

# EDITORIAL

Once more the same small willing (!?) band of people have burned some midnight oil to bring you issue 15 still at 12 pages and still for free.

As always we are looking for more volunteers and contributions to help us produce Notts Trade Union News. If you are wondering why we carry very few local reports i.e, Nottingham City Unison, Nottinghamshire County Council ballot etc, although we asked, the articles never arrived.

In this issue we carry the first contribution from our local hero of Tatton, Lord Biro.

We also carry out a review of the work done by Nottingham and District Trades Union Council in 1997 (p5). Dwindling affiliations and active delegates are a threat to the continued viability of all of the Trade Union Councils in Notts.  
(Contd. Col. 3)

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If we did not exist, who would do all this work. The only income we raise is through affiliations, we need your support.

In Mansfield, the continued success of Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre is even more remarkable if you realise that it started and remains a Trades Union Council initiative.

Invite a speaker to your next branch meeting etc.

Articles and contributions for Issue 16 are requested by Monday February 23rd.

Jon O'Neill, Editor.

Notts TU News, c/o MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 1EY. Tel 01623 424720.

## £0. ITS THE OFFICIAL UNION RATE.

FREETH  
CARTWRIGHT  
HUNT  
DICKINS

### SOLICITORS

If your union is a member of the union law scheme, you are entitled to a free first meeting to discuss any problem except work related matters.

Contact Terry Oldham on (0115) 936 9369

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### LORD BIRO

#### Harriet & Tony say "Hi"

Single Motherland, Absent  
Fatherland  
free at last from Tory Wimps  
Invitations for it's custom  
from Miss Blairlash and her Pimp.  
"Make us shrouds for Third World  
babies  
Make us guns to shoot them dead  
Make TVs to show us weeping  
But don't make babies in your  
Bed".

If you think work has made you ill,  
you need

#### Nottinghamshire Trade Union Safety Committee

We offer FREE testing for Hearing, Vibration White Finger, Lung Function and can offer advice on compensation claims and Health and Safety information.

Call us at 2 Beech Avenue Mansfield (01623) 424720 and ask for Tony



"Aiming  
to keep  
you safe"

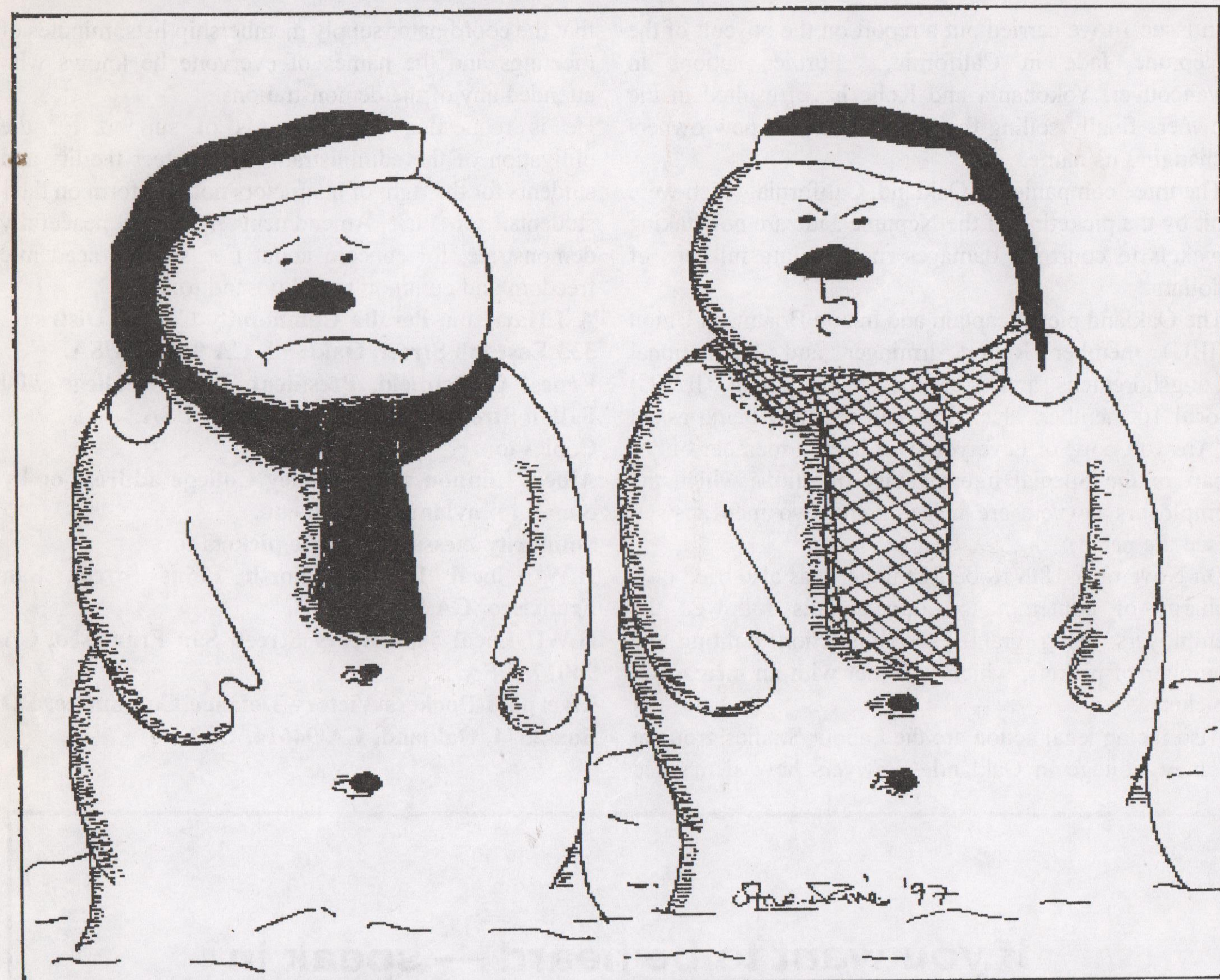
# NOTTS TU NEWS

ISSUE 15

Free or Donation

Jan/Feb 1997

Published by the Nottinghamshire Association of Trades Union Councils



"Vote New Labour", he said. 'No more low paid, outdoor seasonal work', he said"

