

DIARY DATES

Monday 13th March

Chesterfield & District TUC

7.15 p.m. in NEDDC Council Chamber

Saltergate, Chesterfield

Tuesday 28th March

Derbyshire OFFA AGM

7.30 p.m. in NEDDC Council Chamber

(See below for details)

Wednesday 29th March

TU/Unemployed Liaison Committee

5.00 p.m. at DUWC, 54 Saltergate,

Chesterfield.

Monday 10th April

Chesterfield & District TUC

7.15 p.m. in NEDDC Council Chamber

Saltergate, Chesterfield.

Derbyshire OFFA AGM

Tuesday 28th March 2000

7.30 p.m.

North East Derbyshire D. C.

Council Chamber

Guest Speaker:

Ken Cameron:

General Secretary,

Fire Brigades Union.

ALL WELCOME

The Trade Union/Unemployed Liaison Committee

meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 5.00 p.m.

in the Chesterfield Centre to plan and develop

Campaign activities.

We would be pleased to see you there.

Secretary: Richard Easson,

Tel: (01246) 208272

INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres

Main Office: 54, Saltergate, Chesterfield, S40 1JR.

Tel: (01246) 231441 Fax: (01246) 551529

e mail: duwc@shucan.shu.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.shu.ac.uk/shucan/duwc/index.htm>

WHO'S WHO AT THE CENTRES?

CO-ORDINATOR: Colin Hampton

WELFARE RIGHTS ADVISORS: Joe Knight

(Amber Valley), Sarah Roy (Bolsover), Vacancy

(Chesterfield), Derrick Skinner (N E Derbyshire).

ONE FUND FOR ALL: Bob Pemberton

TRADE UNION SAFETY COMMITTEE:

John Knight,

70, Saltergate, Chesterfield, (01246) 231441

SINGLE PARENT NETWORK: 70, Saltergate,

Chesterfield, (01246) 231441

ADMIN. WORKER: Fran Street

WHERE TO GET ADVICE

CHESTERFIELD 54 Saltergate Mon to Thurs 9.00am to 3.30pm. Friday 9.00am. to 12 noon	CLAY CROSS Rm 8, Youth Suite Adult Education Centre Monday 9.30am to 12.30pm	HOLMEWOOD Community Centre Wednesday 10.00am to 12 noon
KILLAMARSH Youth Centre Sheffield Road. Tuesday 10.00am to 12 noon	ALFRETON Alfreton House, High Street (01773) 832237 Mon & Thurs 9.30am to 3.30pm.	BELPER The Cottage Project 16, Chapel Street Tuesday 10.00am to 2.30pm
HEANOR "Salcare", Fletcher Street Wednesday 10.00am to 2.30pm	SHIREBROOK 44, Patchwork Row (01623) 748161 Mon, Tue, Wed & Fri. 9.00am to 11.30am	BOLSOVER Assembly Rooms Wednesday 1.00pm to 3.30pm.
CRESWELL Regeneration Office Elmton Road Thursday 1.00pm to 3.30pm.	PINXTON Community Centre Tuesday 1.00pm to 3.30pm.	

Solidarity

Bi-Monthly Bulletin of Derbyshire

Unemployed Workers' Centres:

ONE FUND FOR ALL

Vol. 3 No.7

March/April 2000

ONE FUND FOR

ALL ANNUAL

MEETING



Ken Cameron, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, who will be the guest speaker at the Derbyshire OFFA AGM.

The Annual General Meeting of the Derbyshire One Fund For All (OFFA) will be held in the Council Chamber of North East Derbyshire District Council, Saltergate, Chesterfield on Tuesday 28th March 2000 starting at 7.30 p.m.

All Trade Unionists and supporters are welcome, so put this date in you diary now.

BACK ON

YOUR BIKES

AGAIN?

Gordon Brown Announcement

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, revived the old idea that the only reason why the unemployed have no work is their refusal to travel.

