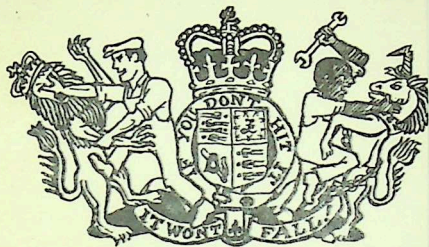


CLAIMANTS HANDBOOK



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FOR STRIKERS



introduction

w h a t w e ' r e u p a g a i n s t

Strikes, as they're fought at present, tend to work against our own interests. The bosses have the press and T.V. to present their case for them. They have the backing of the government. On our side we have the Trade Unions. We all know that many of their leaders, if not all of them, are prepared to negotiate us back to work on worse terms than we came out with. Time and again we've been left with paltry pay rises in exchange for higher productivity and the prospect of mass redundancies. The bosses can afford to hold out for long periods of time. They also have the consolation according to the likelihood of a strike to begin with. And afterwards they can blame us for the high prices and daily charge - prices which we have to pay! If we are going to strike in the future we need to find new ways of organising so that we hurt the bosses and not ourselves.

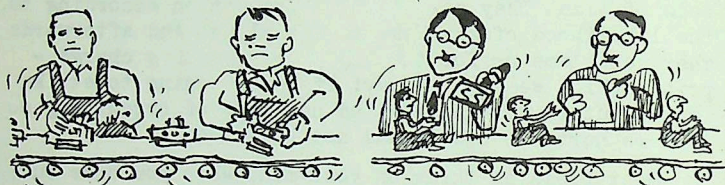
The most pressing thing on your mind when you come out is how you are going to support yourself over the coming weeks. How you are going to feed your children, pay the rent, keep up with H.P. instalments, and cover mounting gas and electricity bills. As long as we have to rely solely on Trade Union strike funds, the strike will remain under the control of a handful of officials. This means being cut off from our workmates, being forced to hang around the house alone. Sooner or later, not only the economic hardship, but also the isolation, and maybe even the boredom, are going to drive us back to work.

s u p p l e m e n t a r y b e n e f i t s

In reality strike funds are no longer the mainstay of people on strike. Supplementary Benefits are a much more important source of income. Much to the dismay of the government amounts being claimed by strikers are rocketing. For instance, workers at Ford recently received £458,180. But even more money could be wrung out of the state. £4 million were paid to striking postmen. It sounds a lot. But with 200,000 people involved in a two-month long strike it could have been at least three or four times as much. The reason it wasn't is quite simple. As one postman put it: 'You get the feeling that the Social Security were being deliberately obstructive. Almost as if it was a policy. "Come back tomorrow," and

tomorrow it's "Come back on Thursday". No one got anything without three or four trips.'

The point is that it is a policy, one which applies to everybody claiming, whether they're unsupported mothers, disabled, old-age pensioners or unemployed. The Department of Health and Social Security (the SS) is an old hand at dodging our demands. It has a tradition dating back to the Elizabethan poor laws. The hours spent being shuffled backwards and forwards, or sitting around in their stuffy, uncomfortable offices are meant to drive home the system's underlying premise - that the only way they'll allow you to support yourself is by sweating it out on the production line. They seem to regard the money they handle, our money, as if it belonged to them. They dole it out with a grudge, as



FACTORY & BUREAUCRACY

if they were doing us some kind of a favour. They have a set of rules, such as 'The Four-Week Rule', 'Wage Stop', 'Voluntary Unemployment' and 'The Industrial Misconduct Rule' (see Appendix IB for explanation) which are designed to keep working people under control and underpin the system's low wage levels.

the ss as strike breaker

When the SS are confronted with strikers their every move is aimed at breaking the strike. It's their job to see that as little money as possible passes our way. In any case they resent the extra work-load, and want to get us off their hands, and back to work, as quickly as possible. Their first tactic is to try to baffle people about their rights. You'll never see an official handout telling you what strikers are entitled to. Of course they may pretend that they're trying to be helpful. In Stoke-on-Trent, the local manager went as far as to address a meeting of striking postmen - but several weeks later the men were approaching N.Staffs Claimants Union for help on very basic matters.

Trade Union officials are often led astray by this method. The Union reps see the Manager or the Regional Controller, or 'influential people', such as MPs, councillors or Trades Union Advisory Committee members do it for them. In the G.P.O. strike U.P.W. leaders visited the Minister himself on several occasions. Wonderful assurances are given. 'Any problems, just see me'. And the problem will be dealt with, even generously - as an isolated problem and, if possible, over the head of the claimant concerned. Meanwhile for the rest of the strikers nothing will have changed.

trade union officials

Trade Union officials have no more experience of dealing with the SS than the other people on strike, sometimes less. Because of their position in the hierarchy they tend to look at the problems of bureaucratic procedure from the official side of the counter. Instead of seeing that harassment, discrimination and intimidation are inherent in a system of means-tested benefits, everything is put down to 'misunderstandings' and individual incompetence. Their solution is always smooth things over with the manager. For their part the SS take every opportunity to use union officials to pacify their members and cool out the situation in the office.

Take, for instance, what happened in Birmingham during the Postal strike. On the first day of the strike a Claimants Union member went along to one of the offices where men were putting in claims. People were approaching the counter in groups and arguing forcefully with the staff. The C.U. rep was able to sit in the office and calculate whether the allowances being given were correct. When they were underpaid the men went back and demanded the full amount, with the result that a large sum of extra money was collected. The manager of the office must then have contacted U.P.W. officials and asked them to come down and steward their men.

They immediately recognised the difficulties the SS were in and came down to sort things out. The next day people were forced to sit quietly in rows and to make claims individually, by themselves. Instead of 'speeding up' payments this method only resulted in inadequate assessments. Men were seen leaving the office and ripping up the giro's they had been handed.

claimants are organising

What is not understood is that supplementary benefits have to be bargained for, collectively. And each individual claim must be followed through to a successful conclusion. Ordinary claimants have learned this through their daily experience of confronting the SS. Over the past two years they have been organising amongst themselves by forming Claimants Unions. A Claimants Union consists solely of claimants and ex-claimants and is run entirely by its members. Claimants back each other in claiming, representing each other in the offices, on visits or at Appeals Tribunals. Claimants Unions have recently been involved in helping strikers with their claims. But we believe that in the future the best way for strikers to win benefits would be by forming their own organisation, The Strike Claimants Union.

Men on strike at Fine Tubes in Plymouth, who have been out for several months now, have been running such a union.

the strike claimants union

The form taken by The Strike Claimants Union will depend on a number of factors, e.g. the size, duration, unions and people involved in the strike. In some cases it could even be the same as the Strike Committee or the existing Union organisation. But, in general, it would probably be more effective if it were an independent group.

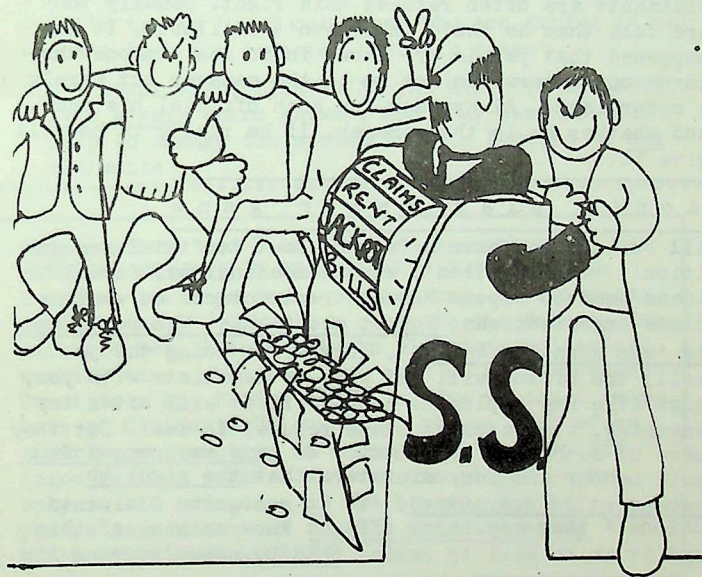
One or more Strike Claimants Union Committees should be set up locally as an early action, preferably before the strike begins. No one knows how long the strike will last, but nothing is lost by being prepared. Wives and dependants can and should take part - they are often more militant about benefit than strikers. Where possible the committee should check out which offices people are going to be claiming at, and put them in touch with each other.

Education is the number one priority. A standard basic leaflet should be produced, one to every striker. (See inside back cover for exemplary strike leaflet). The ministry has no special leaflets for strikers, although there are hundreds of thousands of them every year. They may produce one yet to forestall the 'subversive' ones put out by Claimants Unions. A talk on the subject should be given at a meeting. Similarly those interested

in acting as representatives should be fully briefed and equipped with the necessary tools of the trade - The Supplementary Benefits Handbook, The Social Security Act, 1966, The Social Security Bill, 1971

and this handbook. (There is also a handbook for Unsupported Mothers, available from local Claimants Unions). A Claimants Union speaker may be useful here - members of the various unions will be very willing to give any necessary help or advice.

The Strike Claimants Union is not a 'complaints committee' - it goes on the offensive to obtain as much money as possible for every striker. That's why we call it a union. Members should be encouraged to claim for everything they can think of - especially discretionary grants under Section 13 of the Act. (See 'Discretionary Payments', etc.). Every striker must receive a written assessment, form A 124 A, and must be represented until they get it. This exercise alone will produce financial results. Your own standard forms, as used by other Claimants Unions, may be useful. These are:- questionnaire to collect all the facts about the case (See inside back cover.), request for written assessment, request for visit to discuss grants, appeals forms.