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# CAMPAIGNING & DISPUTES

## CALIFORNIAN SOLIDARITY PART II

In Issue 14 we carried out a report on the boycott of the Neptune Jade in California. Further actions in Vancouver, Yokohama and Kobe have resulted in the owners finally selling the vessel, with the new owners changing its name.

The three companies in Oakland, California which were hit by the picketing of the Neptune Jade are now taking pickets to court for damages running into millions of dollars.

The Oakland picket captain and Inland Boatmans Union (IBU) member Robert Irminger and International Longshoremens and Warehousemens Union (ILWU) local 10 member. Jack Heyman are now being asked "Are you now, or have you ever been a member of" as part of the Special Interrogatory questions which the employers lawyers are insisting the two men answer, (see the panel).

On November 18th Robert Irminger was also tried on a charge of contempt to court. This followed the employers being granted an injunction limiting the number of pickets, which was met with an increase in pickets.

Also facing legal action are the Labour Studies group at Laney College in Oakland. Lawyers have demanded

that the coordinator supply membership lists, minutes of meetings and the names of everyone he knows who attended any of the demonstrations.

He is requesting a few words of support for the obligation of the administration to protect facility and students for the right of instructors not to inform on their students, for First Amendment rights to peacefully demonstrate, for concern about free speech, academic freedom and common morality send to:

**A J Harrison, Peralta Community College District, 333 East 8th Street, Oakland, CA 94608, USA.**

**Ernest Crutchfield, President, Laney College, 900 Fallon Street, Oakland, CA 94607, USA.**

Copies to:

**Albert Lunnnon at the Laney College address or by e-mail to: avlannon@sfsu.edu.**

**Solidarity messages for the pickets to:**

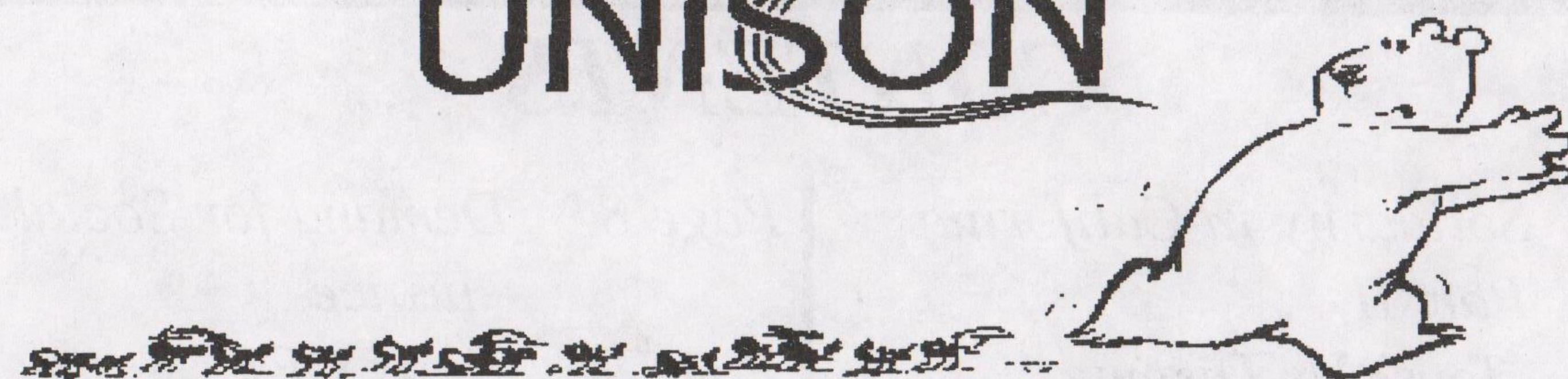
**ILWU local 10, 400 North Point Street, San Francisco, CA 94133, USA.**

**ILWU Local 34, 4 Berry Street, San Francisco, CA 94017, USA.**

**Liverpool Dockers Victory Defence Committee, PO Box 2574, Oakland, CA 94614, USA.**

**If you want to be heard — speak in**

# UNISON



**Regional Secretary  
Nick Wright**

**Regional Convenor  
Janet Hardstaff**

**UNISON East Midlands Region**  
15, Castle Gate, Nottingham, NG1 6BY. Tel. 0115 956 7200

# CAMPAIGNING & DISPUTES

## CALIFORNIAN SOLIDARITY PART II (Continued)

### Special Interrogatory questions

Identify all persons, associations and organisations known to you who participated in one or more of the demonstrations at Yusen Terminals Berth 23, Port of Oakland, at any time between the dates of September 28, and October 1 inclusive.