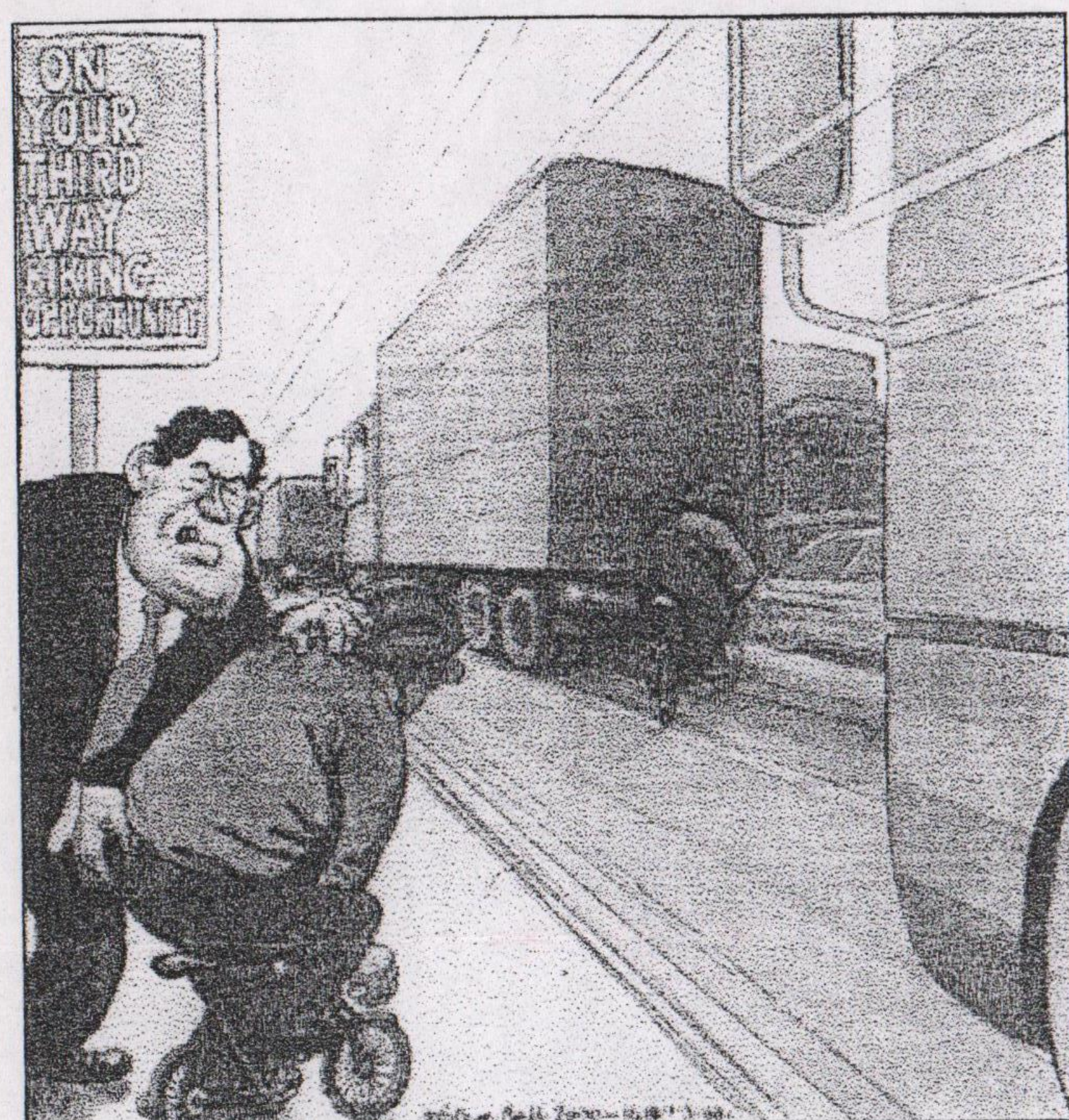
Plenty of Jobs Nearby

The Treasury claim that with 1.1 million unemployed and 1 million vacancies there is no reason why there should be any unemployment. They add that there are vacancies 'near' to most jobless people.

Is This True?

The vacancy figure is based on dubious research carried out in the Tory era which claimed that for every job advertised in the local Jobcentres there were two others that were not notified. If advertised vacancies stand at 330,000 then, so this argument goes, there are over 1 million vacancies. We have never accepted this argument and we believe it is just another attempt to persuade the public that the unemployed are workshy scroungers and so deserve no sympathy or benefit.

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With thanks to Steve Bell

Statistics - Lies or Damn Lies?

