

Notes on Unemployment & Work.



INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is an invitation to discuss some of the thorny problems presented by 'Unemployment', 'Work' and the world wide capitalist crisis. I hope that by putting across some of the things that seem important to me will encourage others to do the same. Developing our understanding is vital to our ability to act as revolutionaries.

KEYNES AND THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE STATE

The ruling class' answer to the massive unemployment of the 1930s lay partly in Keynes' measures of increasing consumption (effective demand) by welfare state payments, public works (eg housing estates) to provide employment, and getting investment right (driving the economy forward). (A lot of this I find confusing) All this had a big effect on the nuclear family (women, children and men), 'community' life, labour mobility.

It also meant much more State control. For example, the 50s and early 60s many workers began to use the piecework system to their own advantage; splitting wages away from productivity (See Tony Cliff. 'Productivity Deals') The State pioneered Measured Day Work to smash this, using the (nationalised) mines 1966 PLA and British Leyland (formed 1968) etc. Now the 'social peace' has gone and Unemployment's back. Where does all this put the traditional nationalisation demand?

WHAT'S GOING ON?

How are the ruling class using the crisis to reorganise industry? (e.g. decline of hosiery, build up of oil-related industry) How much is it out of their control? How does this effect the whole of the working class?

Using the Crisis. e.g. Heath's famous Feb. 1974 'Moderates vs Extremists' General Election. (of course, they lost, we won) e.g. removing women out of paid work. e.g. Director of Knitting Industries Fed says industrial action 'irresponsible' e.g. Ryder says to Cowley car workers 'worker harder or else' (The Times 24 Nov)

The Healey 'Unemployment' Budget (Sept 24th) tried to 'cope' with the crisis using mobility, modernising equipment etc. What is the meaning of the dispute within the ruling class (Thatcher vs Adamson vs Wilson vs Murray vs...) about these solutions? What about Crysler?

Mobility e.g. £1,000 rehous-
ing grants and fares paid while
seeking work are part of the
Employment Transfer Scheme in
East Midlands 'Assisted Area'.

Changes at Work Productivity
deals. Time and Motion. Use of
lay offs and short time working.
Use of 'flexishift' in offices
to attract mothers, 'irregular'
young people etc. Speeding up
assembly lines.

The Common Market means planning of labour throughout Europe. The
German ambassador, speaking at Lincs Productivity Assoc. compares notes:
(In Germany) "We have one million unemployed and no unrest at all" (14th
Nov. Evening Post)

School Leavers there's now the Notts County Education Dept's.
'pop-in'... Job Centre on King St. Isn't that nice. Someone's afraid of
trouble.

Immigration Drawn into U.K. in 50s and 60s to suit the needs of the
labour market, many West Indian, Asian and other immigrants have found
themselves blamed for all the evils by the Right etc. Their answer has
included Mansfield Hosiery Strike, Imperial Typewriters etc.

"The increasing number of strikes by black workers for wage
increases, the developing organisation of parents and students
against the non-existent facilities in education, the rapid es-
calation of squatting black communities show, that far from
accepting any sense of guilt, we are in the fight for what is
due to us, crisis or no." Race Today Editorial Sept 75

Women For 10 years (until very recently) the bosses planned to use
women as a cheap, reserve army of workers, in certain expanding sectors
of the economy, of labour-intensive work (services, clerical, public
sector, unskilled manufacturing - esp. light engineering and chemicals -
and technical jobs) Now the crisis is hitting, many women get laid off
first. (Then, not always shown in unemployment
figures). At home, do housework for free. (Financial independence from
husbands/lovers is undermined). Social Services (e.g. nurseries, school
and teacher provision, health care) are reduced. Housing gets worse. The
housework gets harder.

At the same time, 'men's identity' (e.g. the man as breadwinner) is
being challenged both by women going out to work more and, importantly,
by the increasing confidence of women in struggle: many many strikes,
rent strikes, women's movement, abortion campaign etc. Somehow, the
Welfare State and its role feeds back here!!!

'Unemployment' Budget

EXTENSION of the Temporary Employment Subsidy to the whole
country.

GRANT of £30 millions to the Manpower Services Commission to
create 15,000 new jobs for young people in areas of high unemployment,
the emphasis to be on community-linked tasks of cleaning up the
environment.

RECRUITMENT subsidy of £5 a head per week, for 26 weeks, to firms
recruiting unemployed school-leavers.

ADDITIONAL £20 millions for further expansion of training programmes
with particular emphasis on schemes for young people.

FURTHER £3 millions to encourage mobility of workers.

EXTRA £80 millions for industrial development.

EXTRA £20 millions for the building of advance factories and modern-
isation of existing plant.