Regular general discussions should take place to decide policy towards the Ministry.....There may be collective decisions to be made or collective action to be taken, particularly on return to work, when it may be necessary to force employers to withdraw advances as the dockers did in 1969. (See 'When the strike ends').

r e p r e s e n t a t i o n

The most important single issue is that of representat-
ion. Claimants should represent each other and accom-
pany each other to interviews to gain experience.

'Hatchet men' can be brought in at a later stage. It is
the confidence of the members that is most important.

Most claimants are really scared of the SS. It is the isolation and ignorance in which people are kept which makes them afraid. Try going into the office en masse or seeing the manager en masse. That's the writing on the wall for the SS. Postmen in Crewe organised a mass delegation to go and see the Regional Controller. This was ten times as effective as any number of man to man talks between him and Trade Union officials.

'Hatchet men' should try to be present in the SS offices at the most important times so that any difficulty can be sorted out on the spot. You should know the SS tactics on such things as getting to see the manager. Claimants are often refused this right. Usually they are told that he isn't in or isn't available. It has happened that people are shown in to see someone who turns out afterwards not to be the manager but merely a supervisor. Always ask any such official his name, and whether he is the manager. If he really is he will give it.

d o n ' t p l a y t h e i r g a m e

All bureaucrats have a fetish about 'official recogn-
ition', 'registration', etc. - meaningless, formal ideas used to impose bosses' restrictions on working class organisations. Forget about this! The real issue is 'who wins the battle'. If you are doing the job well, the office will not want to negotiate with you, just like any employer. Local offices will often try anything, even a point blank refusal to deal. But they have no authority to do this. We have assurances from both Labour and Tory ministers that the right to represent is guaranteed. 'We do recognise Claimants Unions,' they say. Local offices know nothing of this and it is as well to remind them by name-dropping Sir

Keith Joseph.

On the other hand, if you play their game recognition will be lavished on you. To gain their approval you should: deal over your members' heads, and discriminate carefully between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' cases. You should be a mini-ministry in yourself and do their job for them. And you must appreciate the extra administrative strain the strikers place on the office; the less demands you make on the office, the less 'mistakes' the officers would make, so they say. If you are this type of 'responsible body', the management will be happy to discuss confidential information about your member behind his back - violating their own rules.

If you don't play ball, you may find that they don't discuss confidential information with a representative even on the instructions of the claimant, and in his own presence. But so what! Make your own rules - don't accept theirs. That's the only way to win.

GOLDEN RULES:-

- *****
* 1] DON'T NEGOTIATE OVER A CLAIMANT'S HEAD *
* * * * *
* 2] REPRESENT EVERYONE UNCONDITIONALLY *
* - don't judge *
* - don't try to 'weed out those who are trying it on' *
* - don't look for 'special hardship cases' *
* * * * *
* 3] DON'T WORRY ABOUT LIGHTENING THE MINISTRY'S BURDEN *
* - it's always chaos anyway, and your demands will *
* help to change the system for the benefit of all *
* claimants *

This handbook has been compiled by members of the NATIONAL FEDERATION OF CLAIMANTS UNIONS. It is based on the experience of fighting, as claimants, against the SS. There's a need, in the future, for much greater liaison between Claimants Unions and working class organisations such as Shop Stewards Committees and Trades Councils. For instance, members of Claimants Unions could become part of an unemployment section of such groupings. The division between workers and the unemployed works only to the advantage of the bosses. Whether you're in work or out there's only one enemy - LET'S FIGHT THEM TOGETHER.

WHAT YOU SHOULD GET

Supplementary Benefits are a means-tested benefit. In other words payments are calculated according to your resources rather than your needs. The basic grants are intended to raise your weekly income to a fixed maximum, 'The Supplementary Benefits Level', which is, roughly speaking, the equivalent of the society's barest subsistence level, the minimum amount you can bring in per week and still survive. They don't intend you to step out of the daily grind of the factory floor, and be able to enjoy yourself. 'When you're on Social Security, you exist - you don't live.'



But, in addition to the basic rates, there are a large number of allowances which are subject to the discretion of the SS bureaucrats. They very rarely even mention the existence of these to people who are claiming. It's these grants which make all the difference between mere survival and living. When you come out on strike make sure you claim for everything you can claim for.

The 'official' version of what you're entitled to is set out for the 'public' in 'The Ministry of Social Security Act, 1966' and 'The Supplementary Benefits Handbook' (available from H.M.S.O. - not forgetting that they're trying to change the position for strikers with their new Bill - see Appendix). But for their own use they have a massive tome known as the 'A Code' which contains details of the complex series of regulations and 'statutory instruments' which govern decisions on assessments. As well as being 'top secret' the 'A Code' is virtually incomprehensible to most of the counter clerks who use it. One of the demands of the National Federation of Claimants Unions is that it should be made public so that we can know just what we are up against.

As far as the SS is concerned the only thing we are entitled to is the right to put in a claim. From there on it's all a question of their discretion and our ability to negotiate. The outcome all depends on the knowledge and force you can muster behind your demands.

BASIC CALCULATIONS

Under Section 10 of the Social Security Act nobody on strike is allowed to claim for their own requirements. You're only allowed to claim for the needs of your dependants.

In a society characterised by its sexual inequality the wife of a man on strike is automatically regarded as his dependant. But in the reverse situation, of a woman on strike, the question of who will be considered by the SS as dependants is not nearly so straightforward. If, for instance, the husband is either disabled or on a low wage a claim can be won for him and the children. But many women see no point in claiming for their children if their husband is bringing home a 'decent' wage packet, even though they might be entitled to something. Then again, a woman with children but no husband is still disqualified from claiming for herself when she comes out on strike

Striker	nil	<u>Plus</u> rent and rates
Partner	£4 .. 15p	
Other dependants		<u>Less</u> family allowance
over 21	£4 .. 15p	<u>Less</u> a few shillings
18 - 21	£3 .. 50p	for savings over £325
16 - 17	£3 .. 5p	<u>Less</u> a certain amount
13 - 15	£2 .. 40p	of any other income
11 - 12	£2 .. 20p	such as strike pay or
5 - 10	£1 .. 80p	partner's earnings.
under 5	£1 .. 50p	[See 'Other Income']

This is the basic situation, but as you will see from what we say elsewhere there are many ways around this, if you use a bit of ingenuity.

OTHER BENEFITS:- MORTGAGES



Although the SS don't pay mortgage capital repayments they do meet interest in full together with an amount for rates, insurance and repairs. Check that these are included in your benefit. (See your notice of assessment, form A 124 A).

FREE WELFARE BENEFITS

While on strike you are also entitled to one free pint of milk per day for every child under 5 years of age. Demand the milk tokens when you make your claim.

You are also entitled to free cod-liver oil and free orange juice for every child under 2. Collect these tokens from your local supplementary benefit office.

When you first claim ask for a certificate of exemption from payment of prescription charges. At the same time you are entitled to free spectacles and free dental treatment.

DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

"...the Commission may increase an award of supplementary pension or supplementary allowance where there are exceptional circumstances..." (Supplementary Benefits Handbook). This includes such things as extra heating costs, hire purchase instalments, special diets, furniture storage, fares to visit relatives, etc. The need to keep up H.P. payments, for instance, is very often seen as a reason for not coming out on strike. But you can make the SS cover all expenses of this kind if the claim is backed up by action from the Strike Claimants Union. Don't forget the golden rule - NEVER MEET THE SS ALONE. Always follow a claim right through to the end. In case of a refusal - put in an appeal.

EMERGENCY PAYMENTS

When you are on strike there are certain things you will need to buy such as clothes for yourself and your dependants, as well as certain debts which you may run up such as electricity bills, gas bills, etc. which you will not be able to meet out of the benefit you're receiving from the SS.

Section 7 of the 1966 Act empowers the SS to give emergency lump sum grants to cover needs like

In the case of a single striker this section cannot be applied. But you can claim emergency payments when experiencing hardship under another section of the Act Section 13. (See notes for single strikers).

If they ever refuse an emergency payment an appeal

should immediately be made against the decision. The arguments put forward at the Appeals Tribunal should be aimed at proving that without the grants in question, hardship was suffered. It's often useful to call on the Regional Office of the Department of Social Security in your area (for list see Appendix II) before putting in the appeal and complaining that the local office is failing to maintain the welfare of the claimant (YOU!) This sometimes reverses the decision of the local office. If it doesn't - APPEAL.



LOANS

The SS may try to fob you off with a loan instead of an actual payment. Don't wear it! If they've got the power to lend you money for something they must have the power to give you a grant for it. Get them to give you a written statement saying that they're refusing to make a grant, but offering a loan. Then appeal. If you're really pushed and need the money urgently it's O.K. to take a loan as a last resort. The form they make you sign isn't worth the paper it's printed on. It has no legal status, and anyway there won't be any witnesses. You can always say you signed it under duress, in ignorance of your rights. They can't make you pay it back. The only thing it might affect is your claim the next time you're out of work. But the SS bureaucracy is in such a mess it's almost impossible for them to be able to catch up on their records.

SINGLE STRIKERS

Because of the disqualification rule under Section 10 of the Act claims for benefit from single strikers are liable to be turned down point-blank by the clerk at the reception desk. However the SS are empowered to make payments in case of hardship under Section 13 of the Act. Single strikers definitely fall within this category. During the Postal Strike Claimants Unions fought and won several claims of this kind.

Two single men from the Mount Pleasant office were put in touch with the West London Claimants Union. The Fulham office of the SS had refused to make them any payments. When they went back to the office with a Claimants Union rep. the counter clerk tried to block the claim. 'There's nothing we can do for them if they're not married. They come under the Trades Dispute Act, you see...' 'Yeah but we're making a claim on the grounds of urgent need...' 'What d'you mean, urgent need?!' 'I mean that we're claiming under Section 13 of the Act... These guys haven't eaten for three days.' Very uptight the clerk sent for the manager who tried to sell them the same line. At this point the rep. went on the offensive. 'Look man, it's all right for you standing there. You look like you've just come back from a big meal... But these guys are starving and we want some money...' Eventually the manager had to give in and two giros for three pounds each were handed over.

