

UP AGAINST THE WELFARE STATE: THE CLAIMANT UNIONS*

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THE late 1960s saw the upsurge of a new form of political action, called variously community politics or community action: organizing around the neighbourhood and the home became a significant political activity. Yet to grasp the significance of community politics, embracing squatting, tenant associations, anti-urban-renewal groups, community workshops and claimant unions—to name some of the more permanent groupings, is extraordinarily difficult, not least because of the ambiguity of the word community.¹ A notoriously Humpty Dumpty word, “community” is as likely to be found on the lips of Edward Heath as on those of the Angry Brigade or the Young Liberals; at times it threatens to replace with a populist wooliness the unambiguous concept of “class”. For these reasons it is important to relate this widespread if often fragmented activity to the working class movement as a whole.

Because the claimants union movement has represented one of the most durable and coherent strands within community politics it is their history which is discussed here. A history which in its turn has to be seen in the context of the working out of the Welfare State, and the changing consciousness of its inadequacies during the 1960s.

The Dogma & Affluence

Although, as this article discusses, the immediate thrust for organizing a claimant movement came out of the university unrest of the late sixties, no amount of student rhetoric could of its own momentum have succeeded. Beneath the growth of the movement have lain the objective facts of poverty for increasing numbers of working class men and women and their children. During the period of self-congratulatory post war reconstruction the myth of “the Affluent Society” was dominant. Both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party sought to gain all possible credit for setting up the Welfare State. The Conservatives, because of their disposition to protect the middle classes, merely thought that it was too extravagant and needed pruning;

* This is a revised article from one originally written with Tink Griffiths.

Labour saw the Welfare State as a demonstration of their success in reforming capitalism. Whatever the facts of poverty, the social construction of reality by the Labour intellectuals² and the incapacity of the rest of the British left to offer an alternative analysis precluded its recognition.

It is difficult now, when poverty is taken for granted, whether as an inevitable and integral aspect of a capitalist social order, or more conservatively as merely an intractable social policy issue, to capture the feeling of the 1950s in Britain which denied the very existence of poverty. John Saville's article in the 1965 *Socialist Register*, discussing the relationship of the Labour intellectuals to the central question of income distribution (exemplified by C. A. R. Crosland³ who in 1953 regarded Britain as half way to socialism), described them as "deeply impressed by what had been accomplished in the six years of Labour rule". They believed that not only had full employment been achieved, a variety of social services established, key industries nationalized, but that there was a significant shift towards equality in the distribution of income.

Certainly the statistical studies of income distribution carried out during this period seemed to support this view, whether conducted by Seers, Lydall, Paish or the Board of the Inland Revenue.⁴ Rowntree and Lavers⁵ return to York in 1951 appeared to provide the acid test; where in 1936 their survey reported that 36% of the town were in poverty, in 1951 only 11% were. Peter Townsend's⁶ commentary on the study, arguing that the poverty line was drawn too low to be socially meaningful in the changed conditions of 1951, was for the most part unheard. The dogma of affluence was in command.

While Richard Titmuss' classic essay on the Social Division of Welfare first given as a lecture in 1955,⁷ served to throw into question the "welfare" element in the new state, it was perhaps Audrey Harvey's⁸ Fabian pamphlet *Casualties of the Welfare State* which was to spell out the problem with a human clarity, linking the experience of working class people to the growing academic analysis. The Stevens family clad the statistics and the abstract analysis with a passionate understanding of the unresponsiveness of the welfare bureaucracy and of the desperation of those who had nowhere else to turn. Subsequently, Titmuss was to return to the crucial question of income distribution,⁹ and, through a rigorous examination of the social assumptions built into the statistics, was able to demonstrate that the belief in a shift towards equality was untenable in the light of the evidence.

While the concept of income distribution carried with it a notion of equality and thus an anti-capitalist thrust, it was in certain subtle ways to be lost and to appear refashioned as the word poverty. For all the discussion that poverty was only intelligible in terms of relative

deprivation,¹⁰ the new concept had the not unimportant effect of shifting the main focus of research from the range of income and wealth in capitalist society, to the conditions of those at the bottom of the scale.¹¹ Put very simplistically research on poverty tends to promote feelings of compassion, research on income distribution can nourish the anger of a movement pursuing class justice.

Thus for example, of the subsequent empirical studies the most important was that of Abel-Smith and Townsend published in 1965. In *The Poor and the Poorest*, they came to the conclusion that while in 1953 some 7.8% of the population were poor, by 1960 14.2% were poor. That means that in 1960 some 7½ million people were poor, of whom no less than 2¼ million were children. They stressed the significance of low pay, the wage stop (by which social security benefits are held at a level below the previous wage) and the acute difficulties of both single parent families and large families. Like other researchers¹² they drew attention to the gap between the formal entitlement to benefit and the many reasons which led to people not claiming their benefits.

Perhaps those living in poverty would have remained uncomplaining had it not been for the advent of a Labour Government in 1964 with the accompanying expectation that "the party of the underdog^m—if not in any theoretical way of the working class—would look after its own. For a complex of factors, among which the government would rate very high the economic crisis which it inherited on taking office, the party began to fail its own constituency—among them the poor. Thus after some modest attempts to emulate the Johnson strategy, with a mini-war on poverty of Urban Aid, Educational Priority Areas and the encouragement of people to take up their free school meals entitlements, rent and rate rebates, the government began to draw back from pressing the rights view of welfare. The cost of closing the gap between the number of people entitled to claim particular benefits, and the much smaller number of those actually claiming, indicated a contradiction which the Labour government was quite incapable of overcoming. The Labour government, still obsessed by the middle class anxiety about the total cost of the Welfare State, and the myth of an overtaxed society, was necessarily reliant on the fact that people did not claim entitlement, as their failure to benefit kept the total cost of social security expenditure to manageable proportions, while maintaining a defensible if not generous scale rate.

Thus social policy on poverty, like so many other issues which to Labour, out of office, appear to be rational and possible programmes such as steel nationalization, the public schools question, dealing with the doctors, etc., becomes in office a predictably unsuccessful struggle against powerful and economic forces. The language of justice for

working people and the poor becomes ineluctably replaced by the conservative concept of the national interest, a concept almost as commonly used by Labour politicians in office as Conservatives.

Research and Reform

Traditionally those active in the empirical measurement of poverty have from Booth onwards been actively concerned with social reform, and this remained the case in the 1960s. Thus, on the initiative of Abel-Smith, Titmuss and Townsend as the key researchers, a poverty reform lobby was established in 1965 to press the case of the poor to a hopefully sympathetic government. Initially established as a traditional philanthropic grouping called "The Advisory Council for the Alleviation of Poverty", within months it was calling itself the "Family Poverty Group", to settle down by the end of the first year with a name and line more in correspondence with the times as the Child Poverty Action Group.¹³ CPAG concerned and concerns itself with two main activities: the first is the critique of social security policy and the formulation of alternatives, and the second is the provision of help to individuals in securing their entitlements. The former is typified by their long campaign to increase the incomes of families whether in or out of work through family allowances, and the latter by their setting up a Citizen's Rights Office in London and welfare rights stalls in markets up and down the country.

