

EDITORIAL

TWO YEARS NOT OUT!

Once upon a time, an off the cuff suggestion was made at a Notts CATUC meeting, that we should have a newsletter. So was born TU News.

For opening my big gob, I was rewarded with the task of editing Notts TU News. And no, I have still not learned my lesson.

After two years we have decided to change the appearance and layout of Notts TU News. I don't know why.

It just seemed a good idea at the time. I hope that you feel that the changes have vastly improved Notts TU News; (We do! Editor), and that you will rush in articles, ideas and money in time for Issue 14.

This could be the last time that you see Notts TU

News, (shame), as the Notts CATUC meeting on September 13th will be discussing the financial viability of our current distribution of Notts TU News. At the present moment it is only through the

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CONTACTS LIST

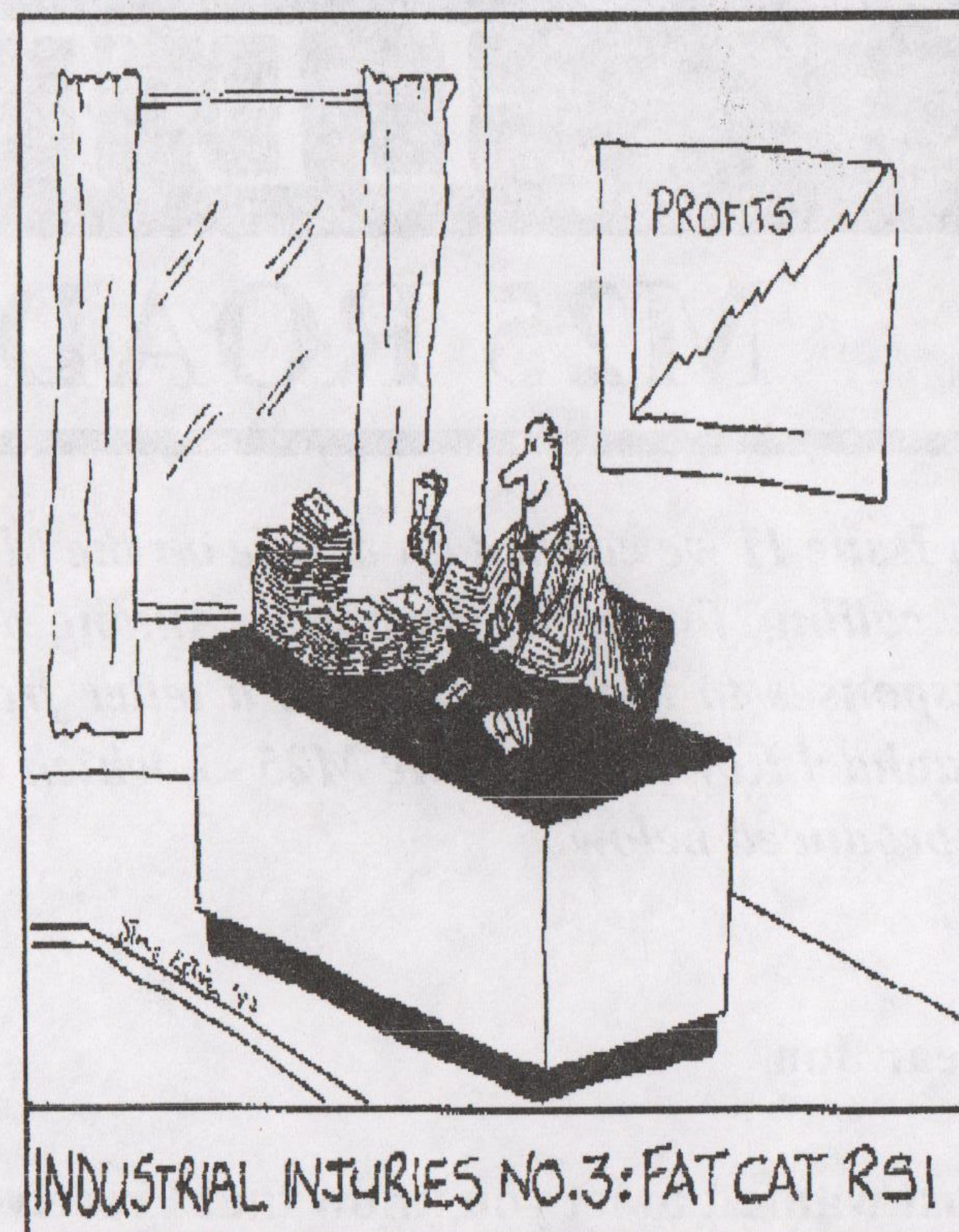
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support of our regular advertisers, UNISON, Unity Trust Bank plc and Freeth, Cartwright, Hunt, Dickens, that we are able to distribute 1500 copies free, every two months. We are still making a loss.

