

Social security meet their match

TWENTY-SIX Merseyside workers have thwarted a new anti-strike weapon used by the Social Security

For three weeks they have stopped the S.S. deducting money from their wage packets. The Ministry of Social Security attempted to reclaim a week's benefit which was given to workers at the Shell oil refinery, Stanlow, after their industrial dispute had ended. In April the government brought in their Supplementary Benefits (Recovery by deduction from earnings) Regulation as part of their anti-strike campaign.

A month later, in May, construction engineers at Stanlow went on strike when three steel erectors were sacked for refusing to do a dangerous job without the help of another man.

Fluor Contractors, the employers, sacked the engineers on May 26, when they wouldn't agree to go back unless the men were re-instated.

But on June 7, the workers won and phased return to work started. Once back, 26 men who hadn't claimed social security for their families during the strike asked for and received a week's benefit...as their wages weren't due for nearly seven days.

Then, much to their surprise on Monday June 19 they each received a note saying the S.S. would start to recover the money from their wages from June 22, because they had been on strike.

No power

The stewards quickly contacted the advice service CHECK (709 481) HELP, and the Social Security committee of the Liverpool Trades Council. They stopped the deductions that week by persuading the firm that the press had been informed.

In the meantime, the organisations waged a strong fight against the S.S. ruling. They pointed out that the men had been sacked...and there fore were not on strike.

So the S.S. had no power under the new regulation to deduct the money. The S.S. haven't attempted to reclaim the money since then and it seems the workers have won their fight.

Said Steve Burkeman, of CHECK, "This shows the social security can be fought particularly if the men in similar incidents co-ordinate their actions. We made sure that all 26 men sent in two appeal forms against the decision to deduct the money...one to the Department of Employment and one to the Social Security regional office."

And Bernie Evans, one of the construction engineers commented: "This is all part of the government's plan to stop strikers getting any social security even for their families. If they have their way you won't even be allowed to have your tax refunded. It's all tied in with the Industrial Relations Act."



'I was thrown out of hostel' says mother

A 33-year-old mother claims she was thrown out of a Church of England hostel... for coming in late.

The mother, Mrs Rosemary Monick, says she returned to St Monica's mother-and-baby home at 8.30 p.m. on a Saturday night, was called a 'slut' and told to leave immediately.

Just two weeks earlier she had complained to the Sunday People about the 'unbearable' conditions at the home in Croxteth Road, Liverpool.

Same offence

Mrs Monick had nowhere to go that night, and eventually had to stay with the parents of another mother, who was asked to leave for the same offence.

Yet another mother, Mrs Muriel McGuinness, five months pregnant, voluntarily left the home although she had no money and nowhere to go, because the rigid discipline and regulations were 'so intolerable'.

Discontent at the home has come to a head recently and twelve out of thirteen mothers signed a petition complaining that they were being treated like prisoners.

St Monica's was set up to provide shelter for homeless mothers separated from their husbands, or for unmarried mothers.

But said Mrs Monick: "Anyone would think we had committed some crime. We were allowed out from 2 to 5 p.m. - just three hours a day. It was only after we told The People about the regulations we suddenly found you could get

special passes to go out in the evening.

"The day I was thrown out I had left with another mother at two in the afternoon to see my 2-year-old son who was in hospital. Later we had a couple of drinks and arrived back at 8.30 p.m. They were waiting for us when we came in.

"We were verbally abused, called sluts, and told to get our coats on and leave. The girls in the home are treated like absolute dirt - you'd think it was the seventeenth century."

The mothers say they have to spend so long doing housework and have so little free time, they are unable to look for a flat or a job.

One girl, Linda Fairbrother, aged 20, said: "Some of the mothers in St Monica's have been there for seven to eight months, because once you are there you are stuck. No-one

helps you find a job or another place to live.

"They take away your social security book. They only gave me just over £1 from my social security as spending money for myself and my child."

Mrs Muriel McGuinness, who is separated from her husband, chose to leave after three weeks, although she had two children, was pregnant and homeless - rather than stay any longer at St Monica's.

She is now living in Falkner House, another mother-and-baby home. "It is far more pleasant here. Everyone is friendly. You can come and go as you like. They don't take away your social security book, you keep the money and just pay them for your bed and meals."

Purle pour waste down a manhole

POLLUTION of a Cheshire stream reached 1,000 times the permitted level after secret dumping by tankers, a Stockport court was told.

Purle Waste Disposal (North-West) Ltd admitted five offences of polluting a tributary of the River Tame. They were fined £500.

"They showed a complete disregard for the river and the environment and irresponsibility, and for profit, discharged noxious waste into it," said Mr Ian Webster, prosecuting on behalf of the Mersey and Weaver River Authority.

"They carried it out, as they thought, secretly and furtively and, as you might surmise, because a great deal of money was in it for them."

Sewage sludge from Stretford

and chemical waste containing propylene dichloride had been put down a manhole into a stream at Arden Hall Farm, Bredbury, it was alleged.

Mr Barrington Black, representing Purle, said: "I feel there is a tendency these days, having regard to the publicity on pollution, to rather jump on the bandwagon when any breach, however slight, is discovered. A very black picture has been painted."

He said the sludge was being put on the land as fertiliser. Chemical waste from a previous job must have remained in parts of the tankers and been 'unknowingly' pumped out when the tankers were washed out.

Tenants can claim excess rents

A STRANGE loophole in the Rent Act may mean that tenants who have had their rent reduced by the Rent Tribunal could claim back excess rent paid during the previous two years.

A registered 'fair rent' dates from the time you apply for a reduction. If you continue to pay the old, higher rent until the tribunal fixes a new one, you can claim that excess in full - either as a lump sum or withhold rent until you've got back what the landlord owes.

This has long been recognised. But a loophole in the law for unfurnished dwellings means tenants can sometimes get back more than this.

When a new tenant receives a reduction at the hands of the Rent Tribunal he can recover any difference there is between his old rent and what the previous tenant was paying.

Thus, in a recent case where a rent was reduced from £4.50 to £1.80 and the previous tenant had been paying £3, there is £1.50 owing for every week the tenant has been there (up to 2 years).

In London, this discovery has forced the mammoth Freshwater property company to fork out thousands to over-charged tenants.

● If you do not know how much the previous tenant was paying ask the landlord - he has a legal duty to tell you within 14 days.

Crawford makes it

So Carl Crawford has finally made it onto Liverpool City Council - as a Liberal. The man who runs 0202 taxis started his political life fighting a by-election in Arundel Ward in August 1970, changing himself from an Independent to an Independent Conservative three days before the poll.

Soon afterwards he became Liberal candidate in another by-election in the Dingle. Now he is in a happy alliance with the Liberals who have put out literature advertising their politics and his taxis.

