

Transcribed from a typescript sent by Fred Warburton to Bill Moore. Mis-spellings and obvious inconsistencies only have been corrected.

Roger Boyle, Ford Maguire Society, January 1999.

2 Leafield Close,
Leeds 17 5BT
27th Dec

Dear Bill & Francis,

Thanks for your card it arrived this morning. I am glad you are doing a pamphlet on the Unemployed I have often thought of doing one on LEEDS, meanwhile do you know that the MEANS TEST was a product of the 1924 labour government? Tom Shaw who was Minister at the time in his bill introduce a measure that had long been used in the Craft Unions, i.e. on drawing (Home Donation) you had to assure the secretary that you were looking for work by mentioning names of WORKS that you had visited so as a Bono Fide he included it in his BILL and when the tories re-entered parliament they used it as a means of knocking men off the dole.

I was a member of the ROTA committee representing the miners and as I have a few minutes to spare I will give you some of my actions or otherwise. N.I.P.I. this was one of the clauses in the Shaw Bill which meant Not in the Public Interest and it read, Where a family income exceeds 11/- per head it shall not be considered in the public interest to pay Unemployment Pay to any member of that family who is UNEMPLOYED. Now I had the first case In Leeds before the committee, Case 5 in family Father Unemployed; son 19 Unemployed; Mother and 2 daughters both working at Burtons earning 29/- per week, I persuaded the solicitor who was chairman that income was the amount that the girls paid in board was family income and that the case be referred to London for definition when the staff clerk suggested that Mr Tortington (A.E.U. District Organiser) was in the next room, would I accept his opinion? I was naive enough to trust him but he said that ALL money earned was family income, at which I bursted into a flow that my mates in the pit would have blushed at. Result case lost and me suspended for three months.

Another day when I arrived for a committee I found our local Pawnbroker sitting in the employer's chair. I objected saying he had a financial interest in poverty and was biased, the staff clerk said that made no difference so I claimed with knowledge that he was not an employer as his son was the only help. Again I lost but the case went to the panel who upheld my claim.

On one occasion I was a committee on my own as neither Solicitor or Employer's Rep could attend and here's how I got my own back. I sorted out the claim papers and all those over 50 1 gave 12 week extension and those under 50 6 weeks extension and that day sent home 64 men happy. I got suspended for 6 months. It was worth it.

The method of questioning used by the chairman was to ask where the applicant had been seeking work for the last 7 days, here was a case of the untrained brain against written material, the applicant could NOT use notes while the Chairman could so when it came to the Monday very often the poor buggers has forgot what they had said and were knocked off, as organiser of the

unemployed I had to find a way of beating this so that the applicant could remember, I devised an association of ideas viz a penny in their pocket reminded them that they went to the copperworks, a knife Leeds Forge, I was so successful that trade union secretaries sent their cases and the solicitors reported that Mr Warburton only brought genuine cases.

I could fill you a book but will let this do now.

A Happy New Year to you and Frances and as a famous revolutionary said may the New Year bring the RED DAWN.

[*signed*] Fred Warburton