So make a donation, and ensure your copy. Phone Ian on (0115) 9582369 for further details.

Deadline for Issue 14, October 27th 1997.

Jon O'Neill - Editor - who will never learn.



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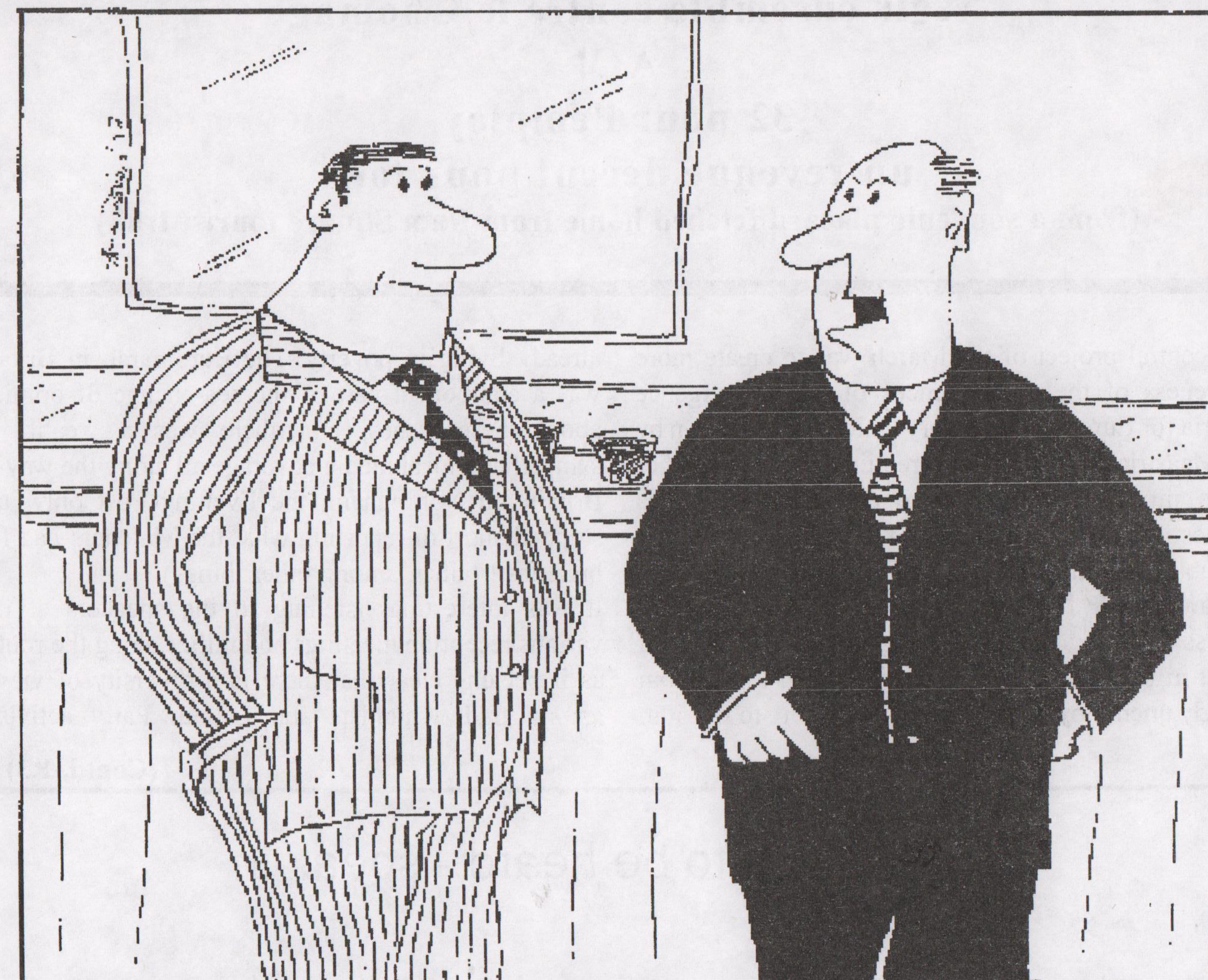