Internally CPAG was to go through a considerable crisis during the first years of the Labour administration. Some of the poverty experts were to remain close to the new government, others retained their oppositional role. Thus, of the key trio, Abel-Smith was to become a senior adviser to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services (R. H. S. Crossman), Titmuss was to continue as vice-chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission, while Townsend remained outside. From CPAG, Townsend, together with the second director Frank Field, launched a biting critique of Labour's performance on the poverty issue. The timing of the attack, during the vulnerable run-up period prior to the 1966 General Election, ensured that poverty, as well as the Labour Government's record on poverty, became part of everyday public awareness.

By 1968, the year of the peak of the student movement in Britain and the inception of the claimants' movement, not only was unemployment still rising but the Labour Government had saddled itself with a disastrous industrial relations policy. It had a prices and incomes policy but no minimum wage legislation and clung to the wages-stop with a capitalist fervour. Indeed by this point the credibility of the Labour Government as representing the interests of working people—to say nothing of its attitude on Vietnam—was at a nadir. Local elec-

tions reflected the sense of betrayal, the GLC was lost in 1967, but more important than the mere loss of an election was the change during this period in the character of the local labour parties and their councils. What Hindess¹⁴ described for Liverpool was reflected up and down the country: the "gentrification" of the houses of inner city was increasingly being matched by the "gentrification" of the Labour Party.

Thus where in the past students had turned primarily towards the Labour Party as their point of contact with the working classes and their way of identifying with working class interests they now had to find some other route. Even in the early days of the New Left Review Club, the debate of 1959 was "Shall We Help Mr. Gaitskell?" By 1968 the thought of helping Mr. Wilson was almost absurd. These then were the kinds of complex factors which took the students and a variety of other young activists out into the "community"—a word which was synonymous for them with working class and all oppressed people. Facilitated by the anarchist strand in the student movement, community politics, that is organizing around the home and the neighbourhood, took on a vitality which organizing around work had lost in the bureaucratic inertia of the trade unions. Awareness of the nature of the Welfare State was to take the young activists particularly into the claimant unions. It is with the history of these last five years that this article now concerns itself.

The Birmingham Model

The first Claimant Union, which became the model for the Claimant Unions up and down the country that were together to form the National Federation, arose out of the radicalization of the university campuses in 1968. Small groups of Birmingham students had set up action committees whose brief was to plan and initiate socialist activity. One of these groups included five students, all working class in origin, who had had direct personal experience of the Welfare State and social security. The two women members were training to become social workers, and one was currently taking the professional case-work course at Birmingham. One had had a fieldwork placement with Tony Lynes, the first director of CPAG. Another was a law student taught by Robert Coleman, one of the few UK lawyers then actively researching and advising on Supplementary Benefit tribunal proceedings. In the early stages of the movement, the geographical mobility of these original activists was of direct importance for the growth and spread of the unions.

The original union in Sparkhill, set up in January 1969, grew very slowly. There was friendly help from the students from the Socialist Society in leafleting the social security offices, and from the Law

Department at Birmingham in developing the relevant social security expertise, but gradually the unions' need for independence moved them beyond this stage. In a way it is still true that claimant unions' emphasis on self-management makes it difficult for them publicly to be seen to be aided by organizations or individuals such as CPAG, consequently they tend to deny that expertise or resources are tapped from outside. Most unions which have offices, have them on a rent-free basis from settlement houses, voluntary social work agencies or the local authority rather than from the organized labour movement, a situation which points to some of the contradictions involved in even the more militant sectors of community politics.¹⁶

Gradually a philosophy emerged which stressed that claimants had rights under social security provision, that supplementary benefits were not a matter of charity and discretion but of human rights. In this their approach is not ostensibly different from, for example, the Child Poverty Action Group who, with their Citizens Rights Office, very energetically press the demands of individuals who are getting less than their entitlements. The crucial difference is that despite an early flirtation with a more radical conception, CPAG has never seen itself as working *with* the poor only for the poor. The possibility Lynes raised in 1968 of "pressure groups for the poor becoming superceded by organizations of the poor" was firmly precluded by CPAG's regard for the poverty "expert".¹⁷

"Getting your rights", very early on in the life of the first Birmingham group, then became a collective activity. Individual cases were and are brought before the entire weekly meeting and a strategy decided upon by the whole group, the one to one relationship of helper and helped being rejected. An important organizing principle emerged, stressing people's ability to do things together for themselves, which has become central to the movement's ideology. An early paper, "Democracy for the Poorest", presented at the Institute of Workers Control in 1969, was to spell out some of these objectives.¹⁸

"Self management", a principle closely related to this self activity of people "doing their own thing", was also enunciated early on as a long term goal. While it was possible to organize people into securing their rights with self activity, self management, that is, the control of the social services by the people who use them, has remained at the level of rhetoric, little serious work and thought having been given to the problem. Together with a commitment to an adequate income being available to all, without a means test, and an opposition to any distinction being made between the deserving and the undeserving, the minimum agreed programme which was eventually to become the Charter of the Claimant Unions at the First Federation Meeting on 21 March 1970, took shape.

The internal structure of the union was modelled—initially—very much on the lines of any trade union or labour organization. A model agenda circulated by BCU¹⁹ thus speaks of a committee, a quorum of four, the election of chairman and officers, itemizes the business of reading correspondence, maintaining accounts, deciding the tactics for claims and appeals, reporting back from liaison committees and concluding with political education. Decisions and recommendations for action were to be carefully noted down. This procedural clarity, so typical of the Labour movement, was gradually blurred over, the whole concept of a committee and office holders became anathema and the unions moved their practice into a highly participatory democracy much more in accordance with their increasingly libertarian ideas.

Not only was the union trying to develop coherent internal forms of organization: it was simultaneously experiencing practical difficulties with one of its main tactics—the appeal. As with large sections of administrative law from, for example, planning to industrial injuries, the citizen may appeal against the relevant administrative body, in this case the Supplementary Benefits Commission, to an independent tribunal. Because the system of benefit is profoundly discretionary there is in principle much to be gained by querying decisions, yet for precisely the same reason the tribunal is a very frail court to which to appeal for justice. The Supplementary Benefits tribunal is the linear descendant of the old Unemployment Assistance Board—hated for good reason—and, because it is dealing with people lacking middle class resources to pay for expert representation, or trade union strength, it is in many ways the slum among tribunals.²⁰ Despite its formal claim to independence its officers are seconded from the D.H.S.S., and the Department itself is responsible for approving nominations to tribunal membership. The exposure of the inadequacy of the tribunals by the unions and CPAG has led to substantial pressure for their reform.²¹ As a tactic, however, making an appeal was both a means of ensuring that claimants received their full entitlements, and simultaneously of exposing the iniquities of the supplementary benefit system. Winning, while important for maintaining membership, was not necessarily crucial, as revealing the true nature of the "Welfare State" was of educational significance.

