

Issue 37

Autumn 2012

SOLIDARITY

The quarterly newsletter of DUWCs and OFFA

WORK OR FULL MAINTENANCE

POVERTY CONFERENCE WILL CHALLENGE ATTACK ON BENEFITS

This historic slogan, first coined by the Chartists in the 1840's, still has relevance to workers today both in or out of employment. Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres calls on organisations locally and nationally to promote a debate on the way forward for all in our communities.

With unemployment high and the attacks on benefits and public services coming thick and fast it is time we worked together to demand jobs, and if work cannot be provided, to ensure dignity and a living income for all.

In this issue of Solidarity we highlight the 'Future that Works' demonstration in London on Saturday 20th October organised by the TUC (See page 6 for details of Chesterfield coaches).

We focus on the many vulnerable people being targeted by the Government through changes to benefit and Disability Living Allowance payments.

We point out the dangers to all workers of the recent legal ruling in relation to the Governments Work Programme which declared that withdrawing benefits of those refusing to work free for businesses was not forced labour.

Join our fight for Work or Full Maintenance - ring 01246 231441 to see how you can help.



Alison Garnham (top) and Owen Jones are among the speakers at the TUC Poverty Conference on 17th October. See p6 for details.

Campaign News

Judge Rules Unpaid Work Schemes Lawful – and Not Forced Labour!

The ruling against unemployed workers Cait Riley and Jamieson Wilson that the Government's Work Programme schemes are not unlawful does not come as a shock. The two claimants brought the case after being threatened with loss of benefit (their only source of income) if they did not work for private business for no pay. They claimed that the schemes they were forced on were in contravention of article 4 of the European convention of human rights which states:

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Now, DUWCs is not saying that being forced to work for nothing on threat of withdrawal of benefits is akin to a colonial labour camp or even slavery, (slave owners have a vested interest in the maintenance of the slave unlike businesses taking on people on the Work Programme) but it is forced labour when the alternative is living on nil income or begging from friends and family. The Judge said that '*characterising such a scheme as involving or being analogous to 'slavery' or forced labour' seems to be a long way from contemporary thinking.*' Unfortunately for working class people the Rights enshrined in the European Convention are, it seems, movable goalposts dependent on what it seems is acceptable to big business and their supporters in Government – just as we see the in the field of international politics the UK and the USA becoming ambivalent to the use of torture as we move further from the Second World War.

Contemporary Thinking?

We should all be mindful of the Judge's ruling when he talks about 'contemporary thinking' when the Daily Mail recently published an article headlined '*Why our legions of unemployed graduates need to adjust expectations*' containing this piece of 'contemporary thinking':

The German slogan 'Arbeit Macht Frei' is somewhat tainted by its connection with Nazi concentration camps, but its essential message, 'work sets you free' still has something serious to commend it. There is dignity to be gained from any job, no matter how menial, and for young people at the start of their careers, there are valuable lessons to be learned from any form of employment, whether that is on the factory floor, on a supermarket till or in the contemporary hard labour camp of a merchant bank or law office.

Threat to Livelihoods

Only after protest was the article removed on-line. Forced Labour schemes in the Government's work programme must be opposed by those both in and out of work as they are a threat to all our livelihoods. Cait Riley's promised interview with Poundland never materialized after she had finished her work experience. The chances are that she was simply replaced by another JSA claimant, and Poundland got more shelf stacking completed for the cost of zero wages. Unless the opposition to these schemes continues, everyone could end up working for nothing!

Stop Press....

The Independent newspaper reports that 16 Atos doctors and 27 Atos nurses are being investigated for misconduct after complaints were made following Work Capability Assessments.

Campaign News

Atos Win Again

To the dismay of those campaigners who are calling for Atos to have their Work Capability Assessment (WCA) contract terminated, yet more work has been handed to them. When the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP) starts to replace some Disability Living Allowance (DLA) awards next year, (see page 5) an assessment similar to WCAs will become part of the claim process. Atos have successfully bid for 2 of the 3 contracts to deliver these assessments – worth over £400 million.