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NOTTS TU NEWS

ISSUE 13
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Sept/Oct 1997

Published by the Nottinghamshire Association of Trades Union Councils



"I don't understand all the fuss about the
minimum wage - we always pay the minimum"

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CAMPAIGNING & DISPUTES

EUROMARCH '97 REPORT -PART II

Agir ensemble contre le Chomage

AC!

32 pour l'employ

un revenue decent pour tous

(from a souvenir placard fetched home from Dam Square tourist trail)

The central project of the March was to create more awareness of the consequences of the convergence criteria for European Monetary Union, as laid down by the Maastricht Treaty. These require that EU member states must reduce their budget to 3% of Gross Domestic Product which would entail cuts in Britain in public spending of £18bn. This will devastate the welfare state.

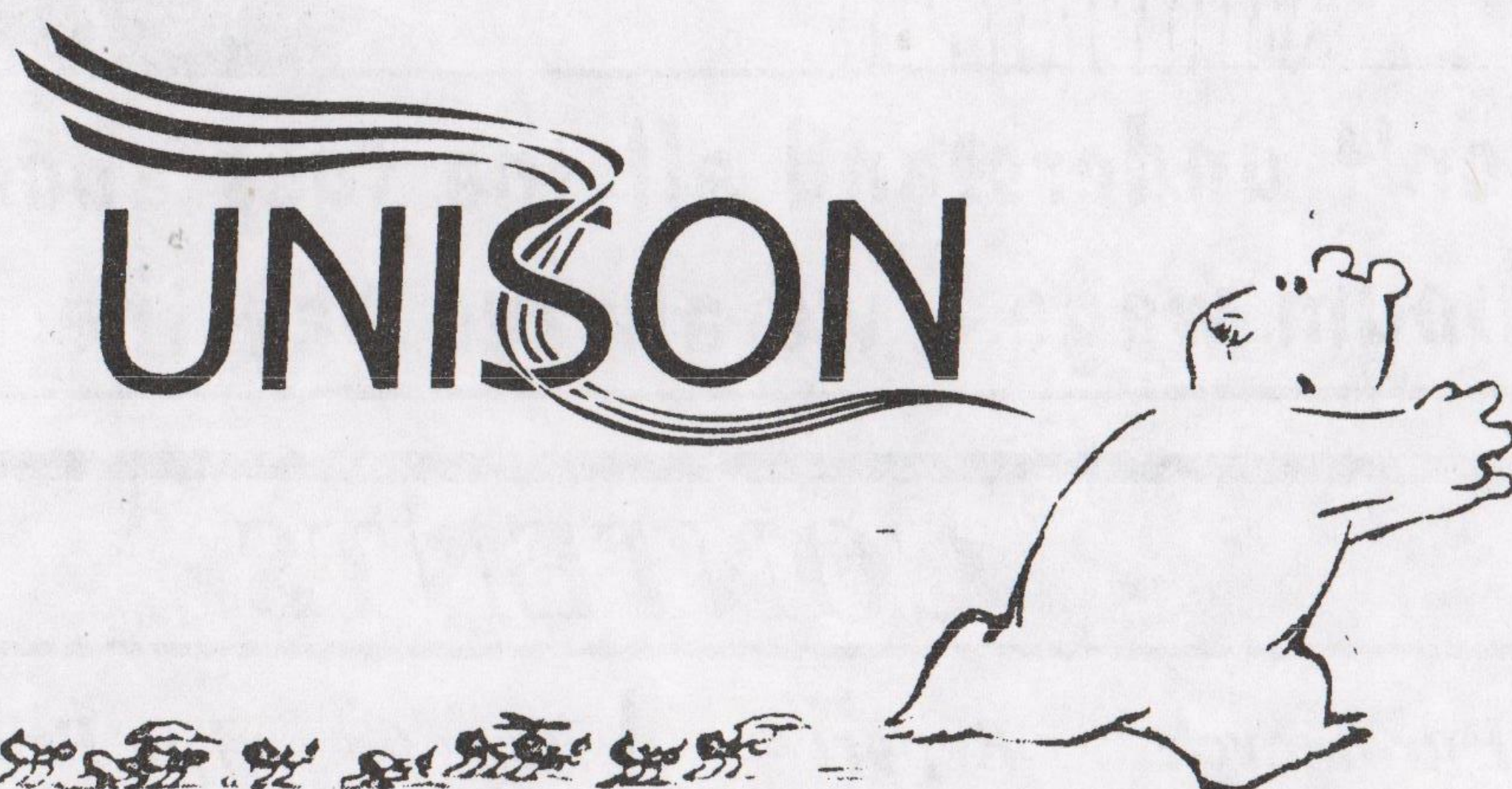
Across Europe, these convergence criteria would result in the loss of up to 10m jobs - on top of 20m already unemployed, adding millions more to the 50m