The kind of complaints Birmingham Claimant Union made about the experience of their first appeal in their first year, August 1969, are the same in substance if not in detail today. Thus the first appeal was made on an issue of mortgage arrears, and the failure of the Social Security office to grant the automatic addition of fifty pence per week for a long term claimant. The Union's representatives attended and reported "gross bias and incompetence". They claimed that "from the

outset the Tribunal and Clerk were hostile, and not neutral. The chairman misrepresented the statutes—until our well-briefed representative corrected him . . . There was much hostility shown, and the appellant appeared to be 'on trial' instead of the question of her welfare being under discussion."²²

Eventually BCU complained to the Council of Tribunals at their treatment, arguing that the Tribunal was not independent of the D.H.S.S. and the Supplementary Benefits Commission. The Birmingham Appeal Tribunal resented the number of members coming to support a particular claimant and tried to limit the number of representatives to one. The first time that this limitation of the representatives to one took place, was in December 1969 in Wolverhampton, where the appellant being ill and depressed, the representative was unable to make many notes, and according to BCU, "found great difficulty in being allowed to speak for Mr. G. at all". BCU argued that like the Supplementary Benefits Commission they needed to train people to represent, and that one person was the advocate and the other the trainee. They were also conscious that with well kept notes, they were gathering further ammunition for any subsequent appeal. Angered by the slow process of the Council, the union refused to return either with the adjourned cases, or with new cases until the Tribunal's impartiality was assured. Simultaneously with this struggle in Birmingham over the right of representation, CPAG was putting pressure on Lord Collison (chairman of the S.B.C.) for similar rights, and an unplanned coalition operated between the unions and CPAG, which was subsequently to operate on other occasions and issues.

The Unemployed Workers' and Claimants' Union

During the same year that Birmingham Claimant Union was set up, a parallel grouping—the Unemployed Workers' and Claimants' Union—was established in Barnsley chiefly by Joe Kenyon, a disabled ex-miner. Because Kenyon was willing to be interviewed on television and generally to act as a spokesman for the Claimant Unions, the media credited Kenyon with being general secretary to one large union with different branches, as if he were a Wal Hannington of the 70s. In fact partly because of the libertarian influence within the union movement, and partly because of the practical difficulties entailed in a more centralized grouping, the unions which were to emerge after Birmingham were not branches but autonomous unions linked together loosely through the National Federation of Claimant Unions, whose development is discussed below. Gradually even those which had been initially associated with Kenyon moved over to the Federation.

Not only did the media exacerbate the problem of spokesmen and

leaders, but so also did one of the Marxist groups and CPAG. Both, the former because of its involvement with the unemployment question, and the latter because of its concern with poverty, sought a spokesman for the unemployed and the poor to lend legitimacy to their own political activities.

Nonetheless right up to 1971 Kenyon's public position stated on endless platforms up and down the country was extremely close to that of the Federation. Apart from the spate of good pamphlets²³ on how to get your welfare rights that were produced from his Barnsley home, Kenyon's most subtle contribution to the claimants struggle was his argument linking the battle against unemployment, the right to work, with the argument linking the right not to work at an unspeakable job. Some of the more libertarian unions have such a passionate loathing of the work ethic, that they often offend working class common sense which knows that a whole society cannot live on air and also directly offend unemployed people desperately seeking work and who loathe being dependent.

In his book, *Stories from the Dole Queue* (1971), Kenyon's position has been considerably modified. The main body of the book is taken up with the biographies of claimants for social security, describing their frustrations and humiliations as, excluded from the world of work typically through sickness, injury and unemployment, they find themselves dependent on the vagaries of the welfare bureaucracy. Whereas in the past Kenyon's conclusions have been towards collective action by claimants (i.e. by joining the UW and CU) or through some form of working class action, in the book he makes the case for social work advocates—to speak for claimants, to help them cut their way through the red tape to get their rights. While to some extent this apparent volte-face may reflect the influence of his co-author—Tony Gould—the shift to urging the case for a form of alternative social work was foreshadowed by Kenyon's earlier highly personal mode of operating. For Kenyon, whatever he was advocating, the distinction between the helper and the helped was always unambiguous.

Centralization — an Organizational Crisis

Without doubt Birmingham quickly built an effective relatively traditional working class organization. It had built coalitions with the tenants' association and with the women's movement, established itself as a political entity and had acquired a substantial expertise of social security statutes and administrative instruments. While the union continued to advocate making alliances with the Labour movement, some of the tactics it advocated, such as bugging interviews between social security officers and claimants, generated trade union hostility. The Civil Service Union, in response to BCU's statement

intention, rapidly advised its members not to take part in interviews they thought were bugged. Nonetheless the BCU's stance was still in favour of co-operation—although the attitude of claimants to counter clerks is fraught with the same sort of complexities as that between say, strike pickets and policemen. The union, for example, tried to obtain a joint statement with the Civil Service Union to make it clear that "the last thing we want is for the clerical workers to close their ranks behind the ministry. They form an exploited, overworked and underpaid class, suffering heavily from bureaucracy and the squeeze". While the Civil Service Union remained at the official level²⁴ unimpressed by this statement of claimant/clerical worker solidarity, the work of individual militants in passing over to claimants the various secret rules of social security embodied in the A and the AX Codes—defying the Official Secrets Act—has contributed substantially to the union's success.

In practice Birmingham probably gained more practical help from a community based organization, the Tenants' Action Group, than from organized labour. And, despite its grandiloquent language of potentially organizing four million claimants, it saw as a solid achievement that in Balsall Heath, the Union was now (early 1970) able to rival the Tenants' Action Group as a second political force in the area.²⁵ Some success was had by working with strikers to help secure benefits for the strikers' families, and gradually, for single strikers by using Section 13 of the 1966 Social Security Act. Good personal contacts were made with the Trades Council but influencing the choice of the workers' representatives in tribunals continued to be a remote goal. The most blatantly anti-claimant attitudes were felt by the claimant union to be displayed by the tribunal's trade unionist member, who seemed to regard all claimants except the manifestly sick and elderly as work-shy and scroungers.²⁶

The Union put out a considerable literature on how to get benefits, explaining its actions and conducting running self-analyses. Indeed its very success—securing for example no less than £3,000 for its members during the first 12 months—meant that new unions looked to Birmingham for guidance, a practice which only shifted as other unions began to feel their strength.