In another case the Claimants Union managed to win a striker a loan under the same section of the Act.

When he first tried to claim benefit, five weeks after the strike started, the claimant was abused and ordered out of the office, without being able to explain his situation. The office didn't tell him that he could claim merely for a loan, which he would have been supposed to pay back once the strike was over.

His position at the time was desperate - he was a month in arrears with rent, amounting to £17, under threat of eviction from a hostile landlord, had two bills for electricity and was faced with hire purchase debts for the past month totalling £12 .. 75p. A loan of £31 .. 85p was therefore necessary for emergency payments, as well as some money for that particular week so he could buy food.

Another personal commitment the postman was worried about was his daughter, living at home in Ghana, to whom he'd been sending £10 per month.

The man contacted North London Claimants Union and returned to the office the next day with a C.U. rep. The reception officer recognised him and tried to dismiss the claim. When he was told that the claimant was eligible for a payment for urgent needs under Section 13 the clerk sent for the manager who quickly lost his temper and threatened to send for the police.

When they still refused to move away from the reception window, with a vast queue forming behind them, the police were actually called in. With the law there the manager told them to get a letter from the UPW saying that there was no money in the hardship fund for this postman!!

The UPW Local Branch obliged them with a written declaration. When they returned after dinner the letter was cursorily glanced at. Then a B 71 D form was pushed across the counter. This complicated form was filled in and signed, stating that the claimant would pay back any money loaned.

While he was putting through the claim the striker tried to find out just how he would have to pay it back, whether lump sum or weekly payments, but no one seemed to know or want to be quoted.

The grant eventually given amounted to only £4 .. 50p which the SS specified was for rent, although they knew full well that his immediate needs were for food.

One thing to note about these two incidents is that under pressure the SS will recognise both food and rent as 'urgent needs'. The point is that we should force them to pay single men for both of these and if they refuse to do so put in an appeal. In fact it's probably a good idea to take prepared appeal forms down with you when you go to the office so that it can be lodged immediately. If this is done often enough in one day the SS may well decide to give in. There's no harm in going down to the Regional Office in a body to let them know what you think about the way they treat unmarried strikers. One of the most important things a Strike Claimants Union can do is to see that single strikers don't become isolated

from married men. It's all too easy for the married men to think that everything's been sorted out once their own claims have been settled, leaving the men without dependants to fend for themselves. But it's precisely here that collective and militant action is going to be needed most.

LOOK MAN - IT'S ALRIGHT FOR YOU STANDING THERE - YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE JUST COME BACK FROM A GOOD MEAL - BUT THESE GUYS ARE STARVING & WE WANT SOME MONEY



MONTHLY-PAID WORKERS

If you're a monthly-paid worker you normally become eligible for supplementary benefits only after the strike has been going for four weeks. Many postal workers, particularly the P. and T.O.s (counter clerks) were hard hit by this rule. Although there's nothing in the SS Act dealing specifically with the position of monthly-paid workers, they seem to take the point of view that your wage is paid to you for the coming

month, even though you probably work a month in hand. However there's nothing to stop you putting in a claim as soon as the strike starts. That way you're sure to get your first money immediately the four weeks have elapsed.

It may be worthwhile, if you've got the manpower, to appeal on this. A recent appeal on behalf of an unemployed monthly-paid worker earned her £5 back pay. The more people object to this ruling the more likely it is to be changed. In any case a claim can be made under Section 13. York Claimants Union fought a claim on behalf of a G.P.O. counter clerk. An unsupported mother with three children, she had been paid 19 days pay at the beginning of the strike. The SS refused to give her anything. When she returned with reps from the CU the SS still refused to take her claim and eventually called in the police to have them removed. But the Union persisted, returned to the office the next day and, in the end, managed to squeeze an emergency payment of £7 out of the SS.

Once the four weeks are over you should receive benefit every week through the strike, and for the first 15 days after returning to work. You should then put in a claim for a 'hardship' grant under Section 13.

A MONTHLY-PAID WORKER'S APPEAL.

The following account of an appeal fought by the Claimants Union on behalf of a Postal worker illustrates some of the above points.

Mr Brown contacted the Claimants Union after he, himself, submitted an appeal against the SS refusal to pay him benefit on return to work. He was a monthly-paid worker in the overseas telegrams section. He received his last pay a week after the strike started. This was not a full month's pay, but consisted of 19 days pay plus a certain amount of back pay.

He waited four weeks before going to make a claim for supplementary benefits. Although this was his fifth week on strike he was turned away from the SS office and told to come back a week later, when he was paid his first benefit.

Subsequently he received two more weekly payments, which were correct in themselves but did not take into account things like:- the home help he had to pay for every week (his wife was an invalid), tele-

phone used by his wife, and invalid car. He had mentioned these things but was offered no help with them.

On his return to work he found that there was a £20 'compulsory' sub waiting for him. Knowing that if he accepted this sub it would affect his chances of receiving supplementary benefits for the next two weeks he tried to refuse it, but was told by the SS that he had to collect it, and was consequently refused any benefit on the grounds that he was in receipt of wages. The £20 was reclaimed by the employers from his next month's pay.

The strike had lasted almost 9 weeks and Mr Brown had received 2 weeks benefit!

We fought the appeal on a number of points:-

- 1] that he had waited 6 weeks before receiving any benefit;
- 2] that they offered no help with his other commitments ie home help, etc.;
- 3] that the £20 sub was not 'income', but a 'loan' - as he had eventually to repay it;
- 4] lastly, that, even if they considered the £20 as income, then that only covered the first week back in work and he should have received benefit for the second week.

The Appeals Tribunal was very reluctant to consider all these points as they said they were not relevant to the statement Mr Brown had made when submitting his appeal. But, despite this, we forced them to hear all our evidence.

On the first point they made a ruling that they could not make a decision about this as it was not part of the original appeal. And similarly with the second. But the important thing is that they had to concede that Mr Brown had not received his full entitlements, and this made them very sympathetic towards his appeal. (In addition Mr Brown and the rep had gone along to the appeal armed with receipts for home help, telephone bill, bank statement showing overdraft, etc. which proved hardship).

Our biggest battle was in trying to argue that the £20 sub was not income. The mainstay of our argument was that Mr Brown had to pay it back. It was also pointed out that some SS offices had been ignoring

these subs, whilst others had been conspiring with the employer to force the strikers to accept them. Unfortunately the Chairman of the Appeal Tribunal was pig-headed and kept insisting that income meant 'available money'. He insisted that it was the SS' job to give money only to people without any. When the CU rep pointed out that this was not the case and that in fact a person could have £300 worth of

savings before they started making any deductions from benefit, the Chairman remarked that he had been doing this job for three years and was the rep trying to teach him how to run his tribunal!

The Trade Union representative was more sympathetic, and the third member of the tribunal, although in no way on our side, seemed at least to know something about social security - which helps!

The fourth point was conceded without much argument - but with a lot of embarrassment from the SS official who couldn't understand why payment for the second week had been refused! The tribunal decided that although they could not award Mr Brown anything for this part of our case - since again they said it was not part of the appeal - they said they would make certain recommendations.

A week later Mr Brown received two letters, one from the Appeals Tribunal telling him that his appeal against the SS' decision to class the £20 as income had been turned down. The other letter contained a giro for £11, payment of arrears which he had originally been refused.

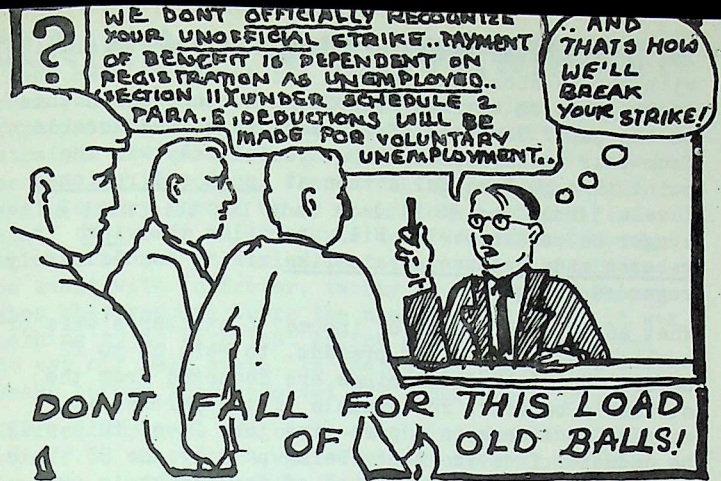


UNOFFICIAL STRIKES

In theory there's no difference as far as benefits are concerned between official and unofficial strikes. Since there's no strike pay, up to £4 .. 35p of any of the striker's income - including part-time earnings - will be disregarded, at present.

But in practice the situation is nothing like so straightforward. Unless the SS can be made to recognise that a 'Trades Dispute' is in fact taking place they will try to refuse benefit on the grounds that you are 'Voluntary Unemployed', in which case they'll try to push you into signing on at the employment exchange. In other words they'll try to break the strike by making you take another job.

