

Published by the Nottinghamshire Association of Trades Union Councils

## TORIES STRIKE OUT

Although we have just come through a period of the lowest numbers of days lost by industrial action this century, the increasing wave of militancy is seen by the Tories as another opportunity to attack the unions. You would think they don't like us.

Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, who all summer has been threatening to end the Royal Mail monopoly, and to bring forward legislation to outlaw strikes in the public services, has even more up his sleeve. In fact he is not only after Trade Unionists in the public sector, he is after us all.

A shortly to be issued Green Paper goes much further than anybody expected. Although the general consensus is that these proposals will more likely be in the Tories next election manifesto, they would quickly move into law if the Tories win.

The Green Papers says "The Government believes there is now widespread recognition that the right to cull strikes should be constrained within reasonable limits". Are they on drugs? As Trade Unionists in this country, we already operate against some of the most

repressive anti-trade union legislation in Europe.

The Green Paper goes on to say "some trade unions cannot be relied on to exercise self-restraint". Why not be honest and say, that after all the obstacles placed before us since 1979, trade unionists still keep voting for industrial action, and are prepared to go on strike. They have at least given up on trying to define essential services. Even the legal profession cannot dream up an accurate definition which would provide them with more fees.

What the Green Paper proposes is:

1. That a trade union's immunity from civil action will be removed if a strike is judged to have "disproportionate or excessive effects" - i.e. involves a risk to life; has health or safety implications; is a threat to national security; leads to serious damage to property or the economy; involves "significant disruption of everyday life" in part or all of the country.
2. After a lawful ballot, a Trade Union would need to give 14 days notice of strike action (it is currently 7 days).
3. That a majority entitled to vote in a strike ballot are in favour of the action,

i.e. if they don't vote, that is counted as a no vote.

4. That rebalancing will be required every three months during prolonged disputes.
5. End the right of employees to take time off for Trade Union activities.

6. Abolish the right to information for collective bargaining purposes.
- All that is left is to make trade unions illegal, or at least make that illegality official.

Notts TU News has consistently called for the repeal of all anti Trade Union legislation. It is a basic right to belong to a Trade Union, to be represented by a Trade Union, and to take action when necessary.

So much comment on Trade Union legislation seems to be driven by a feeling that all trade unionists are just looking for an excuse to take industrial action. In fact strikes are a result of management heavy handedness, or of a failure of negotiations - usually as a result of management's wish to dictate rather than negotiate.

It has to be a priority for all trade unionists at the next election to ensure that we win back our rights. Unshackle the Unions, it is that simple.

### WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

Following the recent victory in the European Court of Justice, we reprint below the text of a briefing on the Working Time Directive which originated with Stephen Hughes MEP and Peter Skinner MEP.

The Working Time Directive is due to come into force on 23 November 1996.

The main terms of the Directive are:

\* *Daily rest* - entitlement to 11 hours consecutive rest per 24 hours, calculated over 14 days.

\* *Breaks* - work breaks where the working day exceeds 6 hours.

\* *Weekly rest period* - an uninterrupted rest period of 35 hours every 7 days. This can be calculated over 14 days.

\* *Average weekly working time* - must not exceed 48 hours per 7 days calculated over 4 months. The 4 months can be extended to 6 months by member states or 12 months by collective agreement for a wide range of businesses.

\* *Annual paid leave* - three weeks which cannot be replaced by a payment in lieu, rising to four weeks in 1999.

\* *Night work* - people whose normal daily work includes at least 3 hours between midnight and 5 am should have to work no more than 3 hours every 24 hours, calculated over 14 days.

### FLEXIBILITY AND EXEMPTIONS

Areas of work excluded are transport workers, sea fisherman, other work at sea and doctors in training.

There are two types of opt out:

1. Delay in application, insisted upon by the

British Government.

\* *The four week annual leave entitlement will not be implemented until 1999* - during that time workers will have a right to 3 weeks paid leave per year.

\* *Until 2003 workers will be able to work more than 49 hours per week if they choose to do so. But Governments must still introduce laws to protect workers who do not want to work more than 48 hours.*

### 2. Flexible application.

\* *The main terms need not apply to family workers, workers officiating at religious ceremonies, executives or others with "autonomous decision making powers".*

\* *For a range of other jobs and workplaces the provisions on daily rest, work breaks, weekly working time, annual leave and the period over which the above are calculated can be carried by legislation or collective agreement - but there must be equivalent compensatory rest or, in exceptional circumstances, equivalent protection. Types of work include Medina workers; post and telecommunications workers; security industry; hospitals, residential homes and prisons; gas, electricity and water production and distribution; industries where there is a continuous process; research and development. Flexibility is also allowed where the work is highly seasonal such as agriculture and tourism and to deal with accidents or imminent danger.*

### WORKING TIME IS A HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE

The Government's legal challenge to the Directive is based on the claim that working time is not a health and safety issue. Long working

hours cause accidents, illness and stress.