At the same time that these new unions began to emerge in 1970, criticism within Birmingham developed concerning the centralization of the union, focussed on a single office in Camphill. The price of developing the necessary expertise and establishing an identity for the organization meant that despite their goals of self activity, the union had produced alternative experts. A kind of anti-social work had developed and people became "cases"; "cases" were represented at appeals. Experts were referred to. The media abetted this process by

identifying leaders. Thus in what appeared to be their success, by the criteria of a growing membership and economic gains for the membership, a strong vein of criticism emerged that this was the antithesis of their goals of mobilizing the claimants to act for themselves. They were ceasing to work with the community and were becoming expert individuals working for individual people who themselves were being depersonalized. BCU literature speaks angrily of being in the same position as the man from the social security or the lady social worker, "people are grateful to us", "we appear as angels of mercy, ugh!"—a vein of self-criticism which appears not only in BCU's discussions but also in those of other unions, as they find themselves slipping into individual social work. This whole debate which constantly recurs in union writing and discussion argues that social work advocates who help claimants get the benefits to which they are entitled, still do this within a framework which isolates claimants and confirms them in their dependency. Thus from Joe Kenyon²⁷ to Barbara Wootton,²⁸ Adrian Sinfield²⁹ or the radical social workers, whether active in CPAG and even in the union 'movement' itself, all are seen, even if helpful to individuals, to provide "help" at the expense of claimants increasing the control they have over their own lives.

Decentralization and Change

Almost certainly the fact that the Claimant Unions emerged in the provinces rather than the metropolis made it possible for the unions to change deliberately their organizational model from centralized to a decentralized and federal structure. Thus they were spared the problem of the centripetal forces which focus political and media attention on London and which have not infrequently distorted the structure of organizations and of movements.

While Birmingham was slowly struggling towards a more democratic form of organizing, where there was homogeneity of role with little or no distinction between helper and helped and where there were either no officers or rapidly rotating officers, other unions were beginning to emerge. Because the chief activists were students the original group had a built-in geographical mobility, and as they graduated or left the Birmingham campus they tended to establish new claimant unions in the cities they found themselves. In addition the economic situation was itself rapidly deteriorating, facilitating the expansion and growth of the movement.

The National Federation

After Birmingham some of the earliest CU's to emerge were Brighton, Manchester, East, North and West London, and North Staffs. By April 1970, these seven unions met at Birmingham and agreed to set

up and join the National Federation of Claimant Unions. They agreed a minimum four point charter and defined the nature of a bona fide claimant union eligible to join the Federation. They saw it as a union of people claiming, or who have claimed, supplementary benefits together with those people whose incomes were low enough to entitle them to means-tested benefits such as free school dinners or rent and rate rebates. Each union was to be run entirely by its members, the elderly, the sick, unsupported single parents, the disabled, etc. Every claimant who joins a union was to be represented without condition or reservation.¹⁰

The Charter itself was brief enough:

1. The right to adequate income without means test for all people.
2. A free Welfare State for all, with its services controlled by the people who use it.
3. No secrets and the right to full information.
4. No distinction made between so-called "deserving" and "undeserving."

In addition to the seven who agreed to join and establish the Federation, another ten were in existence, some present at the meeting and others with whom Birmingham, still acting as a central co-ordinator was in touch. These other unions included Leeds, Tyneside, York, Plymouth, Lancaster and Morecambe, Barnsley, Bristol, South London, Edinburgh and Liverpool.

Some of the earliest unions arose as a spontaneous response to the idea of a claimant union. Brighton, for example, was primarily organized by a disabled woman active in local left politics. The concept of a claimant union for her, and for others like her who were increasingly to appear as the movement grew, made obvious sense, pulling together hitherto disparate aspects of a personal and political existence. But while the growth of the unions partly had this spontaneous quality, which typically brought in an older tradition of political organizing, for the most part the spread of the unions was associated with the fluid network of the ex-students, who were drawn increasingly from the colleges and universities, in particular from Cambridge and Essex. The fluidity embraced not only actual ex-students but also working class youth unemployed or dropped out from the work situation; the distinctions between them—the students—were felt to be unimportant; they shared the same culture and life style. These were and are highly mobile. They hitch up and down the country, stop down with friends and rapidly dig into the local community and start organizing. The ease with which this happens speaks less of the skills which they bring—which can be widely varied—than the

acute material and personal needs, the emptiness and routine hopelessness of life on the Welfare State.

The Conditions for Growth

The three years between the first federation meeting in March 1970 in Birmingham and the most recent in 1973, have been in themselves years favouring the growth of the unions. Unemployment has sharply risen and, when even conservative estimates have topped the million, reality bears in its wake substantial numbers of concealed unemployed, particularly women. Economic depression, inherently uneven in its impact, has not, despite Crossman's claim, distributed unemployment "equitably"; areas of old social and environmental privation are among the first to suffer, with the inner city a second casualty where traditional working class areas have been invaded by the middle classes and by urban planning disasters. Prices, particularly, of housing, rose rapidly, and with the new Finance Bill will rise even more in the local authority sector. Welfare benefits have been cut and a greater emphasis on selectivity has widened the social experience of means testing. Industrial unrest has not merely grown during these years, it has significantly changed its character. At Upper Clyde the men did not withdraw their labour as a response to the threatened closure of the yards, instead they conducted a work-in. The debate often became, not whether to strike, but whether a "work-in" or a "sit-in" was the best way of occupying a factory. The Postal Workers' strike, Rolls Royce, Coventry, Fine Tubes, and lastly the Miners' strike,³¹ made men and women, who despite their working class origins, had not seen themselves as being dependent on anyone, into claimants. The economic crisis of the last two years gave birth—potentially at least—to a new sympathy between the unemployed and the unemployable.

A Pauper Class?

These were important shifts as the claimant unions, instead of organizing the long term dispossessed and the possibly transient youth group, received a sudden infusion of workers, with often substantial union organizing experience. Their presence was greatest in the areas most drastically affected by unemployment, but ripples spread out all over the country.³² Inevitably this led to some of the various Marxist groups increasing their work with the claimant unions. The degree and nature of this involvement varied from area to area, very much determined by the local conditions and the possibilities for working class action. Thus in Scotland, despite an officially lukewarm attitude by the Communist Party to the claimant unions, the Glasgow Claimant Union had active Communist members and strong trade union connections. In Cumbernauld when a well unionized factory was

closed, the unionists now out of work simply translated themselves into an effective claimant union. Such unions emerged not in response to the needs of the long term claimant but in response to those of the unemployed. As such they tended to have a predominantly male membership and to reflect this in their political concerns, tending to put the claim of the "right to work" as a higher priority than the interest of long term claimants. While this distinction between temporary claimants—the unemployed—and long term claimants affected all long term claimants, including the chronic sick and the elderly, it was the women who were actively to resent the assumption that the only work that was to be done was in the workplace. The various Marxist groups tended to support the unemployed workers' position at the expense of the long term claimant and earned for themselves considerable hostility, particularly from the women, as the Marxists were felt to be using the movement in pursuit of partial and sexist ends.³³

Certain unions in the south, while less immediately affected, nonetheless sought to relate themselves to the situation of growing unemployment. North London for example, despite the fact that it was only briefly able to recruit unemployed workers, and in the main organized people who were essentially long term claimants, retitled itself as North London Unemployed Workers' and Claimants' Union.