This is what they tried to do to workers at Laricol Plastics, one of G.K.N.'s small London subsidiaries. The management sacked 5 of the factory's Indian workers, on the grounds that they were 'redundant'. But when they went to claim supplementary benefits the SS told them that they must have been fired for some other reason - their jobs were now being re-advertised. When they heard about it the other workers at Laricol immediately responded with strike action. Their union, the A.U.E.W. didn't give them recognition. They were refused payments by the SS because the firm's racist management were now advertising the jobs of the men who'd come out on strike. The SS wanted to reclassify them as unemployed. When they returned with members of the Claimants Union they were told they'd have to get the A.U.E.W. to notify the D.E.P. of the strike's existence before they could claim benefit. At first the A.U.E.W. didn't want to know. They refused strike pay and legal representation (some of the men had been arrested for picketing outside the factory). So the strikers began to organise themselves with the help of the Claimants Union. They managed to win benefits for men with dependants. Faced with this the union conceded, started paying out strike pay and provided a union solicitor for the guys who had to go to court. (Not that he was much help. He managed to get court and solicitor's fees awarded against the Laricol workers. It was only under pressure from the workers themselves, along with the Claimants Union, that he decided to appeal against this decision).



STRIKE PAY AND 'OTHER INCOME'

At the moment you're allowed to receive £4 .. 35p of 'other income' per week before anything is deducted from your benefit. For example, if you're getting £5 strike pay per week and no other money apart from supplementary benefit, then £4 .. 35p of that £5 will be 'disregarded'. Only 65p can be deducted from your benefit.

If you're receiving a weekly tax rebate whilst on strike, it will probably be added to your strike pay and the whole amount considered as 'other income'. For example, if you're getting £5 strike pay and, say, £3 tax rebate per week, £4 .. 35p of the total of these two amounts (i.e.£8) will be ignored and the remainder, £3 .. 35p, deducted from your benefit.

Tax rebates are normally considered as savings not income, for the purposes of assessing a claim. But the SS have an unofficial rule (probably somewhere in their 'A Code') according to which tax rebates made because you're on strike are to be regarded as income! This gives the employers a useful weapon against strikers. For instance, during the Post Office strike the GPO arranged for tax rebates to be spread out over a few weeks, with the result that strikers found their benefits being cut each week by the amount that they'd received from the Inland Revenue.

As the situation stands at present it's worth arguing with the SS about tax rebates and trying to make them regard them as savings. The SS have conceded on this in the past. Savings, of course, are not deductible from your weekly benefit. But you'll only win the point through forceful action at local and regional levels. If the new SS bill is made law this will no longer be possible. The Bill specifies that tax rebates made because of a strike are to be definitely regarded as income.

What about other forms of income? A striker's wife or husband is allowed, at present, to earn up to £2 before any of their earnings are deducted from the striker's benefit. For example if the partner is earning £5 a week in a part-time job, £3 of this will be deducted from the money being paid by the SS. This is a separate issue from that of the striker's own income, and any attempt to include this £2 disregard in with your £4 .. 35p should be strongly opposed. If they try to do it - appeal.

NEVER MEET THE SS ALONE!



One further point to notice about 'other income' is that although the partner's income may be £5 a week they probably have to spend ten bob or a pound a week on bus fares, snacks on the job, Union Dues etc. These ought to be deducted to get the real earnings.

The situation described above is the one which exists at present. But the new Social Security Bill which is on its way through Parliament attempts to change all this. (See Appendix III for further details on the Bill and how to fight it).

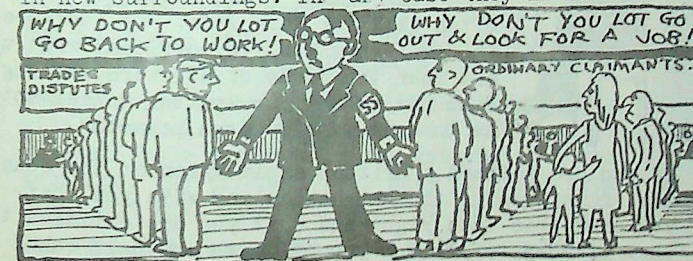
CLAIMING - WHO, HOW, WHERE?

When you come out on strike you don't sign on at an Employment Exchange before claiming benefit. Go straight to the nearest SS office. (This isn't always as easy as it sounds. When striking postmen in the West Country turned up at their local offices, the staff of two or three clerks were so confused by the arrival of men on strike that they sent them off to be dealt with in Exeter, twenty to thirty miles away. When they reached there the men were told that it was nothing to do with that office either, and they had to set off back again. In the end it was two or three weeks before they received any benefit.)

Married strikers can claim on their dependants' behalf if they don't want to do it themselves. Or you can all go together. In Birmingham a postal worker went down to the office with his wife who stood outside with a placard complaining about the stinginess of the SS while he went inside to collect his giro.

When you first put in your claim the SS must take a statement from you. Remember, when claiming, there's strength in numbers. Never meet the SS alone!

In National strikes such as the Postal Workers' the SS often open up special centres for strikers. These are often very under-equipped, and staffed by clerks who haven't the faintest idea of what they're doing in new surroundings. In any case they'll have a



special counter marked 'Trades Dispute' in the local office. In this way they try to separate strikers from ordinary claimants, and hide the conditions faced all the year round by the unemployed, unsupported mothers, the disabled and the old - the enormous waiting times, the secret files, the secret rule books, the prying and spying, the intimidation and the benefits and rights which are refused.

WRITTEN ASSESSMENTS

Everyone claiming supplementary benefits is entitled to a written explanation of how their money is being worked out. This is sometimes called a written assessment or a form A 124 A.

It's essential for everybody on strike to get one of these. Only then can you be sure that you're receiving what you're entitled to. Very few people know of this right. Even when they do and ask for one, they are often refused or persuaded that they don't really need one. Alternatively they are simply handed a slip saying how much they are being paid, but not how this is being calculated.

The reason they dislike giving written explanations is simple. The whole supplementary benefits system is based on a history of hand-outs to those in need and an assumption that people in need accept what is given them without question. Remember, when you claim supplementary benefits, you are not asking for some kind of charity - you are simply claiming money which rightfully belongs to you. If the SS withholds any part of that money, without a valid reason, it is equivalent to your employer docking your wage packet without explanation.



One argument they use is that calculations are too complicated for claimants to understand! Another one is that the working out of an assessment will slow down your claim. Trade Union officials often fall for this line. For instance, in Birmingham a U.P.W. official went up and down the queue of strikers telling them not to ask for written assessments as this would slow down payments.

If you are refused a written explanation at the counter, first remind the person dealing with you that you know this is a right and that you are entitled to one. If they try to fob you off with any half-baked arguments about a written explanation holding up your claim, point out that they have to prepare one anyway to work out how much money to give you. If they still refuse ask for their reasons in writing, ask for the name of the person dealing with your claim, ask to see the manager, say you are going to complain to Regional Office. If all this still fails to produce a

written explanation, phone or visit your Regional Office and say that you have been refused one of your basic rights. It's very unusual for you to have to go this far. Usually the threat of it is enough. Finally, remember that if a group of you ask for a written explanation at the same time, rather than individually, and all say that you know this a right, they are unlikely to refuse.

Don't forget - as soon as you make a claim, demand that a written explanation be given with your first payment. Make sure that everyone involved in the strike gets one. Get together and check your forms to see that you're not being 'iddled.

APPEAL TRIBUNALS

If you are dissatisfied with any decision the SS makes you can appeal against it.

This means writing to your local SS office stating that you are dissatisfied with such and such a decision made on such and such a date (if you can remember it, don't worry if you can't) and that you wish to appeal against it. You can use one of their official forms, which has to be requested across the counter, or you can write on any piece of paper you like. Remember to use the words 'I wish to appeal against....', and to keep a copy. Appeal within 21 days of a decision or they may argue that it's too late.

Two or three weeks after you submit your appeal you will be asked to present yourself before a 'Tribunal' to state your reasons for disagreeing with the SS' decision. The tribunal will hear evidence from both side, and will pass judgement on who is right.

The Tribunal itself consists of three people - a chairman, appointed by the Lord Chancellor, a so-called 'work-peoples' representative, usually a trade union official nominated by the local Trades Council, and someone representing the interests of the employers, nominated by the local Chamber of Commerce. There is a Clerk to the Tribunal who records the proceedings, and a spokesman for the SS, called the presenting officer - usually a deputy manager of a local office. Then there is you and your representative.

Never go to an appeal on your own. Always go along with someone else - either someone to put your case for you, or even just a friend to give you moral support. If you contact your nearest Claimants Union they will represent you. They will have had experience of numerous appeals.

Are there any tips for fighting an appeal? Yes - it's essential to go over the grounds for your appeal beforehand with your rep. Work out your case carefully. Don't rely on them asking you questions, because they probably won't ask you the ones you want to answer. Make a note of the points you want to make in support of your claim and make sure you get a chance to explain each one. Don't let them rush you! You are entitled to as much time as you need. So if they say they have another dozen people waiting, remind them that they have to hear you out first.

If you are arguing your case on the grounds of hardship, make out a budget to show that you don't have enough money to live on. If you are appealing against the SS' refusal to give you a grant for shoes for your children, take your children and their shoes along as evidence. Take along any wage slips, gas bills, doctors' notes, etc. that might be used to prove your case.



It is very useful to make 5 copies of all the facts you are going to present, so that each person in the appeal can have a copy before them while you are explaining. Keep the original for yourself.

The Appeals Tribunal is supposed to be an independent body. Don't count on this! They are certainly not unbiased - they have the same prejudices regarding

Claimants as many other people who have never had to claim. In addition they will be especially prejudiced against strikers. (Don't count on the work-people's representative being sympathetic - they are often the most reactionary of Trade Unionists).

Don't let the Tribunal bring in any matters which are irrelevant to the Appeal. For example, if they say it's your fault for being on strike, tell them that that has nothing to do with the case being discussed.

Don't let the SS spokesman bring up anything which isn't directly related to your case. In the past they have tried to bring up things which are irrelevant but which might put the claimant in a bad light. Object if they try to do this. The clerk is the one who is supposed to keep an eye on procedure. He also has more to say in the outcome of the appeal than is generally thought.