British people work the longest hours in Europe - an average of 43.5 hours a week compared to 40.3 hours put in by our continental colleagues. Britain is the only country where the working week has got longer over the last ten years. Nearly half of the 7 million European male workers doing more than 48 hours a week are employed in Britain.

A leading occupational health researcher, Professor Cary Cooper, found that working over 48 hours a week doubled the risk of coronary heart disease. A study by Elsa Ferri and Kate Smith of City University shows that long hours worked by fathers places family life under strain.

### AFTER THE JUDGEMENT: WHAT NEXT?

It is likely that the Government will lose the case. Labour believes the Government should accept the European Court of Justice ruling and draw up the necessary legislation to make it part of British Law. No one should be forced against their will to work very long hours. The Directive gives employers ample flexibility and safeguards workers from abuse. Labour would expect employers and employees to find sensible ways of working within the framework of the Directive. The Government may say it is not going to accept the verdict - and take the issue to the IGC negotiations. In the meantime they may refuse to implement the Directive. If they do this, the Government could be taken to the European Court of Justice and fined heavily for not implementing the judgement. Also, a worker could go to a British Court to get the rights contained in the Directive implemented.

## Notts TRade Union News NEEDS YOU

At 8 pages, and bi-monthly, Notts TU News hopes to play a useful role in the movement across Nottinghamshire. And all for free. The fact that we have moved to 8 pages is causing us some problems.

For a start our Editor's social life is now in tatters, so help him start a new life by: contributing articles, cartoons ideas etc. offering to help edit, layout and DTP Notts TU News

ordering Notts TU News

Obviously an 8 page free newsletter is a big drain on the limited resources of Notts CATUC. We are concerned that our Treasurer may be unable to sleep at night. I know, hard to believe, you thought he was so laid back.

Help cure his insomnia by:

sending us a donation with your regular order taking out an advertisement in Notts TU News (rates as per New Years Greetings)

What New Years Greetings? - Those that you are all going to rush to us by December 16th in time for Issue 9, which will be published in the New Year. MEPs, MPs, Trade Union branches, district committees, regional councils etc. are all eligible to take up this offer. For a ¼ of a page it will cost only £25, for a ½ page £50 and for a full page £100.

Please remember the deadline date, December 16th, you can contact Notts TU News at

NTUN, Box N, c/o MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 1EY or telephone (01623) 424720.

### LET'S MAKE THIS CHRISTMAS THE SEASON OF GOODWILL TO NOTTS TU NEWS.

If you think work has made your 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"

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## ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The foundation for Social Justice will be a charitable company whose aim will be to work in the area of social policy. In particular the foundation shall:

- receive funds to advance its objects
- conduct research into the impact, the effects and alleviation of unemployment, especially in relation to social policy and publish useful results of such research
- provide advice and support to those suffering hardship as a result of the effects of prolonged unemployment
- to promote the work of the Foundation by holding exhibitions, meetings, lectures, classes, seminars and courses.

The Foundation for Social Justice is to be set up following the "Responding To The Jobseeker's Allowance: New Strategies For The Future" Conference held in Congress House on July 10th 1996. The Conference was organised by the TUC Unemployed Centres with support from the TUC, and by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. It is envisaged that the Foundation for Social Justice will provide an opportunity to develop new alternatives to the orthodoxies of the present social security system. The time is ripe to examine all of the options in order to

promote a benefit system which locates the individual at its centre.

### RESEARCH

Initial research will be conducted in the following policy area:

- benefit levels
- participation in labour market programmes
- barriers to work in the benefit system
- benefit bridges to work
- the National Insurance System

### ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Advice and support will be offered to individuals who have been treated extra-ordinarily by the operation of the social security system, in particular the new framework set out by the Jobseeker's Act 1995. This could include supporting individuals seeking to establish new areas of case law in connection with Jobseeker's Agreement, Jobseeker's Direction and Hardship payments. It is possible that the workings of the Act and its Regulations may be flawed and thus legal challenges pursued, particularly in the areas of civil liberties and the provision of a basic 'safety net'.

For further information contact Jon O'Neill, MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 1EY. Tel (01623) 424720. Or Kevin Coyne (0151) 7093995.

## UNION RECOGNITION

You will all have seen Labours, oops, New Labours proposals of 50% + 1 on TU recognition. Mansfield and District TUC believe that this does not go far enough, and have now issued a leaflet on this issue.

To receive your copy/ copies send an SAE to MansfieldandDistrictTUC, Box M, c/o MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 1EY.