A recent analysis by Bill Jordan³⁴ of the two west country unions he worked with, makes a similar distinction. While the first, Newton Abbott Union, was primarily composed of unemployed workers, who had sufficient energies to set up a collective market garden and a voluntary work scheme to generate resources for members—which was widely reported in the press,³⁵ the second union, Torbay, was an organization of long term claimants whose every minute was necessarily spent struggling against the local social security office for the bare necessities. Jordan defines those long term claimants whose struggle is characterized by a bitterness and militancy, as not merely a sector within the working class, but as a distinctive "pauper" class. While Jordan in no way explains why this stratum should be termed a class (it is clearly a parallel confusion to that within the women's movement which often describes women as a class) what is more important for our purposes is to understand how the concept of class, however incorrectly used, serves to encourage and legitimate the separateness and autonomy of the claimant movement. The price of the distinction is to divide the temporarily unemployed, from the claimant class.³⁶ Some documents published by the more libertarian unions even go so far as to claim a claimant "culture". While what was intended by a claimant culture is obscure, suggesting an ill digested amalgam of Marcuse's ideas of the revolutionary potential of the unincorporated poor with Oscar Lewis's theory of the culture of poverty, whether the intention

was consciously revolutionary or unconsciously conservative, the concept of a claimant culture has the same separatist effect as that of a claimant class. As increasingly only claimants or ex-claimants are accepted to be members of the unions, this has served to preserve the exclusiveness of the unions, rather in the way black and women's organizations are primarily exclusive, and to protect them from being flooded with either middle class Marxists or, worse, sympathetic liberals.

Growth and its Problems

With such diverse strands within the movement, nationwide Federation meetings grew correspondingly more difficult as the number of unions increased. The criticisms which had been expressed within Birmingham of overcentralization and the making of experts, came to be expressed more widely within the whole movement. Birmingham had through being host at early Federation meetings, publishing the *Organization Bulletin*³¹ maintained the network and become something of a nerve centre to the unions. It also published the first edition of the *Strikers' Handbook*³² and the *Federation Journal*.³³ The idea of the Handbooks—and the *Strikers' Handbook* was to play a key role in the subsequent period of widespread industrial action—was to aid the internal development of the movement, that of the Journal to explain the movement to the outside world. However, when Birmingham ceased to play this central network maintenance role, it did prevent the domination of one particular union but at the price of losing a certain coherence and integration between the unions. Knowledge about the unions became more limited to an oral network, which meant that new unions starting up without being on this friendship network were unlikely to be well knitted into the movement. Nonetheless there were certain gains associated with Birmingham's retreat from its co-ordinating role, in that the ensuing looseness facilitated the dramatic expansion of 1971 and 1972. By the end of this period the unions were beginning to take stock of themselves as a now considerable nationwide movement, yet despite a profusion of locally sponsored activities with little national thrust.

The most dramatic period of growth did not start until the summer and early autumn of 1970. Up to that point there were seven unions, some of these were still fragile but which had taken two years to build. Suddenly by November the idea of the unions had taken hold and there were no less than eighteen. They had broken out of the relatively tight Midlands, London and Brighton network, to Edinburgh in the North, to Cardiff and Plymouth in the west. Some seven months later the network began to thicken with thirty-one unions, of which seven were in London, three in Birmingham, one as far north as Aberdeen

and two or three in East Anglia. In a further three months there were an additional 21 unions, so by September 1971 there were 64 unions all told. Between this time and the present (1973) the number has fluctuated between 70 and 90 unions. Some of these are large, organizing several hundreds of claimants, others are tiny, organizing a mere handful. Many claimants are, of course, only active for a few weeks or a few months, because to some extent participation is participation in crisis, and eventually all but the most dedicated are reclaimed by the demands of their life situation. The continuity structurally possible in organizing around a stable work situation—archetypally mining or docking where a shared work situation is reinforced by living in close-knit communities—means that trade unions have a better likelihood of achieving a stable membership. The claimants have to make the first step and go to the union, it cannot come to them. But while claimant unions lack stable membership, it is important to understand that a once organized member does not become completely unorganized merely because he or she can no longer take part in meetings. They become instead a reserve force, a quasi-organized group, who can be relied upon to go on gently advising and organizing claimants in the social security offices both as to their rights and as to the potentiality of the union for helping them. To make a fairly arbitrary estimate of the numbers of claimants and their families who have been reached by the movement, if we assume that each union has organized some 200 members, that each household has say, 2.5 people, then the movement has reached 38,000 people.

The significance of the Federation

Unions subscribed to the belief of the importance of belonging to the Federation, and were prepared to modify their internal arrangements if the three monthly Federation meeting which considered new applicants rejected their proposed affiliation. For example, Grimsby applied to the Bristol Federation meeting in January 1972, and was rejected when members present admitted that non-claimants were members. When the Union reported at the subsequent meeting that these were now excluded, the Federation accepted their affiliation. Nonetheless despite the significance of being accepted by the Federation, in many ways this marked a ritual of maturation and acceptance as a bona fide claimant union, rather than helping the development of the union itself. Despite the persistent attendance at Federation by key unions and key activists within them, not a few unions once having established contact and successfully affiliated ceased to attend, finding meetings themselves unproductive and being able to get literature through the skeletal but crucial library service which Birmingham was continuing to provide.

Where the earlier meetings of the Federation had been extremely small, they were highly effective and organizationally held together by a strong friendship network, little thought was given to the problems entailed when the number of participants moved from 20 to 250 plus young children. Eventually after a Bristol Federation meeting in early 1972, widely regarded as the nadir of disorganization, workshops with some general sessions were adopted and meetings rapidly improved. One further structural problem which Federation meetings showed themselves to be increasingly incapable of overcoming was the disproportionately large percentage of young activists attending who, being highly mobile, tended to be the dominating group at Federation meetings. As one union member put it, "we always had some freaks at the Federation meeting; now they are all freaks". Thus the style of Federation meetings tended to be rather different from the unions at the local level, the mass of whose membership were and are working class people organizing to defend themselves against the social security system.