Fears Deepen

DLA claimants are understandably anxious about the move to PIP and many are worried that their benefits will be taken away from them. Now that Atos, who have found people fit for work who are suffering from life-threatening conditions, are carrying out the tests, their fears have deepened.

Colin Hampton, DUWC Co-ordinator, said

There is no doubt in my mind that DUWC's work will considerably increase, as people seek to challenge the outcome of these tests. We are already struggling to meet the demand for Employment and Support Allowance appeals. Unless our funding increases, we are in danger of being completely overwhelmed. ATOS knows what their paymaster wants, a 20% cut in DLA benefits, and they will deliver if past performance is the measure. Criticism from campaigners, doctors, claimants and advice organisations have fallen on deaf ears. Despite the deaths and damage they have caused, the Government is happy with ATOS continuing to do their bidding.

Who's Who at the Centres

Welfare Rights Team:

Andrew Parkes
andyparkes2009@hotmail.co.uk

Glynn Power

Neil Buxton

Katrina Hudson

Tim Wilkinson

Kathy Farr

John Bradley

Co-ordinator:

Colin Hampton
colin.hampton@duwc.org.uk

Fundraiser:

Sarah Walters
sarah.walters@duwc.org.uk

Administration:

Lynn Bagshaw
lynn.bagshaw@duwc.org.uk

Not forgetting our wonderful team of volunteers including Angela Webster

Tel Chesterfield: 01246 231441

Tel Shirebrook: 01623 748161

Fundraising

COLLECT OLD MOBILE PHONES FOR DUWC AND YOU COULD WIN A HAMPER!

- ◆ DUWC need your old mobile phones. We get paid for each one that we recycle.
- ◆ It's an easy way to help raise funds for us—just hand in the handsets (no charging equipment please) to your nearest office.
- ◆ Collect old phones from your family and friends. The first person to hand in a collection of 20 phones wins a small booze and chocolates hamper as thanks for their efforts.
- ◆ So get collecting now!



Prize Appeal

It's nearly that time of year again—DUWC will be running the usual Christmas raffle in December. This is a great opportunity to tap into the feelings of goodwill among the residents of north Derbyshire, and to make a bit of money that will ensure that we can still pay our bills as we greet the new year ahead.

But, in order to do this we need some decent prizes, that will ensure that people want to buy our tickets. If anyone can help with bottles of booze or shopping vouchers, we would be very grateful.

Please drop any prizes off at any of our offices or post to:

Sarah Walters
DUWC
44 Patchwork Row
Shirebrook
NG20 8AL

Thank you in advance!

Thanks!

Thank you to Derbyshire County Councillor Walter Burrows for his Community Leadership Grant. A much needed contribution to our funds, as we struggle on without a Derbyshire County Council grant.

Partnership is the Funding Key

DUWCs have really been struggling in recent years to secure major grants, which help to meet demands that we don't usually have the resources for, and to meet some of the costs of our overheads.

We are not alone in this, as the recession has increased demand for funding from organisations such as ours, the squeeze on everyone's pockets has meant that there has been less money to go around. A lot of lottery money has also been channelled into the Olympics, which has not helped the situation.

Over the course of this year, we have been joining together with other organisations to submit joint bids for funding. A recent bid to Comic Relief alongside local CABx, Chesterfield Law Centre, Age Concern and the Credit Union has now reached the final stage and we will know if we have been successful in November. This will enable us to reach out to more older people.

Meanwhile, bids to reach out to other specific groups have been submitted alongside Chesterfield Relate and South Normanton based debt support charity Release. A multi agency volunteer based project is also in the pipeline.

We hope to have some good news on this front to report on next time.