Before you leave make sure you claim travelling expenses for both you and your rep., to and from the Tribunal. If your rep. has missed work to be there with you he or she can claim for wages lost. Also demand a written explanation of the Tribunal's decision before you leave.

Finally, if you lose your Appeal (you usually hear



DON'T LET THEM RUSH YOU!

within a week about the result, by post) you can re-appeal on the same thing if your circumstances have changed at all since the first time.

Operation of Tribunals is kept under review by the Council of Tribunals, an advisory body which does not have the power to alter decisions. It is supposedly independent of the Department of Health and Social Security.

WHEN THE STRIKE ENDS

At present when you go back to work you become eligible for full benefit until your first pay day - usually up to 15 days, although monthly-paid workers can win claims for longer periods. This means that single strikers get £5 .. 20p, plus their rent; men with dependants usually get an extra £4 .. 35p (to bring the total for husband and wife up to £8 .. 50p).

The new bill intends to change all this. In the past employers have tried to pay their workers subs on their first wage packet, when they returned to work. Any money paid out like that is deducted from your supplementary benefits. When Liverpool dockers ended their 1969 strike the management generously offered to pay them subs. The dockers decided they weren't having any of this and came back out on strike until the management withdrew their offer. Since then employers have been very nervous of trying to pull the same con. But under the new bill subs don't have to be accepted, merely offered for them to be deducted from supplementary benefits! As if that wasn't enough the bill has another clause which makes any benefit paid out subject to repayment, through deductions from your wage packet. In other words your pay slips for the weeks after you go back to work will read something like this - two or three quid docked to repay the SS and another couple of quid off for anything that's been paid to you as a sub! On top of which you'll still be paying tax, to keep our marvellous welfare system afloat!!!!

HARASSMENT

There are many ways in which the SS will try to deter you from claiming your full rights. The means-test mentality of most of the officers leads them to think that claimants should be servilely grateful for the pittances they receive. They use their powers of discretion to establish control over the lives of the people who have to rely on them for their livelihood. Unsupported mothers, for instance, are sub-

Using my powers
of discretion....
PISS OFF &
DON'T COME BACK!



mitted to personal abuse, are spied upon, are forced to answer questions such as 'When did you last have sex with the father of the child, Miss Brown?' and frequently have their money cut off for cohabiting if they have any relationships with men whatsoever.

As a striker you will be bound to experience this kind of treatment from the SS. The more uncomfortable and difficult they can make your life, the sooner they'll get you off their hands and back to work - or so they think. Don't be intimidated.

If they use any personal abuse, make a note of it. Let them see you doing this. Ask for the name of the person involved. Say you are going to report the matter to the Regional Office. Do that.

Don't answer any questions that you think they don't need to know.

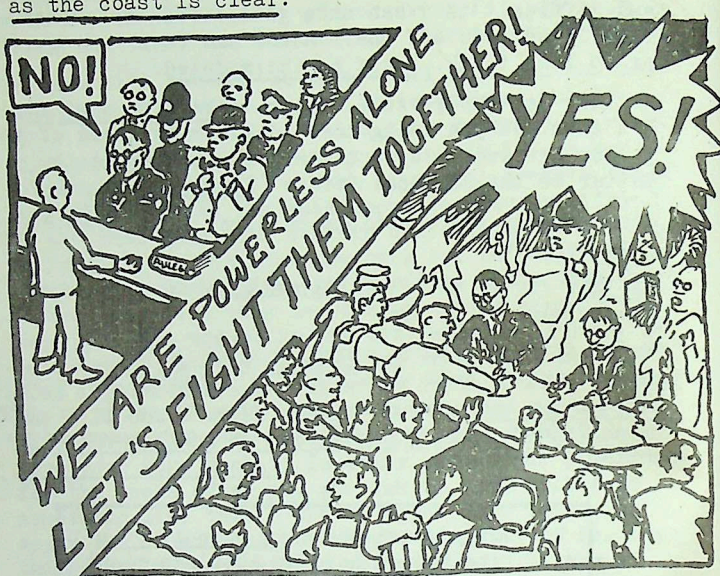
If they try to make you sign any forms, give them one to sign in return.

Eventually, if you're pursuing a claim that they don't want to deal with, they'll threaten you with the police. And sooner or later they'll carry out the threat. When they try to hussle you out remember to argue:-

- 1] that you are there in pursuit of a claim so you have an absolute right to stay until your claim is dealt with or until the manager is free, if you've asked to see him;
- 2] in any case the place is a public building so it can't be trespassing on private property;
- 3] even if it was trespass, trespass is a civil offence, so the police need a warrant to remove you.

Tell the cop your reasons for refusing to leave and tell him he can only intervene as a member of the public, not as a policeman. Tell him that the SS are wasting his time. Don't give him any grounds for getting you on breach of the peace, threatening behaviour, abuse, etc. Keep cool and resist non-violently. Threaten the SS officials and the cop with

an assault charge. If you are ejected, go immediately and make a complaint for assault at the nearest cop-shop. Tell the local press and publicise the illegal eviction in all other ways. Press the assault case if you have the money and confidence, and if your witnesses are still solid. In any case go back to the office and continue with your claim as soon as the coast is clear.



Remember you're less likely to be harassed if you're with other people. NEVER MEET THE SS ALONE.

Always act together as a Strike Claimants Union. Fight together against the SS. Never let them break your solidarity and your will to carry on the strike until you've won.

**IF YOU DON'T HIT IT
IT WON'T FALL**

APPENDIX

APPENDIX IA

Quotations from The Ministry of Social Security Act, 1966.

Section 10.

(1) Subject to subsection (2) of this section, where by reason of a stoppage of work due to a trade dispute at his place of employment a person is without employment for any period during which the stoppage continues and he has not during that stoppage become bona fide employed elsewhere in the occupation which he usually follows or become regularly engaged in some other occupation, his requirements for that period shall be disregarded for the purposes of benefit except so far as they include the requirement to provide for any other person.

(2) Subsection (1) of this section does not apply in the case of a person who proves -

- (a) that he is not participating in or financing or directly interested in the trade dispute which caused the stoppage of work; and
- (b) that he does not belong to a grade or class of workers of which, immediately before the commencement of the stoppage, there were members employed at his place of employment any of whom are participating in or financing or directly interested in the dispute.

Section 13.

(1) Nothing in sections 8 to 10 of this Act nor any determination under section 12 thereof shall prevent the payment of benefit in an urgent case, and in determining whether any benefit is payable by virtue of this section and the amount or nature of the benefit the Commission shall not be bound by anything in Schedule 2 of this Act or in any regulations made under this Act which appears to them inappropriate in the circumstances of the case.

Section 7.

Where it appears to the Commission reasonable in all the circumstances they may determine that benefit shall be paid to a person by way of a single payment to meet an exceptional need.

Supplementary Benefits Handbook.

Paragraph 135, pp 36 - 37.

Persons who are disqualified under Section 10 of the Act (which relates to stoppages of work due to trade disputes whether official or unofficial) from receiving supplementary benefit for their own requirements may receive benefit for their wives and children. In determining the amount of such benefit any personal resources of the disqualified person, for example, income tax refunds and strike pay, are ignored up to the level of his personal requirements

APPENDIX IB

Wage-Stop, Voluntary Unemployment, 4 Week Rule, Industrial Misconduct.

The Supplementary Benefits Commission fixes the level at which unemployed people are to be allowed to live. They set basic rates, supposed to cover the barest essentials - rent, food, heating, lighting, etc. It's just enough to keep you fit for work and mobile enough to go looking for it. The whole system is geared to industry's need for cheap labour.

For 20,000 'Wage-Stopped' families even this subsistence income is deemed too high. Under Schedule 2 para. 5 of the Act they give themselves the right to cut a man's allowance to below this level if they consider that he would be earning less if he was at work. "The principle is that it would be unfair to the man who was working but earning less than the supplementary benefit level if his counterpart who was unemployed received a higher income." (Supplementary Benefits Handbook). In other words higher benefits for the unemployed might lead to agitation for higher wages or a mass decision not to work at all. (Right On!) The 'Wage-Stop' rule is a class weapon, used by the SS to

depress the wage-levels of the working class as a whole. It can and must be appealed against by people to whom it is applied, especially where it's used, as often happens, against people who are registered as disabled or drawing sickness benefit.

'The Voluntary Unemployment Rule' is a further instance of the anti-working class basis of the SS. Allowances can be refused or stopped if they decide that you have turned down 'suitable' employment, or left work without 'just cause'. In their terms 'suitable' can mean a any job going. As for 'just cause', one man who contacted N.London C.U. had been disqualified for leaving a job in which his work-load had been doubled due to redundancies elsewhere in the firm. They have a series of mechanisms for making sure that you don't stay 'un-productive' for too long, the most notorious of which is the 'Four-Week Rule'. Used mainly against unmarried, unskilled workers this rule allows them to cut off benefit after four weeks if you haven't found a job to go to. It was introduced by the Labour Government in 1968 at a time when 50% of unemployed men couldn't find work in less than eight weeks! On an average there are 96 prosecutions every year for persistent refusal to take the jobs they 'offer'. Men charged with this 'crime' are liable to three months imprisonment or a £100 fine.

Finally we come to 'The Industrial Misconduct Rule'. Under this rule anyone who becomes unemployed for any reason other than being made redundant or being sick is anyone who gets the sack, is liable to have 75p a week docked from their first six weeks allowance. (If they can stay on that long). Under the new Bill this fine is going to be increased to £2.08p. This rule is not simply aimed at industrial militants but at anyone who rubs the bosses the wrong way. As an out-and-out attempt to discipline the work force it takes some beating.