Non-hierarchical Methods of Co-ordination

When the trend towards centralism in the movement had been checked, three methods were tried as alternative non-hierarchical means to secure a co-ordinated nationwide movement. The three methods were: (1) mutual interdependence through different experiences; (2) nationwide campaigns; and (3) regional integration. Thus the first was to use the natural differences in the membership constituency of the various unions to secure interdependency through specialist publications. The idea was to draw on, for example, East London's experiences of chronically sick members, North London's of their homeless, Birmingham's strikers, Newton Abbott's unemployed workers, Highbury and Islington's strong connections with the women's movement and their ensuing pamphlet for unsupported mothers, to South Shields' and West London's work with unemployed school leavers and other young claimants. With some exceptions this strategy paid off; unions were writing out of their own experiences and drawing on experiences of unions with similar problems and by helping themselves clarify the issues helping, almost incidentally, the movement. What was more difficult to secure was the commitment to the publication of national publications such as a national newsletter or the Journal originally started by Birmingham. Allocated to one of the London unions as a responsibility, it assumed a lower priority than either day to day organizing or publications written for their own needs. The material was eventually rescued from this union by a member of another London Union and eventually published with the aid of a CPAG grant. This issue of the Journal was of considerable

importance as it contained the reply from the claimant unions to the Fisher Committee on *Abuses*.⁴⁰ Because harassment by both the local social security office and by the special investigators needed exposing, to fail this responsibility was to fail in the defence of all claimants. The importance of the friendship network in keeping to the fore issues which affected all claimants rather than issues affecting a specific local union, is underlined by this particular episode as the actual member rescuing the *Journal* was in fact one of the original Birmingham activists, even though subsequently it was sponsored and published by the union of which she was a member.

The second method of achieving co-ordination was through national campaigns on specific issues. The first was the Winter Heating and Christmas Present Campaign of 1971. This was relatively ineffectual in practical terms although it served to raise claimants' consciousness. The only technique was to put in for a special needs grant, which was automatically refused. Consequently even where a union was energetic and appealed against these refusals, all that happened was that the appeal system was choked. The pressure on the Social Security system was therefore not a collective pressure, but a series of individual cases each requiring representation and work by the union—and as such easily contained within social security. The campaign was also criticisable on the grounds that it afforded the officers a means of attacking the unions as harming claimants through misusing the appeal system with no concrete advantage for claimants. At this stage little or no effort was made to use the media to bring about other pressures on social security. Basically this first nationwide campaign was little more than local action, which had in fact been tried the previous year in Birmingham, writ large.

The next nationwide campaign was the Guaranteed Adequate Income Campaign. More ambitious in scope, this was seen as both a goal in its own right and as a means of pulling the unions together. The media was used and the *Morning Star*, *Freedom* and *Time Out* together with many local papers were to cover the campaign. Yet despite the verbal support the campaign itself failed to get very far off the ground. Probably because it was everyone's issue, like the *Fisher Report*, it was no-one's issue, whereas the third campaign which was specifically directed towards women was much more successful. Launched in the summer of 1972, again from North London like the Guaranteed Adequate Income Campaign, the cohabitation campaign met with much wider support. Most unions had been involved in at least one struggle against the cohabitation rule, whose ruthless application had meant the cutting off of all benefit, sometimes merely on the strength of gossip of a malicious neighbour. Already in 1972, sufficient public opinion had been generated on this issue, to gain an important

concession through a surprising coalition extending from Joan Vickers, Conservative MP in the House of Commons, and CPAG at an establishment level, to the Women's Liberation Movement and the Claimant Union demonstrations in the streets and in social security offices.⁴¹ The concession was that any woman accused of cohabiting could not be cut off immediately from benefit if she chose to appeal, until the hearing." Despite the success particularly of this last campaign in relating the women claimants to the women's movement, thus increasing unions grass-root strength, in terms of co-ordinating the unions the campaigns were only partially successful.

The third method of achieving greater co-ordination gave up the immediate target of nationwide co-ordination, and instead sought to build a closer integration at a regional level. In certain areas, notably the Midlands and London, this was much more successful, a greater frequency of meeting led to a greater continuity both of people and discussion; it also served to pool information and resources. London, for example was able to organize regular monthly meetings, which facilitated both joint action and the emergence of new unions. It enabled problems which were difficult for a single union to handle, such as continued police harrassment which troubled both South London and Hackney to be dealt with on an all London basis. Deputations to Lord Collison as Chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission to complain about the treatment for example of allegedly cohabiting women, were able to draw on unions who for one reason or another still eschewed the *Federation*.⁴²

None of these methods, the shared out responsibility for publications, the nationwide campaigns or the regional meetings, solved the question of how to knit the movement together. While all three helped, their overall effect was to make the unions strong in a particular area and for them to be well meshed into a broad spectrum of activities at the local level, ranging from working with local strikers to help secure social security benefits—support which can be particularly valuable with ill paid and fragilely organized groups such as the hospital workers—to working with squatting groups, women's groups, to local tenants' organizations. Thus each of these three methods of co-ordination reflect both the strengths and limitations of the libertarian ideology which has guided the movement.

Lessons and Prospects

What can be learnt from the experience of the claimant union movement? No-one on the left who has worked with the claimant unions can fail to respond to the sheer *élan* which they have brought to organizing working class men and women around issues of the home and the street. In the brief five years since the claimants unions began,

they have developed from the activities of a handful of students and ex-students at Birmingham to a movement which has mobilized thousands of people. The core of this strength lies in the way that the unions have shown how it is possible to create a collective organization in opposition not merely to the meagre hand-outs of the Welfare State, but to its increasingly intense individuation. What appear to be very simple—and rather slow—ways of collectively discussing a claimant's social security problems, and planning together the best course of action, serve to recreate the collectivist decision-making distinctive to working class culture and movements.⁴³ Social security, in capitalist society in general, and particularly in Britain with its extensive reliance on discretion, means that each claimant is judged by unseen rules on the merits of his or her case. The arbitrariness of this sets claimant against claimant, divided by their jealousy, for a miserable but critical number of pence. Each claimant is isolated, so that at every stage in the process of claiming social security the claimant is at once more profoundly individuated and gradually depersonalized into a total dependency as more decisions which pertain to the conduct of his or her life are taken over by the officials.

No leaflets the unions produce show this as graphically and decisively as the cartoons.⁴⁴ These advise the claimant: "Never see the S.S. alone, they never see you alone," and show the claimant on one side of the counter with a social security officer as a mere puppet in the arms of senior bureaucrats, the police and the judges. The non-neutrality of the Welfare State and its functionaries is the clear message.

Although this article has suggested that the individual unions are often very small with a transient membership, the movement as a whole is widely recognized by the bourgeois press and the courts as "subversive". It was necessary in both the trials of Jake Prescott and Ian Purdie and the "Angry Brigade" for the defence to demonstrate that despite the hysteria the unions provoked on the part of the establishment, they were a legal and open activity and not a nursery school for insurgency which was the prosecution's argument. (Though it is not without interest that Clutterbuck's⁴⁵ book on counterinsurgency features a photograph of Claimant Unions on a demonstration on the jacket.)