already living in poverty. The Euromarch in Britain was a component part of the sea-change of opinion about these issues, and there was a wealth of sympathetic local media coverage all along the way in Britain. In Nottingham, the Evening Post only just stopped short of reporting what the Marchers had for breakfast! (albeit among other things).

It was interesting listening to the speakers at the various reception meetings and rallies along the route, as it became clear that there is a diversity of views among trade unionists and Labour Party activists

(Contd. P.3)

If you want to be heard - speak in



Regional Secretary
Nick Wright

Regional Convenor
Vicky Easton

UNISON East Midlands Region

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

CAMPAIGNING & DISPUTES

regarding the whole nature of the single currency in itself, and its desirability or otherwise. Whatever the view about this, there was broad unity that a single currency should not be at the expense of jobs and welfare, which is what the Maastricht Treaty entailed -The March itself provided a focus which showed that such a development could be actively resisted and showed the ability of genuine grass roots organisations to mount effective campaigns against the depredations of international capital.

To continue with the geographical itinerary, having picketed and occupied throughout the Home Counties including occupations of Job Centres to highlight the iniquitous nature of JSA, the March eventually reached the picket line at Hillingdon Hospital. Against the background of a Rally at the nearby Uxbridge Town Hall, the March at this point received publicity on Newsnight.

It was an honour for me on the following day (Saturday 7th June) to carry the Hillingdon Hospital strikers banner on the March into central London, marching from Southall to Hyde Park, and from there on to Central Hall, Westminster for a rally. It was a shame, in the literal sense of the word, that these events in the capital were not better supported, although I should say that the hospitality and solidarity we received throughout the March was brilliant. Nevertheless, the numbers in London were certainly low although, I suppose, you could take an amount of comfort from Lenin's dictum: "Fewer but better".

Alan Simpson was one of the platform speakers at the Central Hall Rally and said that the European Marchers reflected the resistance which has emerged across Europe to the attempts of governments to meet the Maastricht criteria -with strikes and demonstrations and new levels of international solidarity. He said that what the Marchers represented was the way forward to create the European unity we needed across national boundaries.

It was a bit humbling to be identified as representing the future by Alan but as Michael Heseltine always used to say:- "I do not seek office but if I am called upon to serve....."

On with the millennium, I hear you cry.

The Sunday saw new heights of hospitality reached with a reception put on by the North East London Textiles Branch of the T&G which organises large parts of the Turkish and Kurdish communities in that area of London. The smell of the kebabs that

afternoon vividly rekindled memories of an afternoon in Nottingham in 1984 at the Food For Victory Convoy when the aroma of kebabs catered by the Turkey Solidarity Campaign wafted across the Forest. Their banner still adorns the front office of 118 Workshop. It was also a pleasure at this reception to meet Liz Knight who spoke on behalf of the JJ Fast Foods dispute at the Nottingham May Day in 1996. I have always meant, since that event back in 1984, to do something to reciprocate the solidarity that was shown that day by inviting a speaker at least to a Trades Council meeting in Nottingham.