Those who use these statistics also fail to point out that the figure for vacancies is a snapshot of one day at the Jobcentre whereas the figure for unemployment is a rolling total of people who have been unemployed for at least a week. The vacancies are often filled by people moving about within the workforce rather than by the unemployed. There are also serious concerns about overcounting. In the North East vacancies recorded apparently doubled in the nine months between December 1998 and September 1999 having stayed almost the same for the previous 10 years!

How far is 'near'?

The Government say that no one should have to travel far to find work. They seem to be using a figure of 20 miles as a reasonable daily distance to travel to and from work. As far as we can tell they are not taking any account of whether you have your own transport, what public transport provision there is or if you have any home care responsibilities. There seems also to be a threat of the withdrawal of some or all benefit if a vacancy is refused.

What sort of Jobs?

There appears to be no consideration as to whether the job vacancies match the skills or needs of the unemployed. Very often they are low paid and low skilled jobs. The Government now seem to be saying

any job will do. 13 weeks employment now represents a sustainable job!

Not the Answer

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres have never accepted the argument that the unemployed are responsible for their own joblessness. Unemployment is caused by economic conditions over which workers have no control. In the last year we have seen long-term employees at Renishaw Foundry and Pentney Engineering thrown out of work when their employer has gone bust. We have seen redundancies and factory closures across the area and many are still trying to recover from the catastrophe of the pit closures and the devastation they wrought on the community.

Workers deserve better

These people deserve better than to be told that they are not looking hard enough or that they are not prepared to travel. We will do all we can to get this nonsense rejected. We will campaign, together with the network of Unemployed Centres around the Country, with the Unemployment Unit and with the TUC, but we will need the support of all those who reject this ill thought out approach. We look to all our supporters in local Trade Unions to also carry this argument forward so that we can present a united response to the Government.

PENTNEY ENGINEERING - A VICTORY FOR THE CENTRES.

Just before Christmas the workers at Pentney Engineering in Sheepbridge, Chesterfield, learned that they were out of work as their employer had gone bust.

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Benefit Refused

They were advised not to sign on at the Jobcentre, because, like the Renishaw Foundry workers before them, they were told that they could not receive benefit because of the wages in lieu of notice that they should have received.

Change too late to help

As readers of Solidarity will know, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres had been instrumental in the campaign to get the Government to change the rules on JSA so that wages due, but not paid, would not be taken into account when a claim was made. The Minister, Angela Eagle had already announced the change but it was not due to come into force until the 7th January 2000. Too late to help these workers.

Urgent Action

The Centres immediately swung into action. Local MPs were contacted and they in turn raised the issue with the Minister. It was the worst sort of Christmas present the Government could give, we said, to refuse these people even the help of £51.40 JSA.

Victory

Angela Eagle agreed and the DSS decided that 'extra statutory' payments would be made so that the ex-Pentney workers were not penalised. We welcomed this victory for common sense and fairness. DUWC immediately set about getting this message to the ex-Pentney workers. Local Radio, Press and personal contacts were used and, eventually, those eligible for JSA were able to get their claims in and processed before the Christmas shutdown.

MINISTER AGREES TO MEET UWCs TO DISCUSS JSA PROBLEMS

Angela Eagle, the Social Security Minister has offered to meet representatives of the National Unemployed Centres, the TUC and the unemployment Unit to discuss problems and anomalies with the Job



Angela Eagle, Social Security Minister.

Seekers Allowance following our campaign over non payment of benefit to those affected by the collapse of their employer.

Following a preliminary meeting of the groups involved a list of changes needed to JSA is being prepared and Solidarity will report on the outcome of the meeting in our next edition. Whilst we welcome any movement by the Government that makes the impact of JSA less severe on the unemployed we still remain committed to the repeal of this Act and its replacement with legislation designed to help and assist the unemployed, underemployed and low waged.



Don't forget, DUWC is on e mail and the internet see over on page 4 for details.

DERBYSHIRE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' CENTRES

annual general meeting
of the

Derbyshire
• One Fund For All

**Tuesday
28th March 2000**

7.30pm

at

**North East Derbyshire District
Council, Council Chamber,
Saltergate, Chesterfield**

all supporters welcome

GUEST SPEAKER

**Ken
Cameron**

**General Secretary
Fire Brigades Union**