Claimant Unions are thus one vital strand within a nexus of activities focussed on the home and the street. Like the black and the women's movement, their critique is cultural rather than merely economic and contains an edge of anger which a regular tenants' association primarily focussed on the economic questions of rent and conditions will only rarely display. This burgeoning of neighbourhood activities arises, as we have shown, partly in response to changing economic conditions, but also in response to the failure of the Labour Party and

the neglect by many—if not most—Marxist groups of those not directly engaged "at the point of production". A wide range of attitudes to community action are expressed on the left, ranging from an open view that such activities are a petit-bourgeois irrelevancy or worse a diversion, to an apparently cordial regard which on closer examination sees community action as a useful hand-maiden to serve industrial action. Very few Marxist groups locate community action as an integral and necessary part of the class struggle.⁴⁷

The kind of question that is posed by Marxist writers within the women's movement are strikingly similar to that posed by the claimants' movement. (Nor is this by chance; women, particularly the unsupported mothers, are one of the most militant sections within the claimant union, and, even when claimants are not women, they share the home as the only work place.) Recently Dalla Costa⁴⁸ in her discussion of the liberation of women, reminds us of Gramsci's view that women should be organized that they may be "neutralized", in order that they should not "hold back" the revolutionary potential of the male working class. Transferred to the claimants' movement, the question must be whether community action is merely a way of neutralizing backward sections such as pensioners, women, the sick and the unemployed, or whether it offers a richer dimension to the theory and practice of human liberation.

As we have argued, most Marxist groups stand to one side of the claimants' movement: for example, S.L.L., despite the fact that it has published one of the best pamphlets on social security⁴⁹ plays no part in the union; the Communist Party has a few active members in those areas with a strong working class membership; I.S. has relatively few members active in the unions, being more committed to industrial and tenant work, though some I.S. women are claimant members; even I.M.G. which has a serious commitment to working with the unions and is active in a number of them, does so with the handmaiden theory of the unions, seeing them as a means of organizing the unemployed—if necessary at the expense of the interests of other kinds of claimant. Scarcely surprisingly such views have not endeared these Marxist groups as groups to the movement, however respected individual members may be.

The Tyranny & Structurelessness

The tragedy is that while the movement has defended itself and its autonomous development from becoming the mere handmaiden to the interests of the industrial worker, through the exposure of the manipulative intentions of the Marxist groups, it has fallen into what Joreen⁵⁰ has analysed as the "tyranny of structurelessness". Although she is discussing the women's movement, much of her analysis is

applicable to the claimants' movement. In the desire of these new movements to break with rigidly bureaucratic and deadening organizational structures, they have turned to structurelessness. Friendship networks lie at the core of the movement. In the women's movement as in the unions, there are no leaders, no spokespeople. Consequently the media, battenning on the movement and needing such figures, seizes on its writers and those who are good on television and creates leaders, as with Kenyon and earlier some of the Birmingham activists or presently for that matter, Bill Jordan. Because the movements have not chosen these people to speak for them, they cannot control what they say, and therefore bitterly and futilely criticize them. In the process, as Joreen points out, they exclude the very people who potentially could be of help to the movement.

But more serious than the issue of the question of the phoney leadership of the Unions created by the press, is the question of the real leadership. The rhetoric of the movement denies that leadership as such does exist, yet the reality is that it is concealed in the friendship networks which serve to link the disparate unions both geographically and over time. While the unions were right to reject the situation whereby office holding becomes the privatized property of the office holders, they have moved to the other extreme where instead of an at least visible tyranny of office-holders, they have created the invisible tyranny of the network. The network is defended on the grounds of its fluidity and openness, yet in fact the criteria by which claimant members are accepted or excluded from the network are such that what were described earlier as the young activists, virtually form the network.

Not only is this form of organization bad in itself, in that it contradicts the living democracy of the union at the local level, but that it denies the movement the possibility of developing more complex forms of organization with which to meet the increasing oppression of the Welfare State. It is predictable that with the double combination of a Heath government and a Joseph at the D.H.S.S. the situation of claimants will continue to be worsened as part of the general attack on the working class, yet the movement has no mode of making a coordinated and sustained response to any specific attack.⁵¹ The positive contribution of the Marxists which should be to create a centralized and openly democratic structure has to date failed because such attempts have been attached to the hand-maiden view of the movement. This view is linked to a concept of revolution which is predominantly economic and lacks a cultural perspective. Consequently if the claimant unions are to meet and surmount the present threat, both the hidden tyranny of the network and the manipulative tactics of economizing must be brought into the open and replaced by a

political perspective which provides both sensitivity to the cultural issues and a coherent and democratic organizational structure. The contribution of the claimant unions to the working class movement in revealing the nature of the Welfare State and in resisting its oppression is precious and must not be lost in networks or economism.

NOTES

- Not only would it be true to say that most writing on Community from Tönnies onwards has looked back nostalgically to past ways of living, but also that 19th century social policy makers such as Thomas Chalmers specifically recommend the "creation of parochialism" as a means of "preventing people from forming into a combined army of hostile feeling and prejudice". Community as a local loyalty is thus historically set in antagonism to the universality of class, and casts some light on the Government's new enthusiasm for community development etc. J. Saville, "Labour and Income Distribution" in *The Socialist Register*, ed. R. Miliband and J. Saville, Merlin 1965.
3. C. A. R. Crossland, *The Future of Socialism*, 1956.
 4. D. Seers, *The Levelling of Incomes Since 1938*, 1957.
H. F. Lydall, "The Long Term Trend in the Size Distribution of Income", *Journ. Roy. Stat. Soc.* Vol. 122, Part I, 1959.
F. W. Paish, "The Real Incidence of Personal Taxation", *Lloyds Bank Review*, Jan. 1957.
 5. B. S. Rowntree & G. Lavers, *Poverty and the Welfare State*, Longmans, 1951.
 6. P. Townsend, "Ten Years after Beveridge", *Planning*, Vol. XIX, No. 344, August 1952.
 7. R. M. Titmuss, *Essays on the Welfare State*, Allen and Unwin, 1958.
 8. A. Harvey, *Casualties of the Welfare State*, Fabian Tract 321, 1960.
 9. R. M. Titmuss, *Income Distribution and Social Change*, Allen and Unwin, 1962.
 10. G. W. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, London, 1966.
P. Townsend, (ed) *The Concept of Poverty*, Heinemann, 1970.
A variety of studies were conducted on the conditions of the poor.
H. Land, *Large Families*, Bell, 1968.
D. Marsden, *Mothers Alone: Poverty and the Fatherless Family*, Allen Lane, 1969.
B. Abel-Smith & P. Townsend, *The Poor and the Poorest*, Bell, 1965.
 12. D. Cole-Wedderburn & J. Utting, *The Economic Circumstances of Old People*, Codicote, 1962.
H. Glennister, *National Assistance: Service or Charity*, Fabian, 1967.
 13. F. Field, "A Pressure Group for the Poor" in *Family Poverty*, ed. D. Bull, Duckworth, 1971.
 14. B. Hindess, *The Decline of Working Class Politics*, Paladin, 1971.
 15. Since the late sixties a considerable number of lawyers have entered welfare law: the Legal Action Group and their journal are one major grouping.
 16. No such generosity by voluntary social work agencies was demonstrated to the National Unemployed Workers Movement. The funds given by the government to the Councils of Social Service to provide main halls for the unemployed, was seen as subsidizing hostile and diversionary measures against the N.U.W.M. W. Hannington, *Ten Lean Years*, Gollancz, 1940.
 17. T. Lynes, *Peace News*, 26 April 1968. Also when J. Radford of Lewisham squatters were known to be looking for funds to publish the A. Code, C.P.A.G.

director F. Field leaked the story to *The Times*, ostensibly on the grounds that "publication might awaken the Tories from their appalling ignorance and lead them to cutting discretionary payments", but in practice quite appalled at the intervention of working class direct action politics (i.e. Deptford C.U.) with less respect for bourgeois legality than C.P.A.G. *The Times*, 7 Dec., 1970.