Identify all persons....who participated in the planning, organising, or arranging of any of the demonstrations referred to in Special Interrogatory No 1

identify all labour organisations in which you are or have been a member or with which you are or have been in any way affiliated identity all political organisations....

identify the person or persons who first communicated to you the idea of holding a demonstration at a Northern Californian Port with any connection to dockworkers in Liverpool, England

identify the person who first communicated to you the idea of holding a demonstration over the cargo, or any portion thereof, on the vessel Neptune Jade

identify every person you believe was a member of or in any way affiliated with the Committee for Victory to the Liverpool Dockers prior to October 2, 1997

identify every person who assisted in preparing or distributing any handbill that was distributed at Yusen Terminals, Berth 23 Port of Oakland, between September 23 1997 and October 1 1997 inclusive, including but not limited to, communicating or providing information about the Area Arbitrator, and providing the paper, or the printing or copying services, for the handbills

identify your current employer(s). State your current job title(s).

### Letter of support from the Liverpool Dockers to Robert Irminger.

Brian McWilliams, President ILWU

ILWU Local 10

LLWU Local 34

Liverpool Dockers Victory Defense Committee

Robert Irminger

Dear comrades and friends

18 November 1997

Two years ago we faced a picket line of young dockworkers, many of them our own sons, who had been unjustly sacked in an overtime dispute engineered by Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

At that moment, each Liverpool dockworker had to decide for himself whether or not to cross the line. We knew the risks involved. Almost all of us made the decision to stand up for the principles handed down to us and renewed throughout our own working lives. Two years later, after everything the company, police, and our own union have thrown at us, we remain solid.

If we began with nothing but our own solidarity, we are now part of our world-wide movement against the casualisation and deregulation of our industry. Without this international movement, we cannot survive. But the same is true for every dockworker in every country. There are no safe havens for any of us.

That is why we feel such pride when others stand up for the same industrial principles we fight for: the right to defence working conditions and to take solidarity action in the face of attack, even if the victims of that attack are halfway around the world.

By picketing the "Neptune Jade", Liverpool supporters put the spotlight on Hapag-Lloyd, one of the key shipping lines keeping the scab Port of Liverpool in business, and on Thamesport, where the Mersey Docks acts as Port Authority through its subsidiary Medway Ports. They also exercised their precious right to have an opinion and express it. The decision ILWU members to respect that picket line upheld the industrial principles we share.

It is Mersey Docks and Harbour Company who deserve to be indicted and held responsible for the damage they have caused by wantonly sacking their workforce. Even at this late hour, we call on the judicial authorities to come to their senses and drop the charges against Robert Irminger and any others scapegoated by the shipping industry.

We stand side by side with all of you, and call on dockworkers throughout the world to join in your defense just as they have acted in ours.

Yours in Solidarity

Jim Nolan

Chairman, Merseyside Port Shop Stewards



# CAMPAIGNING & DISPUTES

## GEOFFREY DOESN'T LIKE UNIONS

Toys"R"US likes to portray itself as a friendly family store, with a smiling giraffe greeting the kids to a toy paradise. Behind this facade, one of the worlds most notoriously anti-union multinationals is hiding. When the children grow into teenagers, Toys"R"Us starts to get interested in them as cheap labour. Employing a particularly young staff, management apparently believes, gives the company the right to treat its workers just as it wishes. Apparently, Toys"R"Us did not learn anything from the events in 1995 when its Swedish staff secured themselves collective agreement protection after a prolonged strike. Then, the international solidarity campaign of FIET and its affiliates as well as hundreds of other trade union organisations took many forms and proved to be very successful. At a FIET meeting in Geneva in September, Europe's commercial workers' trade unions confirmed that they are once more prepared to do what it takes to help the colleagues in Geneva to secure their trade union and collective bargaining rights. The trade union in Geneva that has tried to negotiate with Toys"R"Us, Action Unia, tells that there is already strong pressure from management on individual workers in the Geneva store. Neither the Union nor FIET and its affiliates will tolerate any further pressure but will take any action necessary in support of the workers in this store. For the trade unions, this is becoming a question of principle and in that respect the important thing is not the number of workers who are involved. In addition to the refusal to sign the existing collective agreement, which covers the large retailers in Geneva, Toys"R"Us continues to pay its staff sub-standard wages. The wages that are paid to the Geneva staff are some 25 per cent below the absolute minimum levels granted by the collective agreement. Weekly working hours are set to 42, when the maximum working week in Geneva according to the collective agreement is 40 hours. There are also many other employment and working conditions which are not on the level defined by the Geneva collective agreement.

At a press conference today in Geneva, Actions Unia announced that it will launch an information campaign still during the Christmas sales season,

telling prospective customers about the behaviour of the company. FIET has sent out a circular today to all 44 affiliated trade unions world-wide, suggesting that they engage themselves in suitable support action. There will also be discussions with other international trade union organisations about this situation.

Geneva is the home city of the International Labour Organisation ILO. FIET is now looking into whether the company's treatment of its Geneva personnel is in breach of International Labour Conventions and will consider submitting a formal complaint asking the Swiss government to intervene to ensure that the company respects the trade union and collective bargaining rights. A similar intervention with the European Commission is being considered, cautioning against the entry to the labour markets in Europe of companies which openly defy the declared principles of social dialogue and employee rights. A final attempt will now be made by FIET to promote a settlement that would bring collective agreement protection for the Toys"R"Us employees in Geneva. However, if management refuses to change its negative decision, a global solidarity campaign is set to start within days.