# Information Technology and TRADE UNIONISTS

Confronted by new inventions which threatened him and his family with starvation, Ned Ludd smashed frame knitting machines - an understandable if doomed response to new technology.

Today, we as Ludd's successors are faced with new information and communications technologies, whose impact on our work and our lives in general is both frustrating and exciting.

The information society - telecommunications, the internet, the world wide web, the superhighway, it has many guises - is not going to go away. Nor can we go around smashing every personal computer in every home and workplace.

Like all new technologies, it offers opportunities and dangers, and the challenge facing all of us, whether involved in trade unions, as political representatives, or as citizens is the same as that facing our predecessors during earlier revolutions. Simply, how to make sure that the new technologies serve the needs of all of us and not just the fortunate few.

In 1994 the European Commission took its first tentative steps towards getting to grips with the new Information Society, with the publication of its Action Plan "Europe's Way to the Information Society". This year has seen the arrival of a Green Paper -

"Living and Working in the Information Society - People First."

The Green Paper is designed to promote wide discussion and awareness of the social issues involved, and along with dialogue between member states & European institutions, specifically intends to focus the social dialogue between employers and unions on these issues and stimulate joint initiatives at a European level.

The Information society will be - in some ways, it is already - the most fundamental change of our time. Immense potential benefits are possible, but so are huge drawbacks.

The Commission believes that public policy on the information society should be to strengthen the capacity of the EU economy to create jobs and achieve high levels of sustainable economic growth. It should underpin democracy, give access to decision making and social justice. It should reduce bureaucracy and improve the quality and efficiency of public administration. It should help overcome the problems of European citizens who are disadvantaged because of poverty, unemployment and illness or disability, living in a remote area.

Admirable goals indeed, and the European Commission further argues that, if

European policy on its development is to win public support, that it must reflect the ideas and values of transparency and social justice which have shaped the European Union itself.

While many of us would argue that the development of the EU has often been anything but transparent - to many it has been a total mystery - this should be no reason not to take the Commission at their word. We do need to be involved in the policy development of the Information Society. It does need us to actively take part, and comment on the Green Paper - if we don't buy a ticket, we can't win the lottery.

The full text of the Green Paper can be found in the European Commission Document COM (96) 389 of 24th July 1996, or a copy of the executive summary can be obtained by ringing my office on 0115 941 0653. Comments on the Green Paper are invited from all interested groups and individuals and should be sent to: People First, European Commission, Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (DG V/B/5), 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.

Mel Read M.E.P.

## MAGNET DISPUTE

At 9.00 a.m. on the 3rd of September the management at Magnet, a factory making fitted kitchens in Darlington, locked out 350 workers, many with 35 years service. In what can only be described as a final show of strength with the security men and rotweiler dogs advancing as one to put a chain on the gate. All of those workers are now sacked for exercising their legal rights. The dispute developed over a pay claim. Workers from UCATT, T&GWU, GMB and the AEEU Unions are now facing the loss of their jobs because of a management team who are determined to break the will and organisation of its workers, and starve them back to work under draconian rules. Their attitude from the first day of picketing has been hard faced, intimidatory, cynically calculated methods. The dispute over pay started after the breakdown of negotiations over many months and meetings. Ballots results were 3-1 in favour of action in the form of continuous strike. The company reacted by bringing scabs from their Keighley factory, showrooms and depots. They have run a propaganda campaign by telling blatant lies through the media to try to frighten the workers back to work.

The claim by the company that the offer represented a 3% increase was not correct, there are a number of people who are Red Circled and have not received a pay rise for 4 years and may not receive one for another 1 or 2 years. They have been offered a £3 a week productivity deal providing they can reach a 99% production output, which the workers claim is an impossible task. The highest ever achieved in the past was a 95% output, so effectively this means no rise for these people again. This is only part of what concerns the workforce. The company want to increase the number of graded people, move flexibility so they are able to pay less.

In an attempt to show strength and resolve, the company went completely over the top by installing a £15,000 infra-red Video Camera focused on the main gate, and hired a security company whose employees and their dogs certainly looked intimidatory. They have sent a number of letters by hand to every employee, with a form requesting the employee to sign saying they would return to work and never take industrial action again. Injunctions have been served on eleven pickets.

All scabs hotel bills are paid at less than £50 per night, and a fleet of vans hired to ferry them back and forth. This is to make it look like there are a significant number of

scabs working there.

After a fortnight the pickets have become the more determined, and huge support both moral and financial, is coming in from many local workers.

With the Keighley factory now in dispute over pay, and the workforce there having voted 2-1 to reject the company's offer, it looks like a ballot for action there is imminent. This must tell the company something about their style of management, or mismanagement.

As the strike develops, so does the workers organisation. A women's support group has now been established and a series of mass pickets organised.

As with any dispute, the organisation need support financially as well as politically.