Welfare Rights

A Quick Guide to Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Next year, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for 16-64 year olds will be replaced by Personal Independence Payment (PIP). As with any change that will affect incomes, claimants are bound to feel anxious about the move. Here is our quick guide to what will happen and what to expect:

- ◆ Child DLA for those aged up to 16 will remain, and those over 65 will still receive this benefit
- ◆ Those aged 16-64 who need to make a new claim because of their condition, will need to claim PIP from June 2013 (Derbyshire residents).
- ◆ Existing DLA claimants aged 16-64 will start being reassessed for PIP from October 2013.
- ◆ Like DLA, PIP can be claimed if you are in work. The benefit is not means tested and it is not taxed.
- ◆ PIP is specifically to help towards the extra costs that those with a disability or illness can incur.
- ◆ There are two components—help with living costs and help with mobility. There is also a standard rate and an enhanced rate depending on how much your condition affects your everyday life.
- ◆ The claim process includes an assessment of your individual needs by a healthcare professional. *(Unfortunately this may be carried out by Atos, see P3)*
- ◆ Awards will continue to be reviewed at an appropriate interval.
- ◆ You will still be able to challenge decisions at tribunal if you are not awarded the benefit that you are entitled to.
- ◆ DUWC will still be able to help people make their claims and represent them at tribunal (funding permitting!)

Case Study: Credit Where it is Due

A man came into one of our Bolsover District outreaches and asked for help in sorting out his tax credits. He had taken on responsibility for his three young children six months previously. He worked part time and had claimed Child Benefit and Working Tax Credits. The problem was that he had been unable to sort out his Child Tax Credit award despite providing all the evidence required. He had made several telephone calls to the Tax Credit office, but he had not received a penny. This lack of money was a problem—he was struggling to work and bring up his children and he needed that little bit extra help to make ends meet.

Huge Relief

He had been told different reasons for the failure to sort out his claim; it was alleged that he was not the main carer and that someone else was claiming the tax credits. Our adviser telephoned the Adviser Line, which we use to help sort out problems of this kind, and spoke to an expert on the system. This other adviser was able to look at the Child Benefit database for confirmation that he was in receipt of this benefit. Within seconds of making the call, the claim was cleared and both arrears and a new weekly payment were on their way to the man's bank account, to reach it within the next week. The man left our outreach with a huge smile of relief. He told our adviser that a friend had been encouraging him to call in and see us for weeks, and he wished that he had taken their advice much sooner!

Events

TUC Poverty Conference

“Work or full maintenance”

London Wednesday 17 October 2012

As youth unemployment rockets, the gap between rich and poor widens still further and benefits are under attack, the call for “Work or full maintenance” has a renewed resonance.

Coined originally by the Chartists and adopted by the National Unemployed Workers Movement in the 1920s; the demand for a proper job, or failing that full pay by the State, was a clarion call of the left during the Depression. To what extent can we frame the debate around poverty in such terms today?

Organised for trade unionists, claimants and anti-poverty campaigners, this **free one-day conference** will examine the issues and discuss the answers.

Speakers include:

Diana Holland Assistant General Secretary, Unite (Chair)

Kevin Maguire Associate Editor, Daily Mirror

Alison Garnham Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action Group

Keynote speech:

Owen Jones Author of *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working Class*

10:30–16:30, Wednesday 17 October TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

To register, please visit: www.povertyconf.eventbrite.co.uk

March For A Future That Works

Join the TUC March against Austerity

Saturday October 20th 2012

March to protest against Tory policies that bail out the bankers but make working people pay.

Coaches from Chesterfield leave Rose Hill at 7.30 am. Tickets £10 waged /£5 unwaged. Contact Chesterfield & District TUC:

01246 231441

07870 387999

TRUST/DAST

75 per cent of Derbyshire schools contain Asbestos

According to a shocking statistic, three quarters of Derbyshire schools contain asbestos (1). There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos so if fibres become airborne in significant quantities staff and pupils alike are at risk.

According to our statistics, over the last 5 years 22 victims of Mesothelioma from the East Midlands have worked in schools and this was the only place to which they could attribute their asbestos exposure. Statistics released by Asbestos in Schools (AiS) campaign reveal that Mesothelioma has caused the deaths of on average 16 teachers in the UK each year over the last decade and this figure is expected to rise. In addition, in three cases, Solicitors have investigated possible exposure to asbestos as a pupil. One man in particular could remember using asbestos mats for Bunsen burners in school, as do many people. Based on US estimates more than 2,000 people could die as a result of asbestos as a child in UK Schools (2).