## STOP PRESS!

**Since the above article was written, Toys"R"Us has reached an agreement with the Swiss commerce trade union Actions Unia. The details of a collective agreement were agreed at a meeting in London on 10 December. The Toys"R"Us workers will now be covered by the cantonal collective agreement for non-food commerce and will gain wage adjustments (in many cases these will be substantial) and a reduction in the working week from 42 to 40 hours.**

# REVIEW OF THE YEAR

## LOOKING BACK OVER 1997 WITH NOTTINGHAM TUC

I would like to begin this Review by paying tribute to Derrick Wignall, a former Delegate to Council and past President of the County Association, and to Mel Lingard, a former Hucknall NUM Branch Secretary and most recently tutor at Notts Trade Union Education Centre, who both died in the later months of 1997. Both brothers were widely respected and valued for their role in the movement, and were fine examples of why it is vital for the movement itself to survive and succeed in achieving its ultimate aims, to which both Derrick and Mel were utterly dedicated.

When it comes to Trades Councils, it is easy to lapse from frantic activism into a state of what some have described as "melancholy hedonism", providing you can afford it. I'll leave it to you to answer the question as to whether it's all worth it or not; and who, if anyone, would do it if Trades Councils weren't there, but what is certain is that dwindling attendances and lack of resources are a serious threat to the continuing viability of Councils across the country.

In Nottingham, what we intend to do over the coming period is to appeal to local unions to help get their members involved with Council as delegates; and to help us financially by paying Affiliation FEES IN FULL, and generally being generous. Otherwise Councils generally won't be able to survive.

Anyway, best sororal and fraternal wishes for 1998!

Looking at the main events (not in date order):-

1) City of Nottingham Centenary Exhibition

Trades Unions in the City over the Last 100 Years (28th April-3rd May) at the Angel Row Library with unveiling by Harry Loach, Honorary Delegate.

2) May Day March and Rally

Old Market Square (3rd May) featuring Jon O'Neill (Editor Notts Trade Union News); Paddy Hill (ex Birmingham 6); and Women on the Waterfront. Good press publicity.

3) Solidarity activity: Liverpool Dockers

Xmas, 1996 Social (£800); Speaking Tour with Terry (Yap-Yap) Barrett (24th Feb-1st March) and Social (total of £6,000); support at Billy Bragg concert at Rock City on night before the General Election (30th April) (£204 by bucket; £704 by sales); May Day Benefit at Le Metro (3rd May) with DJ Deep Joy (£178); Docker In the House (21st June); and leaflets given out to Jo Brand patrons - we were unable to gain access to the Concert Hall although Jo would have given us house room. More recently, In The Same Boat Productions are doing the business benefit-wise for the Dockers. Mobilised for the March for Social Justice (12th April) in London (41 from Nottingham); and for the second Anniversary Demo in Liverpool (27th September).

Called on John Prescott to use the Government share-holding in Mersey Docks & Harbour Company to get the men reinstated; and leafleted the meeting at St Peters Church at which Bill Morris was speaking after the ballot result.

4) Feargus O'Connor Commemoration Event

With wreath laying (Sunday 7th September) by Terry O'Connor, and Oration by Chris Maguire. With song from Clarion Choir, lament on the fiddle by Jim, Wholesome Fish and contributions from Mel Read MEP, and Alan Simpson MP.

5) Euromarch 97 Jarrow to Amsterdam Leg.

European Day Against Unemployment (28th May) with City Council Reception at the Council House with Sister Joyce Donn and Alan Simpson, MP; County Council Breakfast Reception at County

Hall with Cllr Alan Davidson. Euromarch Benefit (£46) and Appeal to support the March raised £241. The Secretary made the numbers up to Amsterdam. Attempts were made to set up a debate on EMU involving local MEP's.

6) Solidarity Activity: Unemployed

Statement Against Project Work drafted with Bro Pete Watson and circulated to local organisations for endorsement to boycott. A limited number of endorsements received including circulation by Nottingham CVS; and publicity in the local press. Continued to circulate Jobs Not JSA. Attempted to work with Nottingham Campaign Against JSA but opposed to any use of "3 strikes policy".

7) Solidarity Activity: Magnet Dispute.

Speaking Tour (a Day Out on 9th September) taking in County Labour Group and Nottingham City UNISON Branch; Nottingham Contingent to Anniversary Blitz Demonstration in Darlington (23rd August); Leafleting outside Magnet Store in Nottingham at Mill House, Ilkeston Road with Del Boy 3 wheeler (17th September) and on 4th October. No press publicity although Post photographer took pictures - promotion appeared in the NEP on Monday 6th October offering building goods and paint etc. to community groups in conjunction with Magnet.

8) Solidarity Activity: Other disputes

Project Aerospace Dispute - supported Demo in Coventry (21st June). Support, albeit on a more limited practical scale, extended to the following:- Notts County Council cuts to family centres, library opening hours, Lobby at Budget setting meeting (20th February - UNISON); Benefits Agency privatisation (CPSA); Notts Fire Service (FBU); NACAB sacking of Union Activist and national strike (14th April - MSF); Hillingdon Hospital (UNISON - for part of year); M5 Strike (AEEU); Essex Fire Brigade (FBU); various employers post-BR (RMT); Peoples College, Arnold and Carlton College, Southwark College (NATFHE), Critchley Labels (CWU); City Council Housing Department (UNISON); CSA (CPSA); Derbyshire School Meals Service (UNISON); Iranian Oil Workers (Speaker - Sam Evans).

9) Health and Safety

Hosted Hazards Meetings in Nottingham and promoted Hazards Charter. Talk on recent Developments on RSI by Wendy Lawrence. Jointly promoted health screening tests for hearing, lung function and VWF with Notts Trade Union Safety Committee.

10) Miscarriages of Justice

Supported Prison Picket (22nd November) in support of Satpal Ram and affiliated to the campaign for his release; highlighted John Kinsella case as part of May Day Rally (3rd May); celebrated release of Bridgewater 3.

