young people in that direction. The results of this survey and the findings of other organisations demonstrates that the social security policy for under 25's is causing hunger, ill health, homelessness, family breakdown and offending. Financial penalties imposed by the courts on young people who are already poor create a vicious circle of debt and despair.

The failure of this benefits policy is detrimental and costly. We believe that any saving to the Social Security budget is far outweighed by the extra demands on the Health, Housing and Social Services as well as the various departments within the Criminal Justice System. The human cost is even greater and will have long term consequences.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**

JOHN HANNAM

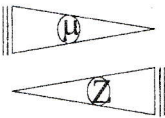
Tel: (0115) 9823823, EXT 4019

OR

UNA MULRENAN

Tel: (0115) 9856777.

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**MESTCUPIA (TU) & ZO (TU)**  
ETHICAL SUPPLIERS OF:

VEGAN BANNERS, TU BANNER PHOTOS, BOOKLETS AND LEAFLETS ON DISABILITY/GREEN ISSUES ETC, ART FOR CHANGE, PLUS MORE

FOR MORE DETAILS WRITE (ENCLOSING SAE) TO:  
MESTCUPIA AND ZO, BOX 32, CARLTON,  
NOTTINGHAM NG4 4EX. TEL: (0115) 953 2388

**Extracts from The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists by Robert Tressell (Number 62 in Waterstone's 100 "Books of the Century")**

**Part III - The causes of poverty - The Great Money Trick**

"Come on here. Prove that money is the cause of poverty. It's one thing to say and another to prove it."

"Money is the cause of poverty", said Owen

"Prove it."

"Money is the cause of poverty because it is the device by which those who are too lazy to work are enabled to rob workers of the fruits of their labour."

"Prove it!"

"All right, I'll show you how the Great Money Trick is worked."

Owen opened his dinner basket and took from it two slices of bread but as these were not sufficient, he requested that anyone who had some bread left would give it to him. They gave him several pieces which he placed in a heap on a clean piece of paper, and, having borrowed the pocket knives they used to cut and eat their dinners with, he addressed them as follows.

"These pieces of bread represent the raw materials which exist naturally in and on the earth for the use of mankind; they were not made by any human being, but were created by the Great Spirit for the benefit and sustenance of all, the same as were the air and the light of the sun."

"Now", said Owen, "I represent the capitalists and all these raw materials belong to me. It does not matter how I obtained them or whether I have any real right to them; the only thing that matters is that all the raw materials which are necessary for the production of the

necessaries of life are now the property of the Capitalist Class. I am that Class. All these raw materials belong to me!"

"Now, you three represent the Working Class; you have nothing - and for my part, although I have all these raw materials, they are of no use to me - what I need is - the things that can be made out of the raw materials by Work; but as I am too lazy to work for myself, I have invented the Great Money Trick to make you work for me. But first I must explain that I possess something else beside the raw materials. These three knives represent all the machinery of production. And thee three coins - taking three half-pennies from his pocket - represent my Money Capital."

"Alright, we understand, you are the whole Capitalist Class and we are the whole Working Class."

Owen proceeded to cut up the slices of bread into a number of little square blocks.

"These represent the things which are produced by labour aided by machinery from the raw materials. We will suppose that three blocks represent a week's work. A week's work is worth one pound represented by a half-penny."

"Now this is how the trick works. You three are all in need of employment so I am going to invest all my money to give you plenty of work. I shall pay each of you one pound a week for producing three of these square blocks. For doing this work you will receive your wages; the money will be your own to do as you like with and the things that you produce will of course be mine to do with as I like. Each of you take a machine and as soon as you have done a week's work you shall have your money."

The Working Classes accordingly set to work and the Capitalist Class sat down to watch them. As soon as they had finished, they passed the nine little blocks to Owen who placed them on a piece of paper at his side and paid the workers their wages.

"These blocks represent the necessities of life. You can't live without some of these things, but as they belong to me, you will have to buy them from me; my price for these blocks is - one pound each."

As the Working Classes were in need of the necessities of life and as they could not eat, drink or wear the useless money, they were compelled to agree to the kind Capitalist's terms. They each bought back and at once consumed one-third of

the produce of their labour. The Capitalist Class devoured two of the square blocks, and so the net result of the week's work was that the kind Capitalist had consumed two pounds worth of the things produced by the labour of others, and reckoning the squares at their market value of one pound each, he had more than doubled his capital, for he still possessed the three pounds in money and in addition, four pounds worth of goods. The Working Classes having each consumed the pound's worth of necessities were again in precisely the same condition as when they started work - they had nothing.

