

# RESISTANCE

No.2 Dec 96-Jan 97



## TIS THE SEASON TO BE ANGRY

### THE JSA - REVISITED

THE JSA has been in force for the past 3 months (introduced October 7th). We hoped to provide an outline of how it has been put into action in Newcastle and the north east area generally. Unfortunately it has proved very difficult to get an overall picture of its implementation. However some interesting anecdotes and pieces of information have surfaced.

One comrade was forced to make an appointment for a "Restart Interview", when he turned up, he was told it was cancelled because of the workload. He was given a new appointment, but when he attended he was told the same story. His interview has been cancelled until further notice.

In South Tyneside DSS workers managed to accidentally give a JSA claimant a criminal record. After his JSA interview this poor soul received a letter telling him: "You're a prisoner - you can't claim". This classic clerical error was also put down to the workload.

Earlier this month an ACF sympathiser attended a training day for local advice workers dealing with JSA claimants. It was organised by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG). They went through some interesting facts. The government has spent £350 million to set up the JSA, which is expected to save them £250 million a

year in benefit reductions. Nationally Job Centres have been given the target of reducing JSA claimants by 215,000 over the next year. Staff have been told to reject or redirect to other benefits 10% of all new JSA claimants. Hence at the end of next year another apparent reduction in unemployment.

The CPAG outlined, what is common knowledge now, that the staff on the front desks of the Job Centres

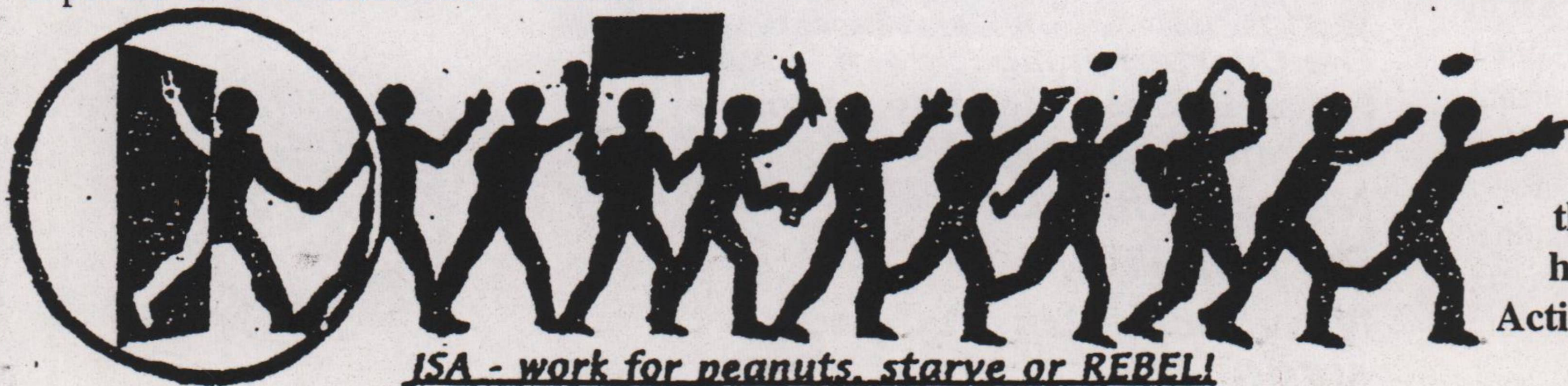
Job Centres have acquired new computer packages, which have enhanced their power over claimants in two new ways. Sanctions on the benefits of those penalised for whatever reason will be enforced nationally with the aid of a computer link up. Therefore moving to another area to make a new claim to avoid sanctions will be impossible - travellers will be well and truly shagged by that.

Job Centre computer packages will also have the details of every job in the area. JSA claimants can be directed - i.e. forced to apply - to these jobs. Job Centre staff are being encouraged to collect information of any postcards - odd jobs, services required, etc. - in shop windows. So who knows what shitty jobs people will be forced to take.



have a direct say in decisions regarding those being interviewed. The staff must counter-sign any JSA agreement made with a claimant. This has the counter staff concerned for their personal safety. Consequently it can be safely assumed that it will be the less assertive more vulnerable claimants who will be affected first. More aggressive claimants being harder to deal with and more of a threat.

It has been suggested that "relatively few people" have been affected by the JSA to date, because the government has ordered a softly softly approach in the pre-election period. This plus the obvious problems with workload and an unenthusiastic staff have delayed the full impact and implications of the JSA coming into full effect. Once these problems are overcome no doubt the worst excesses predicted by most leaflets on the subject will come to be.