11) Support for other campaigns

Supported Bloody Sunday March (25th January); Banner Theatre production "Redemption Song" (18th/19th March, Clarendon College); Affiliated to Cuba Solidarity Campaign; Sponsored Public Meeting "Defend the Welfare State/Resource Trade Union Rights" (12th May); Supported Student Fees Demonstration (15th November); and donated to Nottingham Womens Aid, following report on Regional TUC Forum on Domestic Violence by Wendy Lawrence.

With acknowledgement to Bob Watt, whose Minutes are the stuff history is made of.



# HEALTH & SAFETY

## I'M THE BOSS, I KNOW WHAT'S BEST

I once worked for a medium sized engineering company where the director/owner took the attitude that health and safety was nothing but a financial and time consuming burden. He referred to health and safety personnel as "glorified money spenders". However, he did claim that accidents should not happen in his company. Everybody had worked there long enough (including new employees) to know about the dangers. Anybody who had an accident was either stupid or just trying to get time off work. I assume by now you have figured out that this was a caring employer.

Where was I, oh yes. In one of the workshops within this factory there was a pit dug out by the previous owner of the factory. My "employer" had covered this pit with thin steel plates in the interest of health and safety.

The pit was located in a productivity area, this meant that the cover plates went through all the usual punishment. Fork lift truck, workloads, people etc, just as though it was a solid floor.

Inevitably the plates would become buckled, damaged, dislodged but still the work carried on. People would trip on the plates or their feet would slip into the exposed areas of the pit which was approximately one foot deep.

I recommended on several occasions that the pit be properly filled and concreted over. This would be done on a Friday allowing a full weekend for the concrete to set. I even measured the pit and obtained a quote. *How much!* my employer cried. £200. I'm not paying that. But this price would be halved if our own workplace did all the preparation and halved again if we undertook the whole task.

To assist my employer in reaching a sound decision I asked the following questions:

1. *How much* will it cost in repairs if the fork lift truck falls into the pit and overbalances? How much would it cost if the forklift damages equipment and products after its overbalanced?
2. *How much* would it cost in personal injury claims and potential fines if an employee is injured or killed either through an incident involving the forklift or tripping/falling on the plates or into the pit.
3. *How much* would it cost in productivity disruption,

sick pay, insurance.

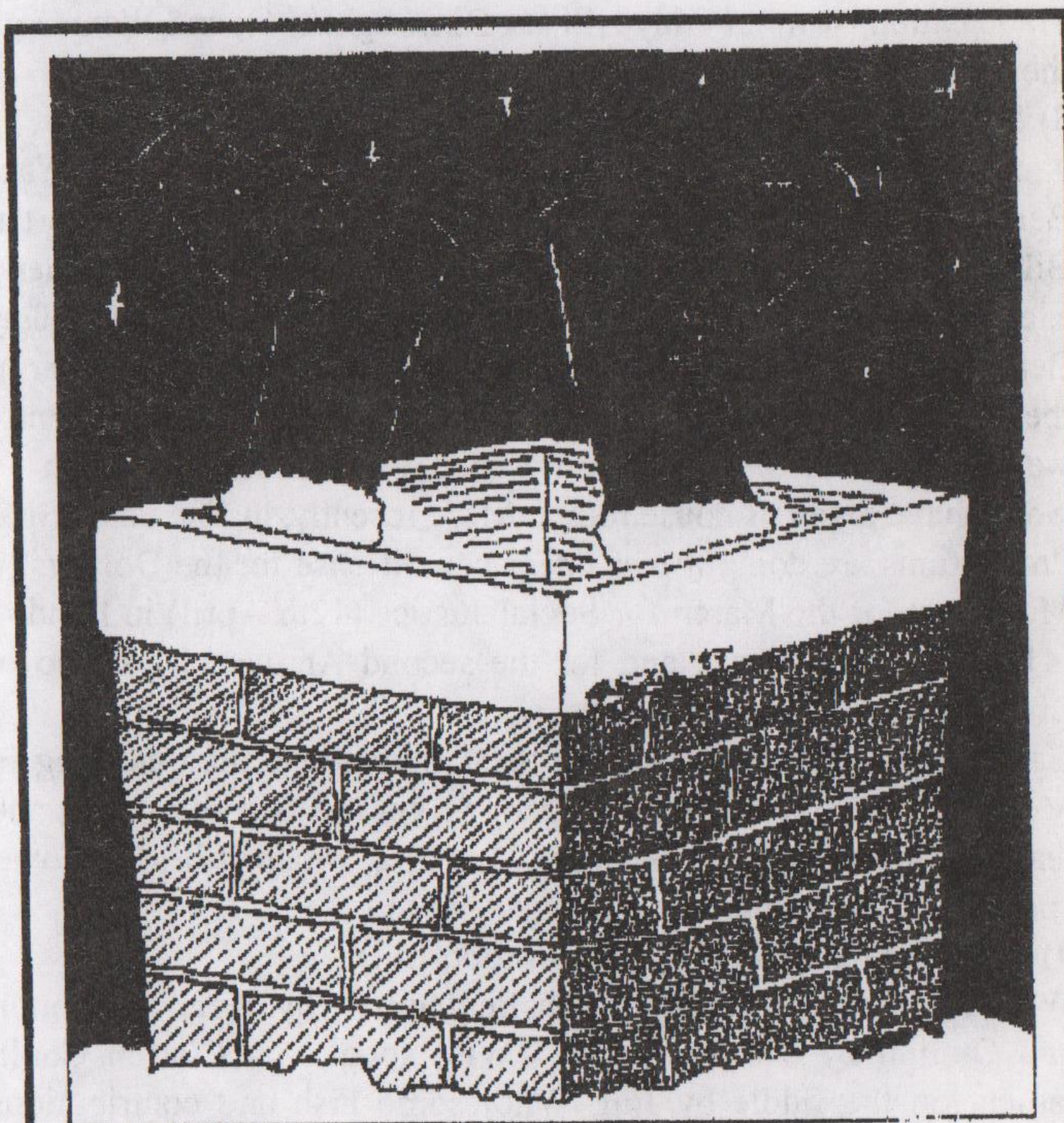
Now if you were the owner of this company, which incidently reaches a nice tidy profit every year, what would you do?