Get a job - low wages - high prices - can't live -
take action - get the sack - refused the dole-look
for a job - no jobs - take a lower job - get lower
wages - prices now higher - take action.....
.....HOW MUCH BLOODY LONGER ?

APPENDIX II

Addresses of Regional Offices.

Northern

Arden House, Regent Centre, Regent Farm Road,
Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Telephone : 0632 850111 H.Wilson

Yorkshire and Humberside

Government Buildings, Otley Road, Lawnswood, Leeds.

Telephone : 0532 674411 G.T.Davidson

East Midlands and East Anglia

Block 1, Government Buildings, Chalfont Drive,
Nottingham.

Telephone : 0602 291111 L.M.Maclean

London North

Olympic House, Olympic Way, Wembley, Middlesex.

Telephone : 01-902 8822 S.H.Bate

London South

Sutherland house, 29 - 37 Brighton Road, Sutton,
Surrey.

Telephone : 01-642 6022 J.K.Studley

London West

Frosvenor House, Basing View, Basingstoke, Hants.

Telephone : 0256 29171 F.W.Goodchild

South Western

Government Buildings, Flowers Hill, Bristol.

Telephone : 0272 78311 J.C.Lewis

West Midlands

Cumberland House, 200 Broad St, Birmingham 15.

Telephone : 021-643 5011 W.R.Denaro

North Western (Manchester)

Albert Bridge House East, Bridge St, Manchester

Telephone : 061-832 8311 G.H.A.Othen

North Western (Merseyside)

St Martins House, Stanley Precinct, Bootle, Lancs.

Telephone : 051-922 7101 F.Hill

Central Office, Scotland

Argyle House; 3 Lady Lawson St, Edinburgh.

Telephone : 031-229 3501 W.B.Cowie

Central Office, Wales

Block 111, Government Buildings, Gabalfa, Cardiff.

Telephone : 0222 62131 D.E.Thomas

APPENDIX III

Social Security Bill, 1971.

what it means

This Bill (whose provisions are not yet law at the time of writing, but which are covered in this handbook) allows the SS to confiscate the strike pay of the claimants in toto, except for a £1 disregard established under the 1966 Act. Its object, as the minister honestly stated, is to prevent a striker's family's income from reaching Supplementary Benefit Level - the bare, minimum level on which all other claimants barely exist. Strikers' families now join the thousands of other claimants deliberately kept at starvation level for political and industrial reasons. Those suffering 'The Wage Stop', 'The Rent Stop', and 'The Industrial Misconduct Rule'.

Strike pay is now merely a subsidy to the SS. All strikers' families will be in the same weak financial position as the Post Office Strikers in Feb. 1971. The Bill robs the workers of about £19 million, through stopping insured benefits for the first three days. A few weeks before, almost unnoticed, flat-rate insured unemployment benefit payable to those temp-

orarily laid off was abolished for the first six days. More and more workers are thrown on the means-tested Supplementary Benefits. Apart from this, and a provision extending the powers of nosing into employers' books, there is little in the Bill that could not have been done by the S.B. Commission itself, using its ultimate power over 'administrative rules'. The SS Bill is a completely new departure - it lays down the law on matters that used to be in the secret rules - it takes the discretion and interpretation in the MoSS Act, 1966 out of the hands of the S.B.C. The S.B.C.'s rules, though falling short of the TUC's policy of ending the trades dispute disqualification, were tolerable to all post-war governments in the era of 'consensus'. Militancy had its clearly-defined limits and our rulers found a facade of gentlemanly 'battle etiquette' and cooperation quite useful. The SS Bill drops the facade.

As if to rub it in the Advisory Committees, which we have long know to be irrelevant talking shops - sops for Trade Unions and other Welfare interests, are abolished by the Bill. 'We can find no useful work for the Committees', said Sir Keith. No more talk about 'uniting the nation'. Seconds out! The S.B.C. itself, with an influential Trade Union and 'liberal' labourite membership could not be trusted to introduce the bluntly repressive measures. 'I have not consulted the S.B.C.', bragged the minister. The S.B.C., however, was itself the body which paved the way for the attacks, with their 'anti-scrounger' campaign, 'four week rule', and the building up of a massive fraud squad, which is essential to the success of the more stringent means test. (In May, 200 extra 'cops' were recruited. Compare this with the Post Office, the country's largest cash business, whose UK-wide Investigation Department is only 100 strong).

Labourite credentials on the S.B.C. are suspect. Hatchet-man Sir Richard Hayward, the previous chairman and ex-secretary of the U.P.W., left to join the P.O. Board in 1969! Lord Collison, the present chairman, a member of the TUC General Council, sat on the Donovan Commission, which, to a man, rejected the TUC's submission to end the Trades Dispute disqualification.

The SS Bill extends the Industrial Misconduct Rule (the docking of 75p p.w. for 6 weeks for alleged

misconduct or leaving a job voluntarily) to 40% or £2 .. 08p p.w. - an employer's paradise, no less. The Labour Government (no illusions, please) pioneered the current use of the SS for industrial relations purposes. Mr Crossman actually stuck his proposals in the middle of his Pensions Bill! His proposal to dock £3 .. 85p from a family was approximately twice as harsh as the Tory SS Act..

Like Crossman's Bill the SS Bill stops return-to-work money for strikers - singled out from other workers starting a job. (See section on 'When the Strike Ends'

h o w t o f i g h t i t

- 1] Strikers have got to organise aggressively at grass-roots level, as outlined in this handbook, to claim Section 13 discretionary payments, and the Trade Unions at official level must pressurise the Supplementary Benefits Commission to use its discretionary powers to the utmost.
- 2] Imaginative tactics can be worked out. For instance the wife or non-striker could be made the 'householder' which would increase the entitlement. Wives can insist on making the claim rather than the husbands. (In fact, full benefit could be claimed if the husband 'walked out' and they claimed as 'unsupported mothers'!) It might be worth each Union considering altering the system of paying strike pay, so that each striker with dependants gets the amount which will enable him/her to claim full supplementary benefit. It won't make that striker or his family any better off, their financial situation will be exactly the same, but it will mean a saving for the strike fund which might enable the strike to be continued that much longer. Alternatively it would be worth Unions paying the equivalent of x weeks normal strike pay less the one pound allowed in a lump sum at the end of the strike. This would mean that strikers could borrow unofficially during the strike on the strength of the lump-sum to be paid when back at work. In any case the stress in the future must be on organising to win benefit, rather than relying on Union funds.

- 3] Mass use of Appeals Tribunals will be necessary, and to add to this, the workpeople's representatives on Appeals Tribunals must be brought into line. Militants should ensure that Trades Councils appoint suitable members, and prune the dead wood.
- 4] Industrial Action should be used where possible as a protest action - especially on return to work. It might be useful to force employers to withdraw offers of subs and to protest at deduction notices.
- 5] As part of a broad campaign, resolution should go before every possible Trade Union body, local and national, condemning the Bill's provisions, and calling for:-
 - * benefit as of right - end the Trades Dispute disqualification for Supplementary Benefit (NB this is, on paper, already TUC policy).
 - * the end of the 'Industrial Misconduct Rule'.
- 6] Get a campaign of appeals against the Industrial Misconduct Rule underway now. The Trade Unions cooperating with the Claimants Unions for maximum impact.
- 7] Give a platform to the Claimants Union to explain the issues at Trade Union meetings.

New Supplementary Benefits scales as from 20th September, 1971 :-

Couple	£9..50p
Single householder	£5..80p
Dependants aged:-	
over 21	£4..60p
18 - 21	£4..05p
16 - 17	£3..60p
13 - 15	£3..00p
11 - 12	£2..45p
5 - 10	£2..00p
under 5	£1..70p

The non-householder's token rent is also increased to 65p.

The National Federation of Claimants Unions

The National Federation of Claimants Unions was set up in Birmingham on 21st March, 1970. It aims to communicate and co-ordinate activities between bona-fide Claimants Unions on the basis of a minimum policy charter.

A Bona-Fide Claimants Union

A Claimants Union is a union of people who are claiming or who have claimed supplementary benefits formerly called assistance, from the Department of Health and Social Security. People with incomes low enough to entitle them to means tested benefits such as free school dinners or rent/rate rebates may also join the Union. Each union is run entirely by its members: unsupported parents, sick, disabled, old-age pensioners, unemployed, etc. Any Claimant who joins a union is represented without condition or reservation.

