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# **UP YOUR GIRO!** *Issue 2 - FREE*



Written and produced by Nottingham Campaign Against the Job Seekers Allowance

## **Project Work! Welfare to Work!** **What's the difference? - it's all forced labour**

When the Labour government was elected some assumed that it would act more fairly towards people on benefits than the Tories did. Job Centres in Nottingham suspended the Project Work programme, waiting for Labour to cancel it. But now the government has told them to carry on and force claimants on to Project Work placements until Labour's own brand of forced labour - Welfare to Work - starts next year, as part of the so-called New Deal. Welfare to Work will be no better and perhaps even worse than Project Work. And in case you hadn't noticed, JSA hasn't changed one bit under Labour.

### **What's in it for us?**

Now that the Project Work pilots are up and running, many claimants aged 18-50 are being forced to waste their time in useless training and work placements for only £10 on top of normal dole. What's the point? We gain virtually nothing financially, we lose freedom of choice and we waste our time. But the bosses get paid £60-£75 a week by the government for our labour. If we complain, they say we are lazy scroungers.

So far, most Project Work placements are in the voluntary sector. In Nottingham the long list of bodies ready to use our forced labour include the YMCA, Red Cross, Imperial Cancer Research and PDSA. The DSS employs 'providers' like Bestco and BTCV Enterprises, the business and training wing of the charity British Trust of Conservation Volunteers to put people in placements. None of these providers seem unhappy with the compulsory nature of Project Work.

### **IN THE NEWS** **A Dirty Deal**

The Evening Post (25/9/97) has reported that a 'New Deal' training initiative for the unemployed was being launched in Peterborough that day. It is being run through "partnerships between employers, training and enterprise councils, career services, FE colleges and voluntary, environmental and disability groups." By every kind of group under the sun, it would seem, EXCEPT THE UNEMPLOYED! How come these people get paid so much money making decisions which affect us, when we don't get a voice? Funny that!

## Threats to jobs

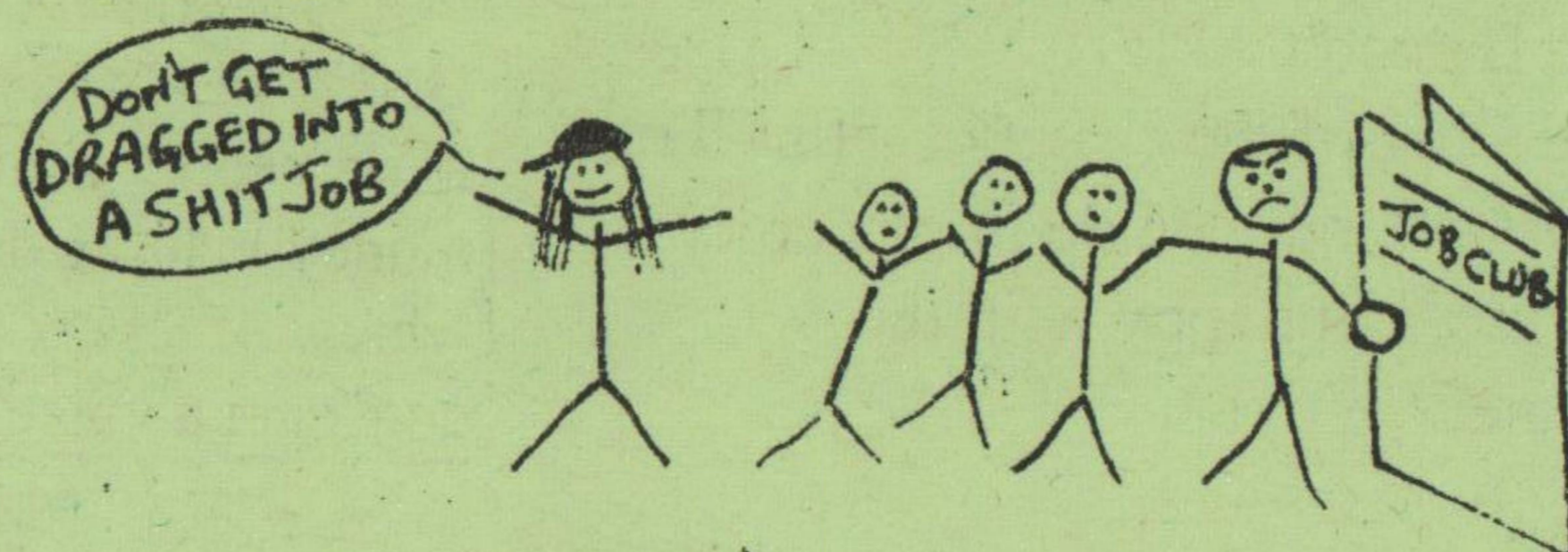
It is clear that Project Work threatens people in "real" jobs. South Notts Training Agency has undercut the prices of a local printer by using free Project Work labour, so jobs at the print company are under threat. There are also plans to extend 'workfare' into the public sector. That will put claimants in a very odd situation. So far the unions have failed to give a shit about the unemployed faced with JSA and Project Work, because we aren't 'real workers'. What will happen when PW placements begin to threaten council workers' job security? Will the unions finally show some solidarity? Or will they slag us off when the DSS forces us to do work which was previously done by paid workers?