WeLL being an intelligent and caring employer he decided the best course of action would be to repair the plates and reinforce them with a steel bar on the underside.

This task would take approximately 2 days and would cost in excess of £200 quote I originally obtained. New steel bar had to be purchased as did some sheet steel. Electricity and gas for welding and cutting along with disruption to productivity and wages to employees who could be undertaking more useful tasks all added to the cost.

What did this company owner called health and safety personnel "*glorified money spenders*"? Stupid I believe was the word he used to describe his employees. But who am I to argue? He knows best - after all he was the boss. Moron!

**Tony Ridgeway**  
Trade Union Safety Committee



**It's easy to forget about health and safety over the Christmas period**

# FEATURE

## SEARCHLIGHT AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Searchlight's close relationship with trade unionists, since its inception in the early 1960's, has gone from strength to strength. Our late editor, Maurice Ludmer, was president of Birmingham Trades Council, the largest such body in Western Europe at that time.

We have worked with trade unions in a number of areas. In the 1960's and 1970's we organised support and information for black and Asian workers who faced racism on the shop floor and from employers. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's have helped those fascist infiltrators, including trade union officials, in the trade unions.

We have campaigned alongside trade unionists in social security and customs offices to expose and drive out organised groups of British National Party members, and have supported trade unionists when they were victimised by management for their actions against fascists.

Searchlight's exposure of fascists such as Laurence Johnson, Cathy Murphy, Jim White, Gordon Stridiron, Eric Brand, Simon Chadwick and John Morse is well known to trade union anti-fascists.

Over the years Searchlight has had support from major trade unions including TGWU, GMB, CWU, UNISON, FBU and others.

Searchlight hopes that with renewed strength and support from our sisters and brothers in the trade union movement, we can continue to safeguard the unions from infiltration and help to educate the movement against the twins evils of racism and fascism.

### Trade Union Friends of Searchlight

Trade Union Friends of Searchlight (TUFS) was launched at last years TUC in Blackpool. To date we have received 100 affiliations from trade union branches across the country. Our work over the past year has included sending TUFS speakers to trade union branches all over the country. We have worked alongside the TUC in the general election campaign collating information on fascist and racist candidates; much of this information was supplied by TUFS affiliates. We were closely involved in the preparation for the TUC's successful 'Respect' festival in London. Our casework has involved giving advice and support to individual trade unionist and trade union branches that have found themselves victims of harassment from fascist groups. We are also currently involved in a highly sensitive investigation into the fascist infiltration of one particular industry.

### TUFS Aims & Objectives

- 1) To create a two way dialogue between TUFS and the unions.
- 2) Allow unions to discuss issues of racism and fascism in a non-sectarian way and therefore to share similar problems and solutions.
- 3) To actively campaign within the unions and wider labour movements for positive and practical ways in which to fight racism and fascism within the workplace and community.
- 4) We envisage building on our closer relationship with individual trade union branches across the country who we believe can be an integral part of any serious community based anti racist/anti fascist initiative.
- 5) We are not an alternative to other national anti racist/anti fascist groups, National Assembly etc, who have a more general brief. Our sole aim is to work within the trade union movement and we see this as complementary to existing groups working within this arena.

**We would like our branch to become a Trade Union Friend of Searchlight**

Union ..... Branch .....  
Contact Name ..... Position .....  
Address .....  
.....  
..... Postcode .....  
Phone ..... Fax.....

**Affiliation Fee is £50 per annum and includes a copy of Searchlight magazine monthly.**

**Please make cheques payable to Searchlight and return this form to:**

**TRADE UNION FRIENDS OF SEARCHLIGHT**  
37b New Cavendish Street, London W1M 8JR  
Tel. 0171 284 4040 Fax. 0171 284 4410  
EMail. tufs@s-light.demon.co.uk

### SPECIAL OFFER

**First time affiliates will receive a copy of Searchlight Educational Trust's widely acclaimed handbook, When Hate comes to Town. (normally £30 for organisations).**



# COMMENT

## WE DEMAND SOCIAL JUSTICE!

Notts Jobs not JSA has never demanded that we defend the Welfare State. Aware of its shortcomings, we have long argued for the rebuilding of the Welfare State. Anybody who has been involved in benefits issues over the last few years has long since realised that the safety-net no longer worked.

Nor have campaigns for the Welfare State just mouthed slogans. Policies to rebuild the welfare state which ensure social justice for all are available in abundance. Drafted by such bodies as the Full Employment Forum, the National Unemployed Centres combine CABs and the TUC, these policies provide a framework in which the welfare state could be rebuilt, all that is missing is the political will.

In April 1997, Jon O'Neill of MUWC was asked on the Today programme on R4 "why people in receipt of benefits seemed reluctant to vote in the forthcoming election?" His response was that all of the main parties were offering similar policies in relation to benefits, and "that the only difference between them appears to be who will be more ruthless and efficient in attacking recipients of benefits." We hoped that those words would not be prophetic.