THE CLAIMANTS' CHARTER

- ```

* 1] The right to adequate income without means *
* test for all people *
* *
* 2] A free welfare state for all with its ser- *
* vices controlled by the people who use it *
* *
* 3] No secrets and the right to full informat- *
* ion *
* *
* 4] No distinction between so-called 'deserv- *
* ing' and 'undeserving' *

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## UNSUPPORTED MOTHERS HANDBOOK

from all Claimants Unions or  
Pauline Giff, 66 Ivor Rd, Sparkhill, Birmingham 11.



## Strikers and their families to get

SIR KEITH JOSEPH, Secretary of State for the Social Services (Leeds, North-East, C.), in a statement on the Social Security Bill published today, said—

Section 10 of the Ministry of Social Security Act, 1966, like earlier legislation provides that during trade disputes persons disqualified on that account for receiving unemployment benefit are not entitled to receive supplementary benefit for their own personal requirements though it is payable for their dependants and their rent.

But for many years it has been customary to ignore the tax refunds and strike pay (and any other personal income) available to the people involved up to the level of the personal requirements of the strikers and others disqualified because of a trade dispute (currently £4.35) when calculating benefit for their dependants. The result is that the total household income is often brought up to the full supplementary benefit level.

The Government believe that the principle embodied in the Act is an important one, generally accepted as fair by public opinion; and they do not think that the present practice, which is totally inconsistent with the principle, should continue.

The Bill accordingly provides that the personal income of persons affected will be treated in exactly the same way as miscellaneous income is treated in other supplementary benefit claims. The effect will be that, in the great majority of cases, up to £1 only will be ignored instead of up to £4.35.

### Rapid increase

When a trade dispute is over, Section 10 ceases to apply and the men, as well as their dependants, are eligible, for up to 15 days, for supplementary benefit though during this period they are earning wages which will normally at the end of the second week be paid. Because these wages were being earned and advances (or "subs") were given by many employers upon them, the need for supplementary benefit was in the past fairly limited.

But in recent years, and particularly since a strike in 1969 after which employees succeeded in persuading their employer to withdraw an offer of subs, there has been increasing replacement of subs—which are repayable and come out of taxed income—by supplementary benefit which is neither repayable nor taxable.

This has played a large part in the rapid increase in expenditure on benefit following strikes. In 1968 it was about £80,000 for

large strikes alone. In 1969 and 1970, again for larger strikes only, the figure leapt to 1,670,000 and nearly 1,900,000 respectively. If all strikes were included, these figures would be higher still.

This cannot be allowed to continue. The proper way of aiding workers over till their pay is due after return to work is by way of advances of earnings.

The Bill therefore provides that supplementary benefit paid to men who have returned to work after a dispute during which they were disqualified for supplementary benefit for themselves shall be recoverable though not at such a rate as to cause hardship—through the employer.

Supplementary benefit paid to the families of strikers and others disqualified during strikes, and to strikers and their families after strikes, amounted in 1970 to £2.5m.

The savings from the supplementary benefit changes I have referred to depend on the number and scale of disputes, but if the changes had been in force in 1970 they would have saved about £1,250,000.

The Bill further provides for a statutory deduction, in most cases of £2.05 (compared with 75p usually at present) from the supplementary benefit payable to those disqualified for unemployment benefit because they have left a job voluntarily or been dismissed for misconduct or refused to take a suitable job offered to them. This will save rather more than £500,000 in supplementary benefit expenditure a year.

I have not consulted the Supplementary Benefits Commission about the relevant provisions of the Bill although, as a matter of courtesy, they have been told of them.

Turning to national insurance, the Bill implements the Government's intention, announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on October 27 last to end the retrospective payment of benefit for the first three days of a spell of sickness, injury or unemployment.

The net saving from this change is expected to be about £19m. in a full year. (Some Labour shouts of "Disgraceful!")

The Bill further provides for the abolition of Social Security Local Advisory Committees. The committees now number 141 with 4,000 members, and in present circumstances, sufficient useful work cannot be found to justify the demand they make on the time of so many busy members of

the community. Abolition will save about £130,000 a year of public funds.

I commend these proposals to the House since they would, last year, had they been in force, have saved half the cost to the taxpayer of supplementary benefit in this sphere while protecting wives and children (I conservative cheers).

MRS. WILLIAMS (Hitchin, Lab.)—The Opposition much deplores that the Secretary of State has not seen fit to consult the Supplementary Benefits Commission or the I.L.C. (Conservative laughter)—presumably because if one has a doctrinaire attitude one does not want it to be altered by those with any expert knowledge.

Disqualification goes wider than strikers and involves all in the class or grade on strike. How does the Secretary of State justify the fact that disqualification will affect married men only and those with children and not unmarried men and thereby will make a strange distinction?

Will the urgency provision under section 13 of the Ministry of Social Security Act still apply?

How can he possibly justify a distinction made by the Secretary of State for Employment, who said it was not intended to discourage legitimate strikes when he is presumably making no distinction between those which are legitimate and those which would say "unfair"?

We are aware that there has been some abuse of "subbing" by employers as well as employees in the past but will the Secretary of State define more closely,

"though not such a rate as to cause hardship" which could mean almost anything? Will he discuss with employers the difference between those who paid in the first two weeks and those who do not pay for a longer period and at least endeavour to get this on the same basis throughout employment?

How does the Minister justify the deduction of £2 from those disqualified from unemployment benefit because they have left their jobs voluntarily or have been dismissed for misconduct when he has not taken powerful steps on unfair dismissals? He has set up a committee to consider abuses but is apparently not waiting to hear its conclusion.

### Intention restored

SIR K. JOSEPH.—The Supplementary Benefits Commission would have thanked the Government for consulting them about a matter which must be for the Government to decide and which is distinctly political—(cheers and protests)—which has distinct polit-

## less state benefit

ical overtones. (Renewed cheers and protests.) The very reaction in this House shows...

A Labour M.P.—Enoch's won the day!

SIR K. JOSEPH.—This is not the year, following a year in which strikes were more numerous than in 1926, to relax that grade and class condition to which Mrs. Williams referred.

Certainly I confirm that single men will not be affected because, of course, they are not entitled to supplementary benefit when on strike. Section 13 will remain for hardship cases.

The Government would justify this decision because all it does is to restore the original intention of Parliament in passing the Ministry of Social Security Act in 1966, which was put to Parliament by the last administration.

The repayment provision will provide for protecting earnings at a level at least £2 above supplementary benefit level to ensure that repayment will not involve any hardship.

The deduction for misconduct is at 40 per cent for a single person and is not difficult to justify since the Labour Party suggested that the deduction should be increased from the present level of 33 per cent to the new rate.

### Mean act

MR. BRUCE-GARDYNE (South Angus, C.)—May I congratulate the Secretary of State on his steps to deal with abuse of supplementary benefits in trade disputes. If it had been in operation at present, a subsidy through supplementary benefits system would not have been payable in the Ford strike.

SIR K. JOSEPH.—Had this Bill been in force, supplementary benefit payable to workers in the Ford dispute would have been cut by something like two-thirds.

MR. HEFFER (Liverpool, Walton, Lab.)—This is one of the most vicious, mean acts that any Government has ever carried out and the only pleasure which will be gained by anyone will be the pleasure gained by Tory businessmen.

Ordinary working people, not only trade unionists, will be affected in relation to benefits to wives and children of strikers. Ordinary working people will be affected by the three waiting days. This is one of the most disgraceful acts by a Government that has acted disgracefully since the day it came into office.

SIR K. JOSEPH.—I think the vast bulk of the public who support both the great parties in

this House would on the whole agree with the change that the Government propose in connection with the supplementary benefits connected with trade disputes.

As for the three waiting days, Mr. Heffer will admit that since they were introduced the position of the present short-term sick or short-term unemployed or middle-term sick or unemployed had been transformed by higher wages, increasing savings, redundancy pay, employers' sick pay schemes, which now cover 40 per cent of the working population, and earnings-related supplements.

MR. MENDELSON (Penistone, Lab.)—The three waiting days will make a serious inroad to the eight million people on low wages who will need that money badly. The decision will make the conditions of the family and the children more difficult.

In spite of the disguise Sir Keith Joseph is making, this malicious decision to punish the family of the man on strike will justify working people taking every kind of action to oppose this class legislation.

SIR K. JOSEPH.—I think Mr. Mendelson should contemplate before making provocative remarks like that, the low earner who is involved in a trade dispute who has no benefit from tax reliefs has been on the supplementary benefit treatment to which we are now suggesting the man with a family should be treated.

I do not accept that I showed my ignorance about waiting days. The low earner has not been able to manage on national insurance sickness benefit and has gone from the first week on to supplementary benefit and the retrospective payment for the three waiting days will not make a halfpenny's worth of difference to him. This is an adjustment between the Supplementary Benefit Commission and the National Insurance fund.