In case I still don't get the business done, the contacts for everybody else to follow up are:-

Billy Jenkins, Turkey Human Rights Campaign, c/o Liverpool Shop Stewards Committee; and/or L. Kadin or Liz Knight, DAY-MER, Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, 16 Howard Road, Stoke Newington, London N16, Tel. 0171 275 8440.

This Sunday was certainly a day of rest, being finished off with a supper at the Workers Beer Company pub - Bread & Roses, courtesy of Wandsworth Trades Council. Every Trades Council should have one! Although I should point out that the Workers Beer was tragically off for the night. During the evening here, in a quite moving Minute's Silence, we all commemorated AIDS Memorial Day.

The following Monday was a bit, like, surreal in that, there isn't really any other way to put it, we missed the ferry from Harwich in the morning. However all was not lost as we mounted an impromptu demonstration through the streets of this ferry terminal and a totally spontaneous occupation of the beach as we gazed over the horizon to the stacked up containers at Felixstowe. Actually, it made me recall the Demonstration against the introduction of workfare that was held in Great Yarmouth a couple of years ago, and I can only say that it's a pity we don't get more marches in seaside resorts outside the annual Conference mobilisations. More please!

Anyway, we did eventually get over to the Hook, and I'll continue my third and Continental instalment in the next issue. At least Jon O'Neill is getting something out of this report back - I will remind him if I come across him in his resurrected social life.

Ian Juniper

CAMPAIGNING & DISPUTES

CRITCHLEY LABEL DISPUTE

BT's label production facility at Croespenmaen Factory was sold to the Critchley Group in May 1993, at which time Critchley guaranteed Union recognition whilst staff wished to be represented by the CWU.

The recognition agreement contained clauses on consultation which were completely disregarded in May 1996 when ten individuals were made compulsorily redundant. The ten staff who were dismissed included an employee with disabilities who had worked at the Factory for 17 years. John White - the Critchley Managing Director at Croespenmaen stated "I haven't got time to talk to a union", despite the fact that the CWU and the previous Managing Director at Critchley had successfully worked together to achieve a voluntary redundancy programme of some 40 plus job losses. Not surprisingly, the Union and its members were outraged that Critchley had refused to consult before announcing the compulsory sackings, and they sought an assurance from John White that any future redundancy situation would be the subject of prior consultation. Mr White refused to give this assurance and de-recognised the Union, in contravention of the assurances given to staff at the time that Critchley acquired the Label Plant from BT.

As a result of Critchley's notice of de-recognition, CWU members at Croespenmaen voted to take strike action if trade union representation was not restored to them. Following a successful strike ballot, two one-day strikes were held in January. These two one-day strikes failed to persuade John White to restore trade union representation, and therefore, a further one week strike was held during the first week of February. The 31 members on strike were then sacked on 6 February for alleged "gross misconduct".

Since the sackings took place, Critchley has employed semi-skilled/unskilled staff from a local employment agency. However, it is clear that this inexperienced workforce is unable to operate successfully, not least because of the effectiveness of the 24 hour picket being operated by our 31 members.

The action of Critchley management in sacking our members is a direct attack on basic trade union rights and the members concerned are a credit to our union and the wider union movement. During this dispute and prior to being sacked they had already lost up to £2,000 each in pay, overtime and profit-related bonus. Five of our strikers are lone parents, and most of the others also have families. They live in an area of high unemployment, and many are the sole earners in their households. All of them have substantial service with the company, and some have been at the plant for more than twenty years. That meant they knew they were risking large sums of money in potential redundancy payments if they were sacked. What they have done is staggeringly brave. They have put principle and loyalty to each other before personal gain. They deserve to succeed, and it is vital for the

CWU that they can continue the fight.

Critchley Group on the Side

The Critchley Group, which sacked 31 CWU members whose only "crime" was to defend their trade union rights, are showing clear signs of severe financial difficulties.

In just over a year, their share price has plummeted from £9.62 per share to just £5.95! Major shareholders in Critchley such as Schroders Investment Management, Lloyds TSB Group, Morgan Grenfell and General Accident must be deeply unhappy at seeing almost 40% wiped off the value of their investments in little more than 12 months. Critchley's John White and his fellow Executive Directors can expect their day of reckoning at the company's annual meeting.