As Tony Blair said recently: "As the party which created the Welfare State, who better to reform it?" We could not agree more.

However, the record over the last seven months is what causes us concern, particularly when viewed in relation to statements and promises made by New Labour prior to May 1st.

There are real worries at what motivates these reforms - we are continually told that benefits are costing the taxpayer too much. And yet for many who are reliant on benefits there is insufficient money available to buy the basic necessities.

Any reforms of the welfare state, if it is to be acceptable, cannot be treasury drivers, but must concentrate on providing security 'from the cradle to the grave'. It is not about cutting costs, it has to be about achieving social justice.

Some supporters of Notts Jobs not JSA are concerned that the prejudices which drove the last government's attacks on the Welfare State, are held by some members of the present government, namely:-

- that the unemployed do not want jobs.
- that lone parents are deliberately so, to be better able to milk the system.
- that many people who are on disability benefits do so to avoid work.

We have seen no convincing evidence which supports those prejudices.

We are only able to pass judgement on what we have witnessed.

- no review of JSA.
- the introduction of workfare i.e. New Deal.
- the cutting of lone parent benefits.
- the benefit integrity programme.
- threats to disabled benefits.
- the proposed scrapping of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

All of these cause us real concern. Now is the time to write to your MP, and in the strongest terms set out your concerns about New Labour's proposals for the Welfare State.

### ABOVE ALL DEMAND SOCIAL JUSTICE!

## BAMS TO BE PRIVATISED

The Benefits Agency Medical Service (BAMS) which directly employs 1500 doctors and assesses claims for disabled benefits is to be privatised.

Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Social Security is expected to award the £80 million a year contract to a private contractor. BAMS currently see 600,000 people a year. Although we have been critical of BAMS in the past, we are extremely concerned about this latest development. The final decision on who receives benefits such as Incapacity Benefit and DLA will still lie with civil servants. The reports on which such decisions will be based will still originate with a private contractor. A contractor who will have to meet tender specifications which include "gain and maintain significant cost reductions."

We can put it no better than Keith Bradley MP, one of Labour's junior social security ministers who condemned similar Tory proposals prior to the election, and said "I am angry that people making commercial assessments on peoples conditions should profit."

Couldn't put it better ourselves.

# FEATURE

## THIS IS NOTTS OFFA

OFFA is a simple way of raising money for TUC Unemployed Workers Centre (like Mansfield) and of building solidarity between employed and unemployed workers.

OFFA asks all employed workers to make a small regular contribution (20p per week, £1 a month) to the fund. This can be collected through voluntary deduction from wages or salary, bankers orders or personal collection.

The money is used to maintain and extend the many and varied services provided by the Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre to the unemployed, employed, trade unions and the community. Every penny you give goes to support the work of MUWC across Nottinghamshire. OFFA is directly accountable to you, the contributors and to the trade union movement.

Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre (MUWC) was opened in January 1994 and provides a voice for the unemployed, unwaged and underemployed, i.e. Tough Times, Unemployed Journal. MUWC provides a wide range of practical resources, meeting rooms etc. for the trade union movement, the community and unemployed workers. MUWC involves all workers - employed and unemployed, in campaigns affecting those in work and out of work. MUWC provides advice and representation on welfare rights - over £400,000 won back for claimants in 1997, as well as researching and campaigning for changes in legislation.

MUWC supports all trade unionists in their efforts to save or create jobs and preserve working conditions.

MUWC is also involved in careers guidance (over 200

helped in 1997), Counselling, Money Advice, Health and Safety (Trade Union Safety Committee), LETS, Credit Unions, Co-ops, DTP and much more.

Every unemployed worker is a talent wasted, a valuable resource unused. In Britain today over 1,500,000 people (Government figures) are unemployed. The real figure is over 3,750,000. As Labour set out to reform the Welfare State, people need expert advice and representation. The changes to lone parent benefit, reviews of disability benefits, and the introduction of New Deal, are helping to increase the workloads within MUWC.

Unemployed workers were once your colleagues, they are now isolated from normal life. Notts OFFA recognises that the battle against unemployment is the responsibility of all workers.

You can play your part by contributing.

Unemployment undermines the wages and conditions of those in work by providing a vast pool of cheap labour. Their struggle for decent jobs with decent wages and conditions is the same struggle as yours.

Remember with each payment you will be helping to build an organisation which will be there whenever you or your family need it.

### NOTTS OFFA

#### EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED TOGETHER FIGHTING FOR JOBS AND RECOVERY

For further information on Notts OFFA and MUWC, to arrange a speaker, or a visit to MUWC, contact Jon O'Neill, Notts OFFA, c/o MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts NG18 1EY or telephone (01623) 424720.



## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ONE FUND FOR ALL PLEDGE

Please print clearly

I (name) \_\_\_\_\_  
of (address) \_\_\_\_\_

Pledge a regular contribution to Nottinghamshire OFFA.  
At the rate of \_\_\_\_\_ per WEEK/MONTH (please delete)

To be collected by (please delete) ☐ PERSONAL COLLECTION  
☐ CHECK OFF  
☐ BANKER'S ORDER

OR EVEN  
BETTER  
RETURN THE  
PLEDGE  
FORM  
  
NOTTS  
OFFA -  
SOLIDARITY  
NOT  
CHARITY



# FEATURE

## THE WORKERS BEER COMPANY AND NOTTS OFFA

The Workers Beer Company which is situated in London, is managed by a voluntary management committee and wholly owned by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council. The WBC is a fundraising body of the Labour and Trade Union which gives support to the campaigning and solidarity work of grassroots organisations and their campaigns, such as our particular group, Notts OFFA (One Fund for All). Money is raised by running beer tents at bars at festivals/benefits, as well as organising and promoting major music festivals.