The process was repeated several times - the Working Classes worked and consumed all their earnings, the Capitalist consumed two as much and his wealth continually increased. Suddenly, the Capitalist took away the Machinery of Production (the knives) and informed them that due to over production all his store houses were full of the necessities of life and he had decided to close down the works.

"And what are we supposed to do now", chorused the Working Class

"That's not my business", replied the Capitalist, "I've paid your wages and provided you with work. I have no work at present, come back in a few month's time."

"But what about the necessities of life? We must have something to eat."

"Of course you must and I shall be glad to sell you some."

"But we ain't got no bloody money!"

"Well you can't expect me to give you my goods for nothing! You didn't work for me for nothing you know. I paid you for you work and you should have saved something: you should have been thrifty like me. Look how I have got on by being thrifty."

So now we know how it's done. Save from you meagre pay and you will have plenty when you have no work. It is as we have always suspected. If you already have then you shall have more. If you have nothing you must be content with that and no more.

Decent wages, a fair day's pay for a fair day's wage, and the reintroduction of Wages Councils coupled with a minimum wage tied into the European decency threshold will prevent the abuses of Capitalism.

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## SUPPORT FOR THE IRANIAN OIL WORKERS GATHERS MOMENTUM

For almost two decades the Iranian working class has been living and working under the most repressive and reactionary regime witnessed anywhere before. It's not only the long hours, low wages, no health and safety at work and continuous rapid rises in the cost of living, but the very fact that the daily lives of millions are being dictated to the minutest details according to Islamic laws. For the past 18 years this has made life an absolute hell and resulted in thousands being imprisoned, tortured or executed, and millions fleeing the country.

Despite all this the last two years have been marked by rising confidence amongst workers, demanding better wages and conditions, and by spontaneous uprisings in the south of the capital, Tehran, and several other cities. There has been a strengthening of a militant mood.

The oil workers have been organizing protest marches and strikes since August 1996 when the Energy Minister promised a 35% wage rise and gave assurances on the other demands including collective bargaining. As nothing materialized, oil workers in 5 refineries across Iran took two days warning strike action on December 18th and 19th and gave another month's grace for the oil authorities to accept their demands.

On Sunday 16th February at 8 a.m. around 2,000 oil workers gathered outside the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in Tehran and sent their representatives to settle their demands. They came out empty handed and were ordered to disperse. As they refused the Islamic anti-riot guards attacked their assembly and, after wounding many, arrested several hundred.

Thanks to the efforts made by the Worker-Communist Party of Iran a campaign was set up after the December strike action to prevent the isolation of workers and, through organized international support, to pressurize the Iranian authorities to concede the Oil Workers demands and accept their right to collective bargaining.

The campaign, organized in 15 different countries from Australia and Japan through to European Countries, the USA and Canada, has achieved a significant amount of support amongst large and small labour organisations. International support for the oil workers and pressure on the Iranian Government and the NIOC will have a tremendous effect. We are asking you to support this campaign by:

1. Writing/faxing a letter to the Iranian Embassy and NIOC's office in London demanding recognition of the oil workers demands and condemning the ant-working class policies of the Islamic public regime.

NIOC(National Iranian Oil Company)  
NIOC House  
4 Victoria Street  
London SW1 0NE  
Telephone (0171) 340 5000  
Fax (0171) 340 5123  
The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
16 Princes Gate  
London SW7  
Telephone (0171) 225 3000  
Fax (0171) 589 4440

2. Passing a resolution in your Trades Council, Trades Union branch/organisation. Please send copies of letters/resolutions to the address below.
3. Publicising news of the strikers and their demands.
4. Sending financial support. Please make cheques out to "FAR" and send to the address below.

If you need further information or you require a speaker for your meetings, please contact us at.

**BM BOX 1919,  
LONDON WC1N 3XX**  
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## PHOENIX FAMILY CENTRE CLOSURE

Parents from the Phoenix Family Centre in St. Anns, Nottingham have felt forced down the road of organising an auction to raise money to try and keep the centre open 5 days a week.

Eighteen years ago the Count Council had closed the original Sycamore Nursery as it was then called. It was then reopened as a co-operative called Phoenix before it was finally taken back under council control when Labour won the council election.

The axe has been hanging over Phoenix for many years because of the state of the building. Even though the centre is situated in the most deprived ward in the county and is an integral part of the city's child protection service, little has been done to improve the state of the buildings. Four days before Christmas the council announced the closure of Phoenix and also of the Broomhill Family Centre in Mansfield.