*If you think this sounds too extreme, think again.. Labour's Welfare to Work is soon to begin as a pilot scheme in Sheffield which will include placements in the public sector. And guess what? The council has also just begun a huge redundancy programme amongst its employees. Compare this to what's happened in New York where the 'Workfare' scheme (which inspired both Project Work and Welfare to Work in Britain) has resulted in 20,000 city council workers being laid off and replaced by the unemployed.*

## Claimant Power

It may seem that you have no choices and no power on the dole, but we don't have to take this lying down. Nationally there is a huge campaign putting pressure on Project Work providers and placements by raising the above issues. And that's on the friendly side! In addition we have threatened demonstrations outside charity shops and training offices if they refuse to take the issue seriously. So far in Nottingham NCAJSA has written to 39 PW training and placement providers. Several organisations have said that they did not know how unfair Project Work was until we contacted them. In fact the DSS has deliberately played down the compulsory aspect because it breaches the 'voluntary' ethic of so many of them. The most significant body so far to respond positively and say they'll refuse to

implement PW is the Nottingham Council for Voluntary Services. Well done! Hopefully they'll have some influence over the other voluntary sector organisations they coordinate. Help the Aged has also refused to have anything to do with PW. We are hopeful that nation-wide pressure at local level will make other charities pull out, as some local branches (like Oxfam in Bristol) have already refused to take part in the scheme. This is just the start of the campaign, which aims to give claimants back some power by showing the government that we can make forced labour schemes unworkable. The first step is to get together because that way we are more of a threat. Why not get involved by writing to us or leaving your phone number on our pager. **We are waiting to hear from you.**



## “Let them eat Cake” Scumbag Award

Not everyone we contacted regarding Project Work was sympathetic. This issue's scumbag award goes to Pat Phillips of 'West Area Parents' (an organisation in Lenton who work with adults with learning difficulties). Pat told us proudly over the phone that West Area Parents are very involved in Project Work and that people on the dole - and we are quoting here - are “screwing the system”, “too damn lazy to get off their butts and get a job” and that benefits should be “abolished”. We hope you enjoy this opportunity to air your bigoted views Pat!