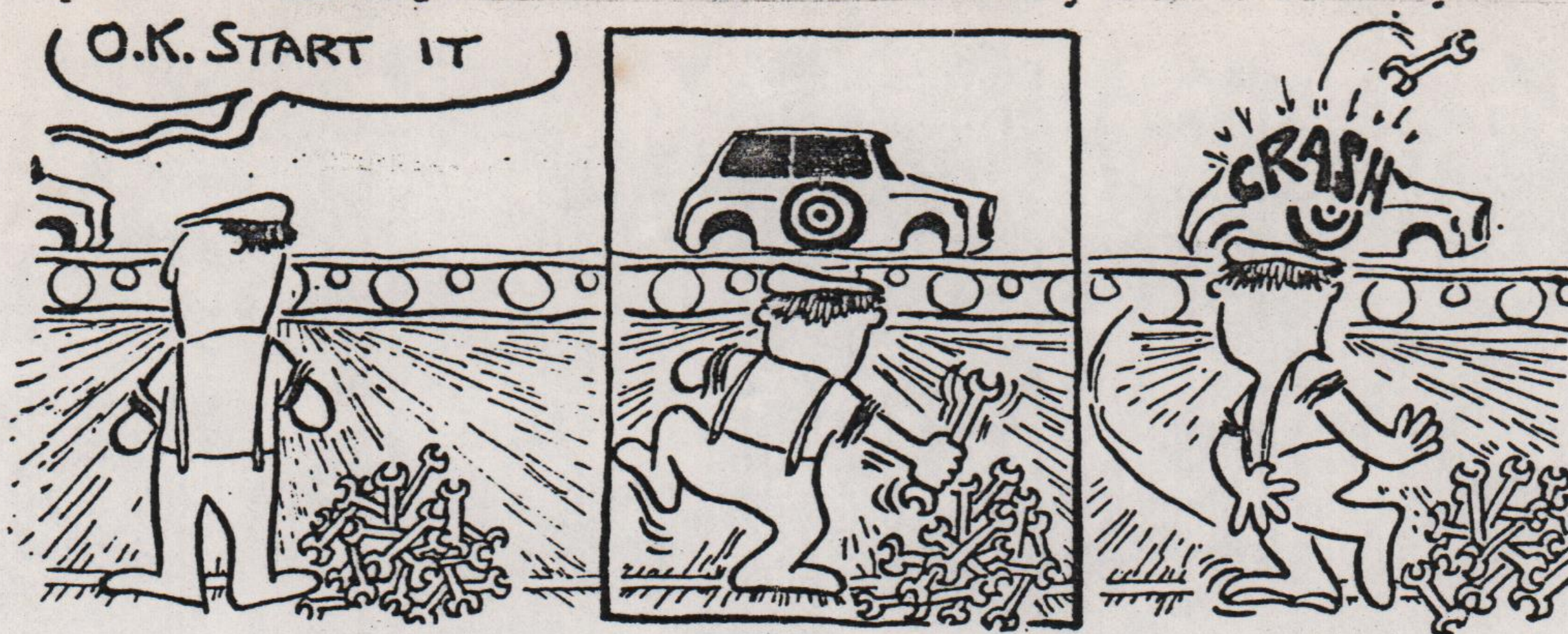
CONSIDERATION to a "carefully defined programme of works" to
help the construction industry.



"Under capitalism, our daily activity
is stolen from us...whether we're in
a factory, office, hospital or are a
housewife."



Socialist Woman - Summer 1972.



SUMMARY

How does capital try to maintain exploitation? It seems to include attacks at many levels, including unemployment, racism, reorganisation, unpaid domestic labour, shifting investment.... Is the Right to Work demand enough? Do we need to oppose speed ups, lay offs without pay, using women and black people to regulate labour force, run down of certain industries and arbitrary movement of people's whole lives.

ANYWAY, WHAT IS WORK? Bringing up children, caring for the elderly almost never counts as 'work'. Much 'work' is wasteful, unnecessary, harmful and meaningless.

DEVELOPING THE STRUGGLE

The most important thing is to look at how this crisis is being fought against already...and how can that fight be strengthened? The issue of valid work was raised in the hospital workers 'pay beds' dispute. How do we make sense of the various demands and actions? What activity serves the needs of the working class as a whole (for unity, against the needs of capital)? The 1972 Miners strike for example, won a wage claim beyond NCBs plans for productivity (although NUM tried to weaken the general interest in this with the Special Case argument)

How do we understand the relevance of claimants unions? - fighting against demoralisation and poverty of unemployment, sometimes linking with workers; women's struggle? - challenging sexist labour policy; prices campaigns - opposing inflation; black people's struggle - challenging racism; the protests etc in hosiery industry etc etc. ????

What about the occupations, right to work marches, go slows, role of the union?

It seems that the car factories with the most industrial action have had fewest redundancies (still orders to complete). Fords (Dagenham) experienced a struggle in 1973 where the shopfloor demanded 'full pay whether working or not'. Is this a right not to work demand? (The Stewards and Union later took up the demand). The activity of the revolutionary left is not insignificant.

If anybody is interested in talking about these subjects contact
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Some Sources: "Women and Social Security"
"Workers Struggle and the Development of
Ford in Britain" by Ferruccio Gambino
"1974" by Big Flame and others
"Race Today"

CLAIM THE WORLD
short pamphlet on Social
Security etc....evaluat-
ing Claimants Unions
2p

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"...the existing factories themselves, as well as the home and the school, are the material embodiments of the capitalist social relations of production."

Struggle against Work Collective
Toronto 1975