**JSA - work for peanuts. starve or REBEL!**

If you are being hassled by the dole and would like some help contact the Unemployed Action Group on 0191 258 7411



## GIT OF THE MONTH LOTTERY SCROOGE

Murton businessman Harry Thomas, who scooped £2.6 million on the lottery this September, has told drivers at his Durham transport firm that they may be on the dole by Christmas. Thomas nearly had us all in tears here at *Resistance*, as he explained how the prospect of sacking drivers at his firm was "sad". Holding back his emotions, he went on "It's got me really gutted. If I can help them out over Christmas then I will, but you can't bank on it because of lack of work".

We agree that it's sad. It's a sad excuse to explain how with over two and a half million in the bank and gaining interest by the day, he can't manage to keep 4 men in jobs. With Christmas and the new year to get through, we're sure the families of the drivers would like the same weighty burden of how to balance their millions. As it is, turkey Thomas would do well to keep an eye on his back, as the only stuffing he'll be told to get this year won't be of the sage and onion variety!

## UPDATE . . .

Following up on our report in the last issue, Health Workers at Newcastle's General Hospital agreed to return to work at the end of November after accepting a pay deal off the City Health Trust. The deal gives staff at the General a measly 1% on top of a nationally agreed 2% rise. Pitifully small though it is, it's more than they would have got had they not joined together to show slimy health chief Lionel Joyce it was an issue of principle by walking out. No one will forget his team of quangoes doing the cleaning and ancillary work while the health workers stood outside watching.

## DSS get physical

A Newcastle woman ended up breaking her arm recently during a Benefits Agency test to prove her eligibility for disability benefit. Sarah Chapman, 43, suffers from a spinal condition, spondylosis, which has meant she has been unable to work since 1991. When asked by the doctor during a test to kneel down she couldn't, nevertheless the doctor forced her to. Sarah was left unable to get up, having

to ask the doctor to help her.

The doctor refused saying this would be cheating, and forced Sarah to push herself up. As she did this, she fractured her wrist and forearm. Sarah complained to the Disability Benefits centre in Newcastle, where she underwent the test, and the response? They cut off her £70 a week benefit on the recommendation of the doctor!!!

Her benefit has now been reinstated after she took her story to a local newspaper, and she has been granted Legal Aid to sue the DSS and the doctor for personal injury. She is also appearing before a House of Commons select committee set up to investigate the impact of tougher disability benefit rules. (info from NUTFIN)

## YOU'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD

That's the bosses, rather than us of course. Local companies feel so confident that one has actually had the nerve to pay 3 men 60 pence an hour! They did 50 hours work and received £33.04, over a tenner less than full dole. They obviously left the company, M.P. BURKE of Houghton, hopefully with a big fuck off. Although the TUC want to know about more examples of low pay, they'll be unwilling to do much except bleat the weakest of pleas to the bosses. What's needed is our own initiative, organising outside and against both the employers and the unions. It's up to us to organise against the whole system that allows this, rather than the one or two employers who get spotlighted.

## celebrity scabs and pickets

Having recently read that Ulrikakaka Jonnson got her TV break by scabbing during the TVAM strike, we are happy to report that other celebs haven't always been so spineless. Comedian Lee Hurst recently revealed why the *Sun's* right wing TV critic Gary Bushell gives him bad press. He suggested "if a hidden agenda

exists, it may have been because I was on the picket line at Wapping. If Gary Bushell thought it was me throwing bricks at him, I probably was. Next time I see him, he won't be able to hide inside an armoured bus". Nice One. Maybe Lee can pass on some tactics to the workers in the north east who are also having to deal with scabs. He was actually arrested at Wapping and seems to have more of an idea than most of the famous. "I was brought up with the fact you had to strike to get anywhere ... united you stand, divided you fall". Too right, and if you can take the piss out of those in authority whilst you're doing it, all the better. Lee Hurst, comedian, picket, anarchist? Well not quite. He's actually linked up with other comedians in a group called the Socialist Labour Party, their main jokes being about socialism through reforms etc. Laugh?? we nearly registered to vote!

## Black & White & Green ?

Plans in the pipeline for Newcastle would mean losing Leazes Park, Castle Leazes moor and Exhibition Park to make way for a new football stadium. Bad news for the thousands who enjoy the last of the city's free public open space, especially if you can't afford holidays. So why not use derelict industrial land? There's no shortage of it, yet feasibility studies hardly bothered to look seriously elsewhere. The Council and local media have conducted their campaign with indecent haste, bordering on hysteria - while the commercial bosses at NUFC have kept silent . . .

'No Business On The Moor' campaigners include many Newcastle supporters, but have restricted themselves to middle class tactics like letter writing, petitions and begging important people not to let it happen. Let's hope they learn soon that 'respectability' isn't enough, and the legal planning process can't be trusted. If direct action becomes unavoidable, winning over ordinary fans might mean the difference between success and failure.

**ORGANISE!**

The Quarterly magazine of the ACF.  
For a FREE sample copy, or more  
information write to:

**Newcastle ACF,  
PO Box 1TA,  
Newcastle Upon Tyne,  
NE99 1TA.**