Within 24 hours of the closure announcement, parents at both centres were organising to fight the closures, contacting councillors, organising petitions and planning meetings. Strong messages of support were also received from social workers, health visitors and paediatricians, which were relayed to the council.

By early January, parents, with the support of UNISON, had mapped out a strategy to campaign for extra money from the County Council.

On the 15th January a 300 strong lobby took place in the social services budget meeting. Although the vote was lost 13 - 15, it did show parents that a number of councillors were feeling the pressure.

The campaign was stepped up with intensive lobbying of councillors, and parents at the Broomhill Family Centre organised several overnight sit-ins.

A social Services committee meeting in early February was brought to a halt by a noisy protest by parents from the public gallery. They demanded and got an immediate meeting with the committee chair.

At the Labour group budget meeting in early February an extra £150,000 was allocated to the two family centres, to retain a limited service. This must be seen as a partial victory, given that originally the centres were facing total closure. This is a big step forward, and testament to the parents determination to stop the closures. It shows what can be achieved when people come together to fight back.

Notts County UNISON has been unequivocal in its criticism of the County Council cuts, whilst acknowledging that the Tories are the arch-villains. Labour politicians all over the county have stood by whilst the Tories have stolen £70 billion from Local Authorities, at the same time giving £30 billion in tax cuts.

**Jean Thorpe  
Joint Convenor Social Services  
Notts County UNISON**

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## C O N F E R E N C E      T I M E

With the conference season upon us we include Alan Rowland's guide to conference speak. This was originally printed in the GCHQ Trade Unionists newsletter "Warning Signal". There are some more additions.

### Conference Speak

A guide to the new delegate describing what is said by delegates at Conference and what is actually meant by them.

What they say	What they mean
<u>Opening Gambits.</u>	
"Brothers and Sisters..."	"I'm a socialist and proud of it!"
"Comrades..."	"I'd like you to think I am a hard-line leftie.."
"Colleagues..."	"Don't confuse me with those two above..."
.....	.....
"I have two points to make"	"I can't count above two but two of the many points I wish to make are...."
"The Motion is self-explanatory."	"I will read it to you anyway.."
"The last speaker has covered most of what I was going to say."	"I'm going to say what I planned to say anyway.."
"I had not planned to speak to this Motion..."	"I will repeat my one point in three almost identical statements between ramblings.."
"I shall try to be brief.."	"Please excuse me when I fail and run over the red light..."
"My position on this matter is well known.."	"I'm going to tell you anyway.."
"...and finally...."	"I am about half way through.."

## THE UNION MOVEMENT UNDER A LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Sid Platt (Chair, Midland Regional TUC) introduced the conference by saying that with the prospect of a General Election within the next few months, discussion was essential on the themes of workers rights in Britain, and links with the Labour Party. He anticipated that if the Tories were returned, there would be "more of the same, yet worse"; while the election of a Labour Government would be "problematic", and the purpose of the Conference was to address some of the "tensions".

He also announced that one of the planned speakers, Angela Eagle, MP (Labour frontbencher) had that morning apparently had problems with her car, and would not be appearing - a case of the Eagle having blown, perhaps. (This platitude is entirely attributable to the reporter/typist).

Roger Lyons, MSF General Secretary, kicked off on the theme of trade unionism as a question of civil/human rights, with the biggest issue being "insecurity". He condemned the lack of legal protection at work, and observed that by contrast in the Republic of Ireland, the rights of Union representation were enshrined in the Constitution. Even MacDonald's recognized Unions in Dublin.

He emphasized that the first Queen's Speech under a Labour Government should provide for the restoration of union rights at GCHQ; and for early legislation on the 13 different rights contained in the Labour Party's "Road To The Manifesto" - this

was a minimum demand. The TUC proposals for rights to representation at work as contained in "Your Voice At Work" were enshrined as Labour's Manifesto commitment. In this context, he was adamant on the need for "unity" - "we can't afford the luxury of arguing over details" as "we have not won everybody over".

He cited other legislative initiatives as part of an ongoing agenda:- the Dignity at Work Bill, introduced by Ann Campbell to outlaw bullying at work; the Offshore Safety (Protection Against Victimisation) Act, passed prior to the 1992 General Election; and mentioned the Heating & Ventilation Contractors Assn agreement which had

incorporated the Working Hours Directive.

The unions would not be giving up their 50% vote at Labour Party Conference. In this context, he referred to a dispute between MSF and Terence Conran, style guru and New Labour advisor, who had derecognized MSF at his design museum because they had accepted an agreement with the management that was 'too good'; apparently, the MSF reps shouldn't have accepted it but should have notified Conran personally that his management had exceeded their brief.