In 1987 air sampling took place and it was then discovered that dangerous levels of asbestos fibres could be emitted into classrooms by acts common in schools such as hitting a wall, slamming a classroom door or sitting on a window sill (3). In those schools that were part of the system-built school procedure, it is probable that asbestos fibres have been emitted into classrooms by such simple acts for many years.

So what do we need to see happen?

The Government is already undertaking an audit for the assessment of the risk and cost of many named items including air conditioning, fire alarms, toilet fittings, **but staggeringly an assessment for the presence and state of asbestos has been specifically excluded.** An audit on the state of asbestos needs to be included. If asbestos is to be managed effectively then governors, headteachers, teachers and support staff have to be trained in asbestos awareness, and more in-depth training has to be given to members of staff responsible for the management of asbestos. DfE is presently working on basic asbestos awareness e-training for schools which will be available in October. **It will not be mandatory but the Asbestos in Schools Group argue that it should be because those who are informed and conscientious will undertake the training, whereas the less informed and less conscientious will not.**

Ultimately a policy of progressive removal should be adopted, with priority being given to the most dangerous materials. Following the release of statistics DAST went on Derby Radio and East Midlands Today, supporting the Asbestos in Schools campaign and calling for a phased removal of asbestos.

(1) Source Radio Derby

(2) American Academy of Pediatrics Asbestos Exposure in schools Pediatrics vol 79, no 2 Feb 1987 p301 – 305 Reaffirmed May 1994.

(3) ILEA report LSS/AP/52 (1987)

**Trade Union Safety Team and Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team
Contact Joanne Gordon or Natalie Woodward on 01246 380415**

Where to get advice

ALFRETON Alfreton House High Street Tuesday 9.00am—12.00pm Wed,Thur 9.00am-12.00pm 1.00pm-4.00pm	BOLSOVER Kitchencroft Oxcroft Lane Monday 1.00pm—3.30pm	BRIMINGTON Community Centre High Street Monday 9.15am—12.15pm	CLAY CROSS Adult Education Centre Market Street Monday 9.30am—12.30pm
CLOWNE 48 Mill Street Tuesday 1.00pm—3.30pm	CRESWELL Limestone House Elmton Road Thursday 1.00pm—3.30pm	ECKINGTON Business Centre Market Street Monday 1.30pm—3.30pm	GRASSMOOR Community Centre New Street Thursday 10.00am -12.00pm
HEANOR Salcare Ray Street Friday 8.30am-12.30pm	NORTH WINGFIELD Community Resource Centre Thursday 1.00pm-3.30pm	PINXTON Village Hall Kirkstead Road Tuesday 1.00pm—3.30pm	SOMERCOTES Parish Hall Nottingham Road Monday 1.30pm-4.00pm
STAVELEY Learning Matters High Street Mon,Wed,Fri 9.00am—1.00pm	Telephone 01246 231441 01623 748161	CHESTERFIELD 70 Saltergate Mon—Fri 9.00am—12.30pm 01246 231441	SHIREBROOK 44 Patchwork Row Mon—Thurs 9.00am—11.30am 01623 748161

Help us Go Green!

If you are able to receive your issue of Solidarity via email, please send your address to:

info@duwc.org.uk

For more regular updates you can follow us on Twitter **@derbyshireuwc** and we also have a Facebook page.

Don't Forget...

To remember us in your will, or to ask for donations in lieu of flowers at your funeral.

Let our future be your legacy.

Websites

Our Snakes and Ladders Climbing Out of Poverty game is on the move, with trips to the TUC annual conference, the TUC Poverty conference and to Brussels. However, it now has a potential worldwide audience since it went online. You can now play the game from the comfort of your own computer by going to <http://www.climbingoutofpoverty.co.uk/>.

As part of a consumer empowerment project Citizens Advice Bureaux in Derby and Derbyshire are contributing to a new online resource: www.derbyshireconsumerhub.info. The idea behind this is to bring together consumer information and issues from across the county to deliver a definitive resource for consumers; also to provide an opportunity for advice and enforcement agencies to share issues and promote campaigns.