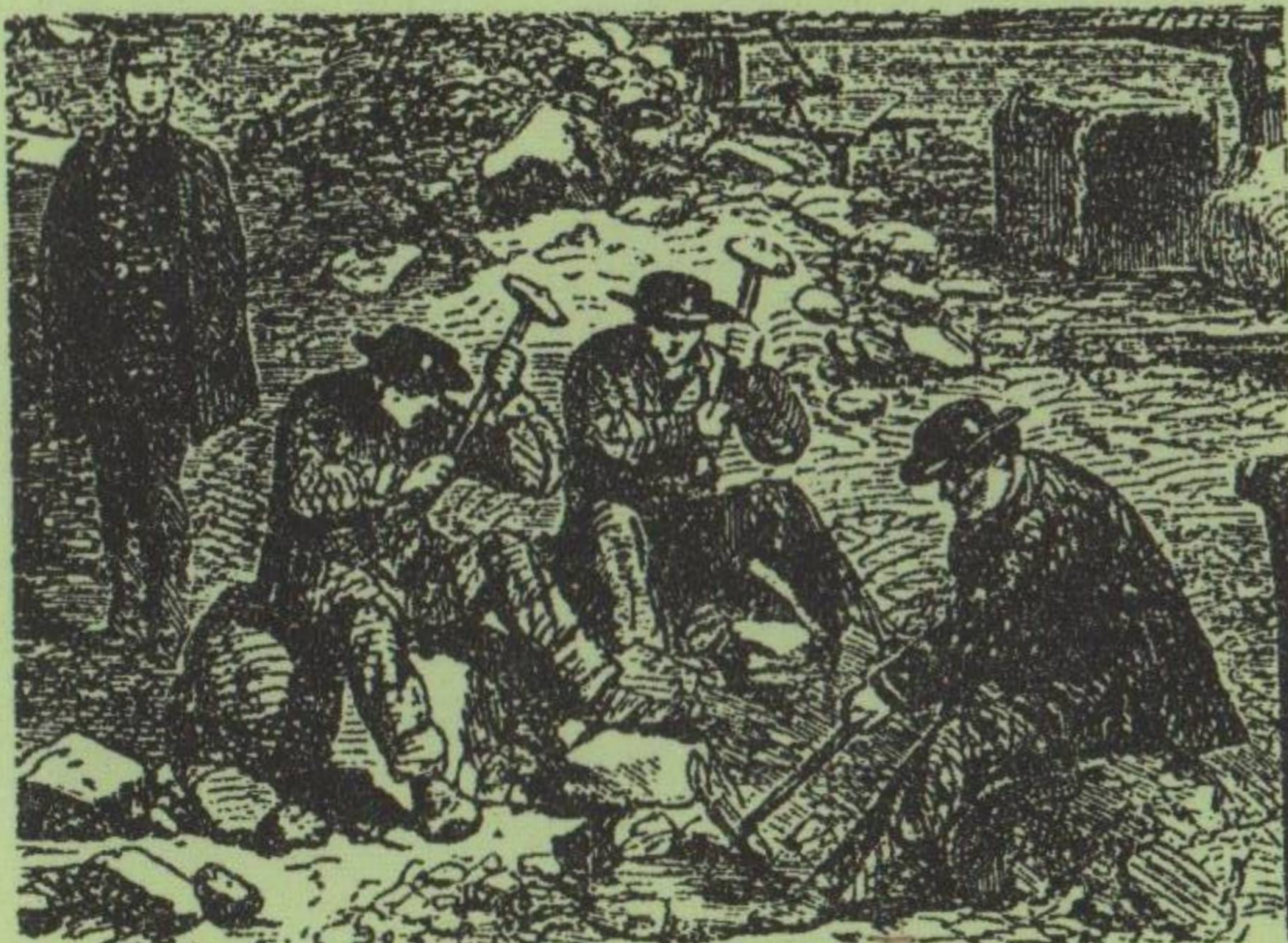
## Never Fear, Labour is here?

Milan Radulovic, the Labour leader of Broxtowe Borough Council, has denounced Project Work. At a recent public meeting Alan Simpson, Labour MP for Nottingham South, denounced 'forced labour' schemes in general. We wonder if they will be as outspoken about Welfare to Work? Hmmmmmm! It has recently been announced that Welfare to Work will include the disabled, single parents, and even the dying.