Production difficulties continue at Critchley Labels in South Wales, scene of the sackings. The "replacement" workforce of semi skilled and unskilled staff seems unable to meet production targets and it can't be long before BT, Sony, Panasonic and other Critchley customers look to take their business elsewhere.

It's not just Critchley Labels in the mire. Critchley have just announced 50 redundancies at their non union factory in Stroud, Gloucestershire. This will result in more than half the workforce at the Stroud plant losing their jobs. The sackings at Stroud naturally caused alarm and gloom amongst the scab workforce in South Wales, but they were reassured when management told them that all 50 workers at Stroud were being sacked for "poor timekeeping"!!

The Critchley 31 and the Communication Workers Union ask for you help and support.

Messages of support should be sent to

Tony Young

Joint General Secretary

Communication Workers Union

Greystoke House

150 Brunswick Road

Ealing

London W5 1AW

or, E-mailed to the CWU at 101354.1171@compuserve.com

E-mail your protests to the Critchley management at Critchley_components@dial.pipex.com and the word_factory@compuserve.com or leave a message on the Critchley web site at <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/square/hj72/index.htm> for the UK, Europe and Asia.

Critchley's Website in the USA is at <http://www.critchley.com>.

Any donations would be welcome and should be made out to "CWU - Critchley Fighting Fund" and sent to Union headquarters, address as above.

HISTORICAL

THE PENTRICH REBELS

Wild rumours in the air of working class armies marching on the capital. Poverty, unemployment and despair everywhere. A ruling elite terrified of revolution. Secret societies, many infiltrated by spies. A 'super-spy' travels from society to society, spreading false information. He encourages a group of villagers to take up arms and march on the nearest town. His information ensures they are trapped. The 'ringleaders' go through a mock trial and are hung and beheaded. An outline script for yet another Bond movie? No, this is Middle England in the time of your Grandfather's Grandfather.

300,000 troops released from Wellington's army after the Napoleonic wars, many wandering unemployed around the countryside, competing with others for non-existent jobs. A system of open and savage repression, with public executions and mass transport of people to overseas penal colonies often for minor offenses. A disastrous harvest in 1816, making even bread a luxury. The massive population displacement from rural village to slum town of this phase of the Industrial Revolution. And in the towns and villages of the Midlands and North of England, the virtual collapse of the weaving trade. All these factors helped to produce a volatile broth of repression and revolution seasoned with radical religious and political thought.

In June 1817, several hundred men from Derbyshire villages around Pentrich took up arms and marched towards Nottingham expecting its citizens to support them and join the expected thousands marching from the North to take London. They were under the leadership of Jeremiah Brandreth, an unemployed hosiery worker from Sutton in Ashfield, rumoured to be one of the Luddite Captains. Encouraged and betrayed by the notorious spy Oliver, they only made it 14 miles or so before being routed and captured by government troops. A pantomime of Justice began on October 15th 1817 in Derby. The prosecution was led by the Attorney General, who came equipped with an ear trumpet. The trial was presided over by no less than 4 Judges, led by the Chief Baron of the Court of the Exchequer. The proceedings of the trial would not have disgraced a Monty Python episode.

Any resemblance to humour fades when the sentences

are announced. To 'deter others from being the instruments of hellish agitators', Brandreth and his comrades Turner and Ludlam were told, "you must be drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, and then be severally hanged by the neck until you are dead; your heads must then be severed from your bodies, which are to be divided into quarters and to be at his Majesty's disposal".

As an act of 'mercy', they were later granted the privilege of simply being hung and beheaded, which they duly were in public in Derby. 14 others were transported for life to Australia's penal colonies.

These events took place at a time when the notorious Combination Acts preventing working people from organising were in force. Pentrich was one of the strands of opposition along with events like Peterloo, the Tolpuddle Martyrs and the development of the Chartist movement which eventually led to widespread reform sufficient at least to allow the development of a legal Trade Union movement.

Yet there is no annual pilgrimage to Pentrich, the names of the participants are not contained in the Roll of Honour of the working class movement. Why?