18. B.C.U. "Democracy for the Poorest" in *Monthly Digest*, Institute for Workers Control, Notts., March 1969.
19. *Business Meeting, Standing Agenda and Sheet for Notes*, B.C.U., 1970.
20. The quality of decision-making in supplementary benefit tribunals is lower than for similar tribunals. This is particularly apparent when the same case is presented to two different tribunals as in: "Cohabitation: Supplementary Benefit & National Insurance Appeal Tribunals", *Welfare Law Report*, C.P.A.G., May 1972.
21. Both research studies such as those of M. Herman, *Administrative Justice and Supplementary Benefits*, Bell, 1972, and the experience of lawyers as reported by C.P.A.G.'s Law Reports and the L.A.G. Bulletin contribute to this pressure.
22. Journal of the National Federation of Claimants Unions, No. 1, August 1970.
23. Such as *Outline Guide One: Social Security Supplementary Benefits* C.U.W.U., Barnsley, Jan. 1971 or *Outline Guide: Strikers*, C.U.W.U., Barnsley Jan. 1972.
24. *Support the Birmingham Claimants Union Campaign for a New Welfare State*, pamphlet B.C.U., 1970.
25. *National Federation Organizational Bulletin*, August, 1970.
26. The anti-claimant attitude or indifference of the Trade Union tribunal member has been widely reported: N.F.C.U. Journal No. 1 (op. cit.), Herman op. cit., H. Rose, *Soc. Work Today* 4 409-414, 1973.
27. J. Kenyon, *The Dole Queue*, Temple-Smith 1972, especially the last chapter advocating alternative social workers.
28. B. Wootton, *Daddy Knows Best*, Twentieth Century, Winter 1959.
29. A. Sinfield, *Which Way for Social Work?* Fabian Tract 393, 1969.
30. In fact a position modified by Birmingham, who were to point out that the Claimant Union supported members on the basis that their claims were genuine, not fraudulent.
At Fine Tubes the length of the strike was such that the strikers formed their own claimant union. At the beginning of the 1972 strike a special issue of *The Miner* gave guidance as to getting S.B. for strikers' families. The C.U.'s contribution was to point out how the single striker could also secure benefit.
32. The impact of skilled men entering the unemployed movement in the interwar years was also noted, not without ambivalence, see W. Hannington, *Never on Our Knees*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1967.
33. An internal paper circulated by one of the Marxist groups urging concentration on unemployed workers was found by women at the Bristol conference (1972) precipitating sharp conflict "Our work in a C.U. should be to orientate the C.U. away from the unsupported mother, sick, old etc., towards unemployed workers".
34. B. Jordan, *Paupers: The Making of the New Claiming Class*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.
35. This scheme was opposed by the Dept. of Employment, but was won on appeal, *Observer*, 3 Dec., 1972.
36. Some unions have to their credit consistently opposed this division thus at the London Federation meeting in May 1972, a paper called *Claimant Unions, Action Groups and the Campaign for a Guaranteed Income* opposed the distinction between unemployed and any other sort of claimant. Similarly a paper from the Moseley Sparkhill C.U. opposed the trend towards unions titling themselves "unemployed workers and claimants unions" on the same grounds, N.F.C.U. meeting, Bristol, Jan. 1972.

37. The first claimants newspaper—gestetnered, **was** the *United Claimant News'* Jan. 1969–Dec. 1970 (10 issues). Birmingham in parallel with this developed the *Organization Bulletin* first produced by Birmingham, then by Birmingham for the Federation, Nov. 1969 to July 1970.
38. *Supplementary Benefit and Industrial Disputes*, B.C.U., Nov. 1969.
On Strike, Information sheet, B.C.U., Jan. 1971.
Claimants Handbook for Strikers, Newtown, Birmingham C.U. 1971.
39. *Journal of the N.F.C.U. No. 1*, B.C.U., August 1970.
Journal of the N.F.C.U. No. 2, West London C.U., Dec. 1970.
Journal of the N.F.C.U. No. 3, East London C.U., March 1973.
40. This issue of the *Journal* was originally entrusted to Camden in September 1971, and contained the unions reply to the Fisher Committee of Enquiry into allegations of fraud and abuse of supplementary benefits. A report, which when it was made refuted the possibility of widespread abuse, only to be met by Sir Keith Joseph expanding the numbers of special investigators. The Cohabitation campaign specifically planned to work with the women's lib workshops, the other allies were self-nominating. Report from the first meeting of the Cohabitation Campaign *Working Party*, York Conference, N.F.L.U., 1972.
42. Reply by Sir Keith Joseph to a parliamentary question reported in the *Times*, 3 May, 1972.
43. The deputation of Friday, 3 Dec., 1971, to the D.H.S.S. contained representatives from unions from all over London both federated and unfederated.
44. "A.C." "Bourgeois and Proletarian Decision-Making Process", *Marxist-Leninist Quarterly*, No. 4, Spring 1973.
45. It is a pity that no article in the *Socialist Register*, or elsewhere, has discussed the important contribution of cartoons and street theatre to political education over recent years.
46. R. Clutterbuck, *Protest and the Urban Guerilla*, Cassell, 1973.
47. The failure of most Marxist groups particularly orthodox Communist and Trotskyite, to find an adequate theoretical perspective for movements based on the community is very marked.
48. M. Dalla Costa, *The Power of 1, Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Falling Wall Press, 1972.
49. *Tories Attack the Unemployed: The Social Security Swindle*, Socialist Labour League, Pocket Library, No. 3, 1972.
50. "Joreen", *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*, Second Wave, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1973.
51. The weakness of the highly decentralized structure linked chiefly through the network was demonstrated by the movement's total incapacity to respond as a movement to Stormont's attack on all social security claimants in the autumn of 1972. In order to break the rent strike Stormont ordered that all social security benefits of debtors were to be withheld. Despite the fact that many of the key activists, members of the network, were also active on the Irish question, the claimant unions could not be mobilized into any significant action of solidarity. (On this issue without doubt CPAG made a much greater contribution.)