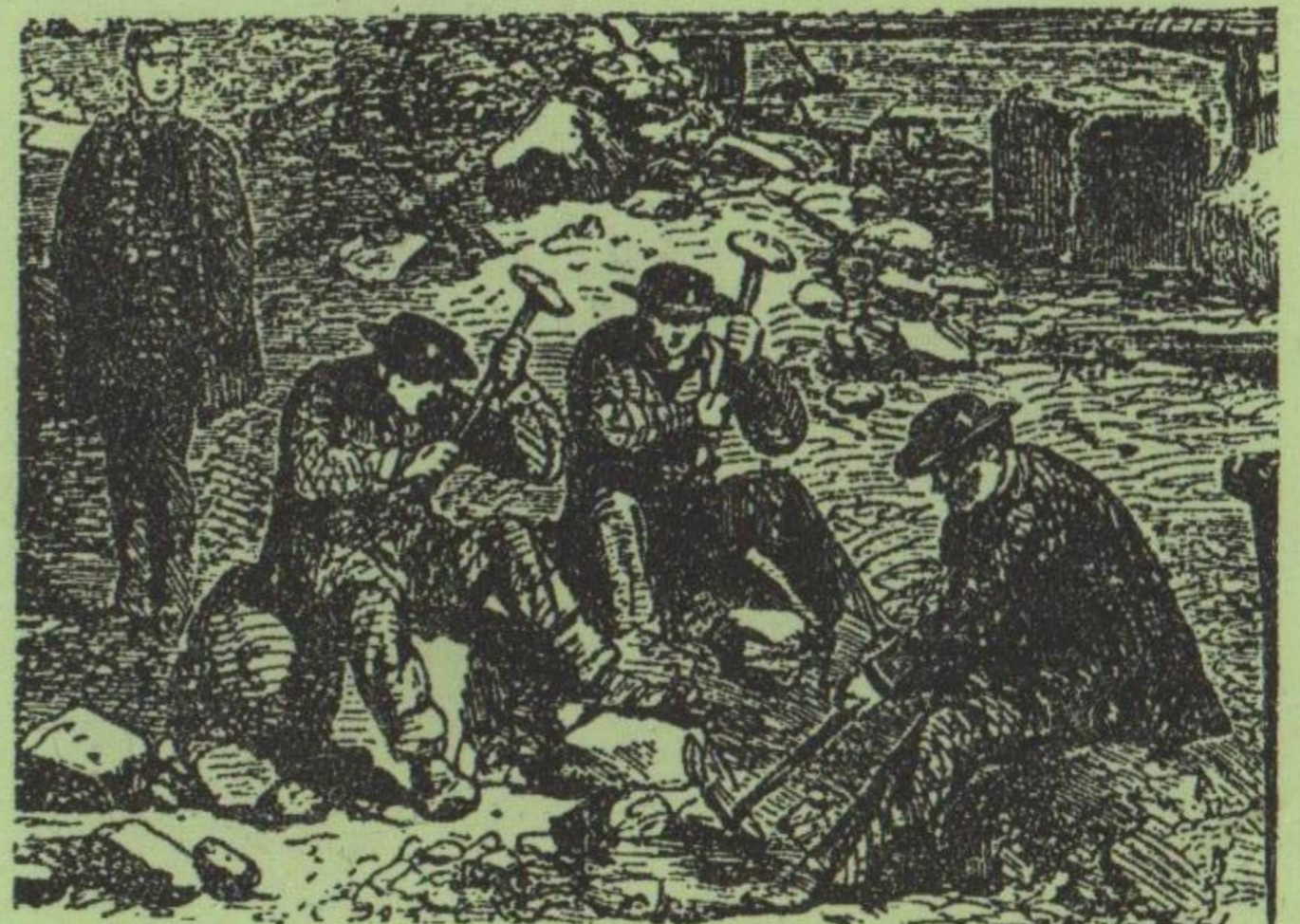
### Minimum Age for Minimum Wage

And things don't look much better under New Labour for young people if they do manage to get a job. Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, announced recently that 16-25 year olds are probably to be exempted from any national minimum wage. But don't get the impression that the government doesn't have our best interests at heart! Quite the reverse! They say are doing us a favour because they are worried that a minimum wage would “*provide a disincentive for young people to stay in education and training.*”  
WHAT THE FUCK?!!!!

## *Spot the Difference!*



HARD LABOUR



PROJECT WORK

# Three Strikes and You're Out!

## - a tactic against dole hassle

Everyone knows that the new 'Claimants Charter' is a farce - getting hold of one from the DSS is hard enough! In the Job Centre, people signing you on can give you any amount of grief and there's almost nothing you can do about it. Raising merry hell can work, but its more likely to land you with more harassment. Take an example which was witnessed by one of us recently: a man had his dole cut off by a Job Centre manager and protested that he had no income now of any kind unless he took up burglary. Like a good citizen trying to prevent a crime(!) the manager called the police to the office and they led the claimant away!!! Over-reaction or what?! Who do these people think they are?

It was because of such harassment of claimants by dole office staff abusing their power that last issue we announced the launch of the '3 Strikes and You're Out' campaign in Nottingham, part of a national initiative. After two 'warning letters' delivered to their office, a third 'offence' against the unemployed will result in the worker's photo being plastered all over town. We are inviting claimants to contact us about extreme examples of hassle they are receiving at the dole, which we will investigate and treat confidentially. Rest assured, the manager in question above has received a 'First Strike' letter.

FROM THE  
DESK OF

DIGBY SOUL SNATCHER

"HE'S GOT A DIRTY JOB  
BUT SOMEONE'S GOTTA DO IT"



Write to: NCAJSA c/o PO Box 192, Nottingham NG1 1FJ  
Or leave a phone number on our pager, and we'll get back to you:  
Tel. 0839 046175