Too much of our history is hidden from us. We should find ways to celebrate the rich tapestry of our past. We need to make ourselves and our brothers and sisters in the movement aware of it. An annual Trade Union walk, an exhibition, a Labour movement pamphlet, an annual lecture or other event? Pentrich may have been foolhardy and doomed to failure; yet it is a link in the long chain of struggle against oppression, stretching from before Wat Tyler to today's campaign against JSA. We can identify weaknesses in the actions of the Pentrich rebels, but we should be proud to salute their courage and be prepared to learn from them.

Jeff Staniforth.

Anyone wanting to know more about this period in our history should read E.P.Thompsons's 'The Making of the English Working Class', Eric Hobsbawm's 'The Age of Revolution', and on Pentrich 'England's Last Revolution' by John Stevens.

HEALTH & SAFETY

THE PRICE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY

The Health and Safety at Work Act, probably the most outstanding piece of Health and Safety legislation introduced, has been in existence for well over 20 years. Apart from being an enabling act from which countless health and safety regulations have stemmed, it is the *law* and just like all other laws it is to be respected and adhered to.

The act and regulations are there in order to ensure that those at work and those affected by work activities are provided with safeguards in respect of their Health, Safety and Welfare.

Still as we draw closer to a new era, in time, the carnage continues.

Work related accidents, ill health and disease are widespread and work related deaths a common occurrence.

Even now, we still find employers who actually believe they have some sort of right to expose their workforce to untold dangers, without adequate means of protection. To these employers the law of health and safety is an obstacle, standing in the way of their own objective.

They usually have only one such objective '*Money*'. It's irrelevant that an employee may lose the use of limbs. It's irrelevant that an employee may suffer from crippling disease as a result of exposure to toxic substance. It's irrelevant that those left, after a work related death has occurred, can often only stand back and watch as the employer responsible carries on relentlessly, in the pursuit of profit.

Employers who knowingly put their workers at risk, have so far only had to pay a small price, a price which can usually be recouped quite easily, therefore, little or no hardship is caused to the employer.

Ask one of these employers, what they would expect of the law if somebody broke into their home or physically harmed them, through an act of violence. I think the answer to that is obvious; yet these employers care nothing for the harm and suffering they cause. The price they pay for this is often meaningless.

However, things are now turning round, employees are no longer willing to tolerate having to endure poor standards of safety. It's a fact that many employees who have spoken out or 'criticised the boss' regarding poor safety, have often faced harassment and

victimisation in one form or another. I hope now that the Labour government will take extra steps to protect those who do speak out. Please do not misunderstand me. I am in no way implying that all employers have this attitude. I have had the privilege of working and liaising with companies and organisations, profit making or not, who take a serious view of workplace Health and Safety.

The genuine commitment and approach by all of these, is highly commendable. Recognition of their standards and their ceaseless efforts to meet all necessary requirements is worthy of praise.

For any employer who may just be reading this, who takes the attitude that health and safety is not important, then it's about time you woke up.

Improvements in standards do not necessarily mean spending large sums of money. In many cases the cost is virtually nothing. Higher standards and a total commitment to health and safety, can only serve to better the company. A person who is safe while undertaking a task, will do so much more easily. Morale can be boosted, and the quality and quantity of productivity can be enhanced.

The price of this is nothing compared to the price that has already been paid by ordinary working people. Those who are responsible for the creation of the hazards and the risks, must surely endeavour to combat and control them.

They must be held accountable for their failures when influenced and led by greed, power, ignorance and total disregard for others.

For further information on the Trade Union Safety Committee, or if any safety representative wishes to become actively involved, please contact Tony on 01623 424722 - 01623 424720 - evenings 01623 453780.

Articles on workplace safety and health, including opinions and views may be submitted to this section of Trade Union News.

Please try to keep such articles to a maximum of 600 words.

Send to: TUSC c/o Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, NG18 1EY.

TONY RIDGEWAY

LETTERS

M25 ROAD TO JUSTICE

In Issue 11 we carried an article on the M25 3, calling for your support. Among the responses to that article, was a letter from Raphael Rowe, one of the M25 -3, which we reproduced below:

Dear Jon

Just wanted to let you know that I received your letter and newsletter, and of course to thank you for your continuous support and efforts.

If there is anything I can do or send to help you, help us, please don't hesitate to ask.

**Yours in continuous struggle
Raphael.**



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