To send donations and for further information contact:-

Peter Hutchinson - Magnet Strike Committee, Labour Rooms, 123 Victoria Road, Darlington.

## EDITORIAL

Okay!! I know, pride comes before a fall. There I am in Issue 7 as pleased as punch that we have expanded to eight pages, and what happens? We are back down to four.

I might add that this is not through lack of interest or support, our distribution list is getting bigger, we have sufficient articles for eight pages, or even more. The problem is time and ever increasing workloads.

So apologies for this smaller issue, if you answer our cry for help on the back page, then hopefully we will be back to eight pages in January.

Deadline for Issue 9, Adverts - December 16th,

Articles - December 21st.

Notts TU News, Box N, c/o MUWC, 2 Beech Avenue, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 1EY. Tel: (01623) 424720.

## Trade Union Badges

Mansfield Unemployed Workers' Centre is anxious to obtain Trade Union badges that are either surplus to requirements or left over from before an amalgamation. Unions and their members have so far been most generous in donating such badges. Currently, we hold a small stock of obsolete badges from these sources and can offer collectors such badges as KFAT (4 designs), NUCPS, IRSF, COHSE and UNISON at various prices.

The Centre welcomes donations of badges to supplement our embryo collection both obsolete and current examples are sought. Accumulations for resale in support of OFFA are also sought.

We have access to John Hammond's "Trade Union Badges: A Guide for Collectors" (3rd edition 1995) which is a comprehensive listing of ALL known Trade Union badges.

We also subscribe to his quarterly *Trade Union Badge Collectors' News*.

If you have a query about Trade Union badges, if you wish to buy, sell, exchange or especially donate, ask to see Jon or Alan.

In addition, we have a limited number of NUCPS and IRSF items such as sweatshirts, ties and headscarves.

Of interest to collectors and those interesting in the 1984/85 miners' strike, is the poster we have obtained entitled "Closed by Tories".

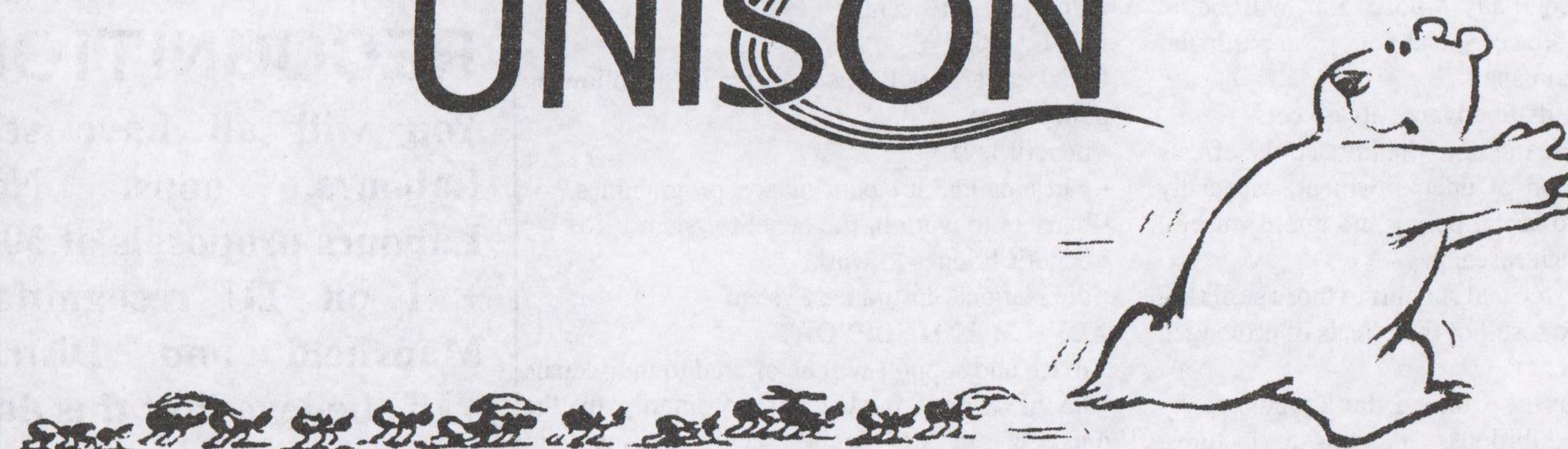
This full colour, art quality poster measures 100x70cm and shows each colliery and workshop closed by the Tories in the 10 years since the strike. Over 200 badges are depicted. It is a browser's delight.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy can send £15 made payable to **Nine One Seven at PO Box 91 Cannock WS12 4YT.**

This includes postage in a secure and protective tube, and a donation to the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. If you are interested, it is on display in MUWC's reception.

If you want to be heard — speak in

# UNISON



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