He finished with a flourish on the theme of "rights" and "social partners", the notion of "muscle-power" now being outmoded, and remarked how

# FEVER

## Saturday 29th March

### Skgy Club

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- DJs -

Pablo/Jazz Spirit/Jonathon/ Phat J/Johnny C

The Backroom - The Drum Session

10.30 - LATE

Members and Guests £3.50

Concessions £3.00

Percentage of takings to the Anti-Fascist Election Fund in Notts

people held on to ideas long after their sell-by date, and finally anticipated the passing of a Fairness At Work Act, which would also contain a clause to outlaw age discrimination.

Professor Roger Seifert, Keele University,

started by saying that he agreed with everything Roger had said on the problems unions faced - apart from his conclusions. Calls for "Bills of Rights" proceeded from a position of weakness, while the trade union movement had preceded the formation of the Labour Party and their primary function - which the Webbs had eloquently delineated - was collective bargaining. Bringing pressure on the Government was a secondary function, which in any event, rested on their exercising power at the workplace.

Unions did not represent "individual workers" in the sense that Bills of Rights implied -

indeed, with their emphasis on the individual, they negated the whole purpose of collective organisation. It was significant that the repeal of anti-union legislation had not even been mentioned by Roger (Lyons). Looking to France and Germany was not a solution as workers there were being sacked even in industries where workers were strongest, and their individual rights offered no protection. Rights without collective power were meaningless - indeed, they served to lull workers in to a false sense of security.

He sensed that no such thing as the "national interest" - indeed, even in the event of a Labour Government being elected, as there was no identity of interest between multinational corporations and the working class. He posed the question: Why do the Tories bring in anti-union legislation? - to stop workers fighting back. There was no such thing as good/bad employers - employers were only as "good" as trade unions were able to force them to be good.

The repeal of the anti-union legislation was absolutely essential, while the legal right to organize strike action was the key determinant of rights. No rights would be given - workers' only serious power was to be able to stop work. The contract of employment was itself a legal fiction between powerful employers and weak employees. Collective action, in which the wages struggle itself was pivotal, actually fuelled the struggle for better health, education, etc.

The movement had been constitutionalised out of its will to fight - the last Labour Government had attacked the

unions more than it had the employers. The priorities under a new one had to be the repeal of anti-union legislation; collective action; and the resolution of unemployment - Bills of Rights were technically unenforceable at the place of work and a diversion from the real priorities.

In the Workshop discussions and the plenary session which addressed the contributions made by the two Rogers, it has to be said that the activists present identified themselves markedly more with the arguments of the academic than with those of the apparatchik. Indeed, considerable scepticism was expressed at the conventionally received defeatist wisdom, according to which workers were afraid to take on employers.

All in all, this was a valuable initiative by the West Midlands CATUC and the debate it gave rise to needs to take place across the trade union and labour movement as a whole in advance of whatever Government gets in in 1997.

(Report by Ian Juniper, 25/12/96).

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TUC 

**PUT A CROSS  
IN THE WRONG  
PLACE AND  
YOU CAN KISS  
EMPLOYEE  
RIGHTS  
GOODBYE.**

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pen, drawing a cross in one of the cells of a grid on a document. The grid is partially visible, and the hand is positioned on the right side of the frame.

**WHOEVER YOU VOTE FOR, MAKE SURE EMPLOYEES WIN.**

In the last few years, job insecurity has mushroomed in Britain.

The reasons are obvious.

Independent surveys show that people are working harder, for longer.

Over 8 out of 10 new jobs are either part-time or short-term.

At the same time, rights at work and legal protections have been cut back.

Good employers know this is bad: for their companies, the economy and the country as a whole.

They understand that investment in people pays for itself in higher skills, higher motivation, and higher productivity.

Yet some politicians refuse to see it. They believe British employees should have even fewer rights.

Who decides? You do.

## **Bring the TUC's employee rights campaign to your locality**

*Ask your election candidates and canvassers*

- Should people at work have guaranteed rights to three weeks paid holidays every year?
- Should people have the right to refuse to work more than 48 hours every week?
- Should Britain sign the social chapter so that everyone in Europe is guaranteed minimum employee rights?
- Should part-time employees have the same rights as full-timers?
- Should there be a national minimum wage to combat poverty pay?
- Should parents have rights to unpaid time off when they need to care for their children?

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Campaign updates and resources on the TUC web site:  
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