The company was established in 1985 and over £633,000 has been raised by different organisations since this time. 1996 saw the opening of the WBC's first pub the Bread and Roses, which apart from being a very successful business, also has a function room which can be used free of charge by organisations for meetings etc.

Thousands of volunteers from many different organisations, representing their own particular campaign have come from all over the country to work at these events through the WBC, and the majority are well disciplined, hardworking and co-operative. It cannot be stressed highly enough of the quality of the servers who, as well as representing the WBC, are also representing their own particular organisation and as in our own group, Notts OFFA, it is the behaviour of the members which reflects on the reputation of the organisation. Everyone who has represented Notts OFFA at the many festivals we have been part of, has reacted in a mature and reliable manner and to carry on being part of this we must ensure that we carry on sending the right people. We have never encountered any problems with the WBC and we want it to stay like that for the sake of Notts OFFA.

It is imperative that our members understand what the WBC stands for. Failure to know this would mean us not being allowed into events.

Notts OFFA has now been associated with the WBC since 1996, and although we go to the festivals to work, the weekends away can also be counted as a mini holiday. Everyone who has represented Notts OFFA has thoroughly enjoyed every festival or concert that we have been associated with. From Madness at Finsbury Park in June 1996, right up to Reading 1997, it has been a non-stop roller coaster ride of top bands. The main three festivals are the ones that really stand out, those being Glastonbury, Phoenix and Reading. At these events it is essential that staff camp overnight where there is an enclosed 'village' area, set aside for the WBC staff. The village area has toilets that actually flush, showers that actually give out hot water as well as cold, a catering tent and subsidised bar which is open till the early hours for those who can manage it. In the WBC's village, the general atmosphere is great. From the servers up

to the management, everyone pulls together and no-one is classed as being any better than anyone else, but are all put on an equal footing.

As I have mentioned, we go to these festivals to work and to raise funds for Notts OFFA, but it still gives us plenty of time to enjoy the festival. The maximum we normally work each day is six hours, and after each shift servers receive two free alcoholic drinks, (the rest of the time it normally just costs us a pound a pint). As well as this, bottled water and soft drinks are free throughout the festival. The Beer Company also provides a meal voucher to the value of £3.75 for each day you are working, which buys a main meal or pudding or can be exchanged for breakfast or snacks. There is no charge for the voucher, so it normally makes more sense to buy your main meal with it. The catering tent is open from about 7.00 a.m./7.30 a.m. for breakfast and is normally open until about 2.30 a.m. for all those night owls with hunger pains. The prices are very reasonable and they offer a good selection from day to day.

On arrival, you are issued with your pass, which must be guarded with your life as this gains you access to the village and concert area. On no account must passes be given to other individuals, as this is a very serious matter especially if done deliberately to get friends into the festival. This could mean removal from the village and could also jeopardise the future part that Notts OFFA have with WBC. So it is not just the individual who cops it, it would also result in further action and could have further implications for the WBC.

Notts OFFA receives £5 an hour per volunteer for our work. After volunteers' expenses have been met, the remainder goes to support Mansfield Unemployed Workers' Centre.

We are always on the look out for new volunteers. Obviously you won't be classed as first choice, but there is every chance that you will be involved at a concert or festival. The earlier we send our lists through, the greater the chance of getting more places. We are also after people who can drive and have access to a car, as we are short of drivers, so this would increase your possibility of going. All travelling expenses will be met if needed.

So, if you are into music such as the Prodigy, Metallica, Ocean Colour Scene, Radiohead etc., love festivals/concerts, like meeting new and interesting people and are available from May until September, then get in touch.

Hope to hear from you soon.

**Martin Beresford**  
Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre  
2 Beech Avenue  
Mansfield  
NG18 1EY  
Tel. 01623 424720

## BOOK REVIEW

### DOWNSIZE THIS!

"We're a bunch of fools aren't we? Today, we're actually earning less than we earned, in real dollars, in 1979! Millions of people officially are out of work -7,266,000. But the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau estimate another 5,378,000 are also unemployed but *uncounted*. Another 4,500,000 more are working *part-time* but looking for a full time job. And then there are the 2,520,000 Americans who are working full-time and earning a wage that is *below the poverty line*.

*That's nearly 20 million people who cannot make the bare minimum they need to survive!*"

Sounds familiar? The figures may not mean much to you but otherwise this describes the situation that confronts most working people in the UK as well. In *Downsize This!*, Michael Moore presents a searing indictment of late 20th century corporate capitalism, describing the devastating effects on communities when large corporations are able to move their entire operations to where labour is cheapest, while castigating the politicians and union leaders who have permitted, even actively collaborated in, this process.

Oh! I nearly forgot to mention that it is also *very funny*. Chapter headings include: *If Clinton Had Balls*, *Why Are Union Leaders so F#!@ing Stupid*, and *Free Us, Nelson Mandela*. *O.J Is Innocent* may cause you to see a much publicised legal case from a new perspective.

Moore may not think much of current American union leaders but he recognises that trade unions have never been more necessary:

"When the early unionists stood up to the companies it resulted in a higher standard of living for all of us - even for those who didn't belong to a union. .... Those of you who like to say nasty things about unions should look around and see how much

better your life is because somebody else *in a union* fought for those things. Businesses will never do the right thing unless they are forced to."

The final quoted sentence is one which fanatical advocates of the free market would do well to ponder.

So read this book. It will make you very angry. However, I doubt whether getting angry has ever been more fun.

**Graham Watkins**  
Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre



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