### Post Office payments

SIR KEITH JOSEPH, in a written reply, said the latest figures available showed that during the Post Office dispute a total of £3,024,199 was paid for the dependants of persons involved, and that 1,153 discretionary payments totalling £3,412 were made to persons involved in the dispute for their own requirements. In addition 25,690 payments amounting to £180,286 have been made to persons who have returned to work.

MR. DEAN, Under-Secretary, said in a written reply, that to Tuesday, March 23, supplementary benefit payments for the dependants of persons involved in the Ford dispute totalled £458,180

its main purpose is to puny the social security system of some abuses that have crept in and some elements which have become obsolete...





# CLAIMANTS UNIONS :-

Address list as at 8 September 1971

ABERDEEN: 6B Powis Circle, Aberdeen. 0224-491570  
BARNSELEY: 120 Standhill Crescent, New Lodge, Barnsley. 0226-87776  
BELFAST Enquire  
BASILDON & DISTRICT: 145 Factory Road, Pilsea, Basildon, Essex.  
N.DEVON: c/o P.Blake, The Mill, Corfe, Fawstock, Barnstaple. 0271-5078/5665  
BRADFORD: c/o Share, Thorpe Chambers, 12a Ivegate, Bradford.

## BIRMINGHAM UNIONS:

HANDSWORTH: c/o 40 Hall Road, B20 2QB.  
AFRO-CARIBBEAN SELF HELP ORGANISATION, 97 Leonard Road, Lozells.  
MOSELEY, SPARKHILL & SPARKBROOK: 66 Ivor Road, Sparkhill.  
NEWTOWN: 19 Rea Tower, Mosborough Crescent, B19 3AU.  
BRISTOL: 30 Pembroke Road, Bristol.  
CARDIFF: c/o Duncan, 250 Loudon Square, Cardiff.  
COVENTRY: 27 Paynes Lane, Hillfields, Coventry. 0203-58991  
CANTERBURY: c/o M.Gosling, 110 Whitstable Road, Canterbury, Kent.  
DURHAM CITY: c/o B.Hardy, 9 Nevill St., Durham City.  
DERRY CITY: Enquire.  
COLCHESTER: 20 Fairfax Road, Colchester, Essex.  
CAMBRIDGE: 1 Victoria St., Cambridge, 0223-64064  
EDINBURGH: c/o S.Gilmore, 17 Hillside St., Edinburgh 7.  
EXETER: D.Lovell, 14 New North Road, Exeter.

## GLASGOW UNIONS:

GLASGOW: 190 New City Road, Glasgow. 041-332 8164  
GLASGOW EAST END: 53 Craik St., Glasgow E1.  
PARKHEAD: 250 Nithsdale Road, Glasgow S1.  
HARLOW NEWTOWN: R.Wake, 112 Rye Croft, Harlow, Essex. 02796-27938  
BRIGHTON & HOVE: c/o Irene Haywood, 199 Thorndene Road, BN2 4EF. 0273-317510  
LANCASTER & MORECAMBE: 6 Beecham St., Morecambe.  
LEAMINGTON SPA: enquire via Women's lib info centre, 14b Adelaide Rd.,  
Leamington. 0926-28862  
LEEDS: 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2. 0532-39071 extn. 57  
LIVERPOOL: J.Young, 102 Ritson St., Liv.8 (of uncertain existence. The group 'HELP'  
into which the CU had merged is not deemed to be a bona-fide claimants union.)

## LONDON UNIONS:

CAMDEN: Hole-in-the-wall Community Centre, Rochester Road, NW1. 01-267 3106  
CROYDON & S. NORWOOD: Mrs B.Lee, 53 Albert Rd., SE25. 01-656 1262  
EAST LONDON: Dame Colet House, Ben Johnson Road, E1. 01-790 3867  
HIGHBURY & ISLINGTON: 6 Clephane Road, N5. 01-359 2290  
HOXTON: 66 New North Road, N1.  
LAMBETH: c/o 29 Bromfeld Road, Stockwell, SW4. 01-622 8011  
NORTH LONDON: 17 Duncombe Road, N19. 01-272 0029  
SOUTH-EAST LONDON: Brenda Atkins, 54 Comet St., SE8.  
WEST LONDON: temp. address at BIT, 141 Westbourne Park Road, W11. 01-229 7538  
MANCHESTER: 40 Crosscliffe St., Manchester 14.  
NORTH STAFFS: 102 Newcastle St., Silverdale, Newcastle-under-Lyme. 0782-79256  
NORWICH: 124 Lincoln St., Norwich NOR 51F  
OXFORD: 181 Divinity Road, Oxford. 0865-45131, or 65 Iffley Road, 0865-44756  
READING: 6A The Forbury, Reading, Berks. 0734-581042  
ST. ALBANS: c/o 6 Watsons Walk, St Albans  
STAFFORD: 19 Lovatt St., Stafford, Staffs.  
STEVENAGE: c/o M.Hewitt, 52 Wigram Way, Stevenage, Herts.  
TYNESIDE:

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE Branch: Flat A, Thornton House, Beech Grove Rd, N/C-on-Tyne 4.  
SOUTH SHIELDS Branch: 4 Lawe Road, South Shields. 08943-62213  
YORK: 11a Victor St., York. 0904-29899

WEST CORNWALL: c/o D.Gould, 6 Penrhyn St., Redruth.  
GRANGETOWN: 39, Clynes Road, Grangetown, Teesside. 06495-56405  
LAZENBY: Mrs S.Elliott, 4 Chapel St., Lazenby, Teesside.  
GLENROTHES: 323 Colliston Ave., Glenrothes, Fife, Scotland.  
JARROW: Enquire via South Shields for address etc.  
FINE TUBES STRIKE COMMITTEE: Frank Clark, Devonshire Villas, 48 Stuart Road,  
Pennycomequick, Plymouth. 0752-65459  
NOTTINGHAM: 23 Mansfield Grove, Nottingham.  
SHEFFIELD: exists, but address uncertain.  
WARLEY: enquire via Handsworth, B'ham.

# SLAVEDRIVERS LTD CL

## SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS INFO

When we come out on strike we will be entitled to claim Supp  
children and other dependants and in cases of hardship, for  
needed to get our maximum rights! First, we need to know e

### BASIC WEEKLY RATES

| Striker | Dependants aged : |        |
|---------|-------------------|--------|
|         | over 21           | £4.60p |
|         | 18 - 21           | £4.05p |
|         | 16 - 17           | £3.60p |
|         | 13 - 15           | £3.00p |
|         | 11 - 12           | £2.45p |
|         | 5 - 10            | £2.00p |
|         | under 5           | £1.70p |

Plus rent and rates in full.  
Mortgage interest, not cap-  
ital, is paid plus an amount  
for rates, repairs and insu-  
rance.

Less 5p for every £25 of  
savings over £300.

Less family allowance and  
other income.

(N.B. see opposite.)

### REMEMBER

\* Back up your fellow claimants when claiming.

\* Never be interviewed at the SS office or receive a visitor

### EMERG.

The SS can make grants or:  
you. In emergencies, gas &  
prevent eviction can be pai  
further details see the Stri  
if you make a claim.

### SIN

Single strikers are not exc  
If you have no income a cla  
food!) under Section 13 of  
forceful action and careful  
you are going to make a cla

### DISCRE

If the strike is prolonged  
for clothing, household equ  
the Strike Claimants Union

### NB STRIKE P

All of our strike pay excep  
any part-time earnings of o  
will also be deducted.



# SLAVEDRIVERS LTD CLAIMANTS UNION.

## SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS INFORMATION SHEET

When we come out on strike we will be entitled to claim Supplementary Benefits for our partners, our children and other dependants and in cases of hardship, for ourselves. But bargaining power will be needed to get our maximum rights! First, we need to know exactly how much we can claim :-

### BASIC WEEKLY RATES

|                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| Striker           |        |
| Dependants aged : |        |
| over 21           | £4.60p |
| 18 - 21           | £4.05p |
| 16 - 17           | £3.60p |
| 13 - 15           | £3.00p |
| 11 - 12           | £2.45p |
| 5 - 10            | £2.00p |
| under 5           | £1.70p |

Plus rent and rates in full.  
Mortgage interest, not capital, is paid plus an amount for rates, repairs and insurance.

Less 5p for every £25 of savings over £300.

Less family allowance and other income.

(N.B. see opposite.)

### EMERGENCY PAYMENTS

The SS can make grants or loans if money is urgently required by you. In emergencies, gas and electricity bills and rent arrears to prevent eviction can be paid. This will take strong backing up. For further details see the Strike Claimants Union and be sure to report if you make a claim.

### SINGLE STRIKERS

Single strikers are not excluded from receiving emergency payments. If you have no income a claim can be made for personal needs (e.g. food!) under Section 13 of the Social Security Act but it will need forceful action and careful argument. See the claims committee if you are going to make a claim.

### DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

If the strike is prolonged we are entitled to 'extras' such as grants for clothing, household equipment, hire purchase debts, etc. Contact the Strike Claimants Union for our own claim forms.

### NB STRIKE PAY AND OTHER EARNINGS

All of our strike pay except for £1 will be knocked off our benefit and any part-time earnings of ourselves and our dependants over £2 will also be deducted.

### REMEMBER

- \* Back up your fellow claimants when claiming.
- \* Never be interviewed at the SS office or receive a visitor at home alone if you can avoid it. Have a fellow striker or a friend with you to back you up or even to speak for you.
- \* Keep in regular contact with the claims committee. If all else fails we can back you up in an APPEAL to the local Appeals Tribunal.
- \* Insist on a clear WRITTEN ASSESSMENT, form A 124 A, explaining any calculation made by the SS.
- \* You are entitled to FREE SCHOOL MEALS for your children and tokens for one free pint of MILK daily for each child under five years old.
- \* All strikers, with or without dependants, will be exempt from HEALTH CHARGES.

### WHEN THE STRIKE ENDS

Full benefit is payable until the first wage packet. In most cases this means an extra £4.90p a week for the husband. A single householder is entitled to £5.80p plus rent. A single man or woman who is not a householder is entitled to £4.60p plus 65p as token rent. But under the 1971 Act any money paid for the first fortnight back at work will be deductible from your wage packet unless your wages are less than the supplementary benefits level plus £2. If Slavedrivers Ltd. offer us an advance, under the SS Act we will not be entitled to claim at all for this period. But we can discuss with the strike committee whether it would be worthwhile forcing the company not to offer us an advance.

### THE STRIKE CLAIMANTS UNION IS AT

Mon Repos, Slum Lane,  
Tumbletown.

EVERY MORNING  
KEEP IN REGULAR CONTACT

### MEETINGS

Monday - a representative of the National Federation of Claimants Unions will be speaking at the Dog and Lampost at 7 pm.

Every Tuesday - regular meetings will take place after the strike meeting at the Dog and Lampost.



## Says

Industrial News

### Strikers told how to live off the State

By MICHAEL MORDEN

A DOCUMENT advising Post Office workers how to obtain maximum social security benefit while on strike has been widely circulated without the knowledge or approval of the Union of Post Office Workers.

At the union's Clapham headquarters a spokesman said yesterday: "Whoever prepared this knows the social security position backwards, but it is nothing to do with us."

The information, dated Jan. 17—three days before the strike began—explains how the strikers can live off the State. According to the Department of Health and Social Security the information is correct.

Suggested are ways of securing grants for bedding, clothing and household equipment, free milk and school meals for children, and repayments on mortgage interest. It also suggests ways of obtaining an income tax refund and rent and rates rebates.

A section stresses that if strikers are not satisfied with their State aid they can demand an explanation from the manager of their local supplementary benefits office "stating that you wish to appeal to the Local Appeals Tribunal."

FURTHER COPIES  
OF THIS HANDBOOK  
FROM YOUR LOCAL  
CLAIMANTS UNION

