

Unemployed Workers' Centres: Employed and Unemployed Solidarities

Newcastle Trades Council had set up a charter of rights for unemployed people. And that was basically saying that it's not your fault you've ended up on the dole, it's the fault of society, it's the fault of the government, they previously had a contract that guaranteed you a job. Now you don't have that guarantee. You need to not give up, not take it personally, but stay collective, and realise that now you're out of work, you have the right to be treated with dignity by the staff in the job centre.¹

Introduction

In 1978, Newcastle Trades Council officially launched the Centre for the Unemployed. With premises at 5 Queen Street, on the Quayside of Newcastle upon Tyne, it provided a space for staff, activists, volunteers and 'unemployed workers' to gather collectively and engage closely with the issue of unemployment. The centres opening was significant in that it reflected the organising efforts of trade unionists who recognised the changes around them, namely the impacts of deindustrialisation, rising unemployment and the need for worker solidarity beyond the workplace. The centre would become an example model for other Trades Union Congress (TUC) affiliated Unemployed Workers' Centres that would emerge in the early 1980s. These centres were linked as an initiative coordinated through Trades Councils and nationally through the TUC. Their role varied slightly depending on local approach, but at their core they attempted to operate as spaces of advice, support, organising and education. This paper looks to step inside these centres, specifically their role within the North East, to revisit the history of a persistent alternative to the economic challenges of Thatcherism.

By 1982, there was over 150 centres nationally and a 'Combine' network of centres was also established later in the decade. As is explained further below, these centres provided a wide range of services and activities, as well as campaigning on the issues related to the growing unemployed. The history of this alternative vision of solidarity and care in relation to unemployment, at a time where Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher suggested there was no alternative, is little known, though, and remains a narrative that requires further uncovering. Indeed, the unemployed struggles of inter-war Britain are perhaps more familiar than those within living memory. This short paper begins to address this absence and sits alongside other related work that is beginning to illuminate unemployed struggles from the late 1970s onwards.² The centres themselves would often vary slightly in their names, and Newcastle's centre name would change too, but here they are generally grouped together under the umbrella of Unemployed Workers' Centres (UWCs), unless a specific centre is discussed. They reflect a little-known history whereby trade unionists and community organisers intervened within contexts of deindustrialisation and rising unemployment.

Their history is connected to a longer history of political left organising. In *The Making of the English Working Class*, E.P. Thompson identified the importance of a 'working class presence' as found in many forms within society, and in doing so indicated the need to document how workers and left political groups establish their role and organising structures within a landscape.³ This is achieved through protest and resistance, through demonstrations - banners, flags, documents, papers – but also the presence of physical spaces themselves. The Unemployed Workers' Centres were

one of these crucial infrastructures of solidarity and political activity. They opened during a time where the trade union movement was also establishing a presence through resource centres, which occasionally overlapped in their organising and activities. Here, this short historical article introduces some small stories of hope, possibility and success, of which there plenty within the UWCs on a daily basis. The paper identifies the comradeship and solidarity found within these centres, but also intend to acknowledge their struggles and difficulties. Doing so is important, as it contrasts some other more dominant versions of unemployment, which repeat the stigmatising language of exclusion, most notably perhaps the language of ‘scroungers’ which was prominent in the late 1970s and continues to be wielded today.⁴

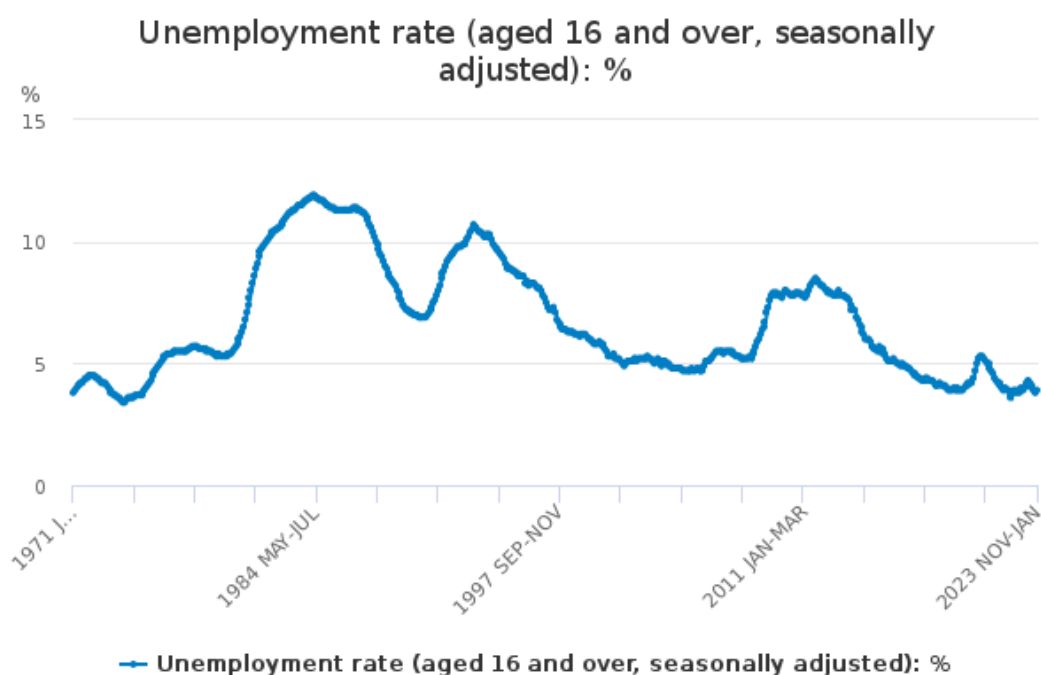
The paper considers the emergence of UWCs as an historical example of trade union activity beyond the workplace. It focuses particularly on their emergence on Tyneside and in the North East, but similarly recognises how these efforts intersected with a national initiative through the TUC. The significance of this is noted in part above, through the oral history testimony of Kevin Flynn, who would go on to become Tyne and Wear centre co-ordinator. He comments on the need for a collective response to the individual impacts unemployment, whilst also articulating a sense of trade unionism beyond the workplace. This sentiment was true in the late 1970s and remains relevant now. Centres were active bulwarks against the seismic change caused by Thatcherism and neoliberalism. Their history then provides vital lessons for the labour movement, whilst the question of trade union connections with unemployed struggles remains a prescient one.

Drawing upon a combination of archival materials and oral histories, through a five-year research project, the paper uncovers a history of sustained trade union activity that resisted and countered the trends of deindustrialisation, redundancy and long-term unemployment. It argues that UWCs were, and in some instances continue to be, spaces of care and campaigning. Centres have made notable interventions with regards to welfare advice and campaigns across societal and trade union issues, making them examples of the role trade unions can play beyond the workplace. In this regard, they provide histories which might connect with conversations regarding trade union futures. The paper begins with some contextualisation, briefly commenting on the conditions of 1980s Britain and the response of the trade union movement. It then focuses in on the Tyneside centre to document a particular centres history, before linking this regional history with more national trends.

Rising unemployment and trade union responses

The late 1970s witnessed a structural shift in the industrial sector of Britain. Margaret Thatcher’s election in 1979 accelerated change in Britain, which had already witnessed rising unemployment throughout the 1970s (see figure 1). The increasing influence of neoliberal thinking shaped an economy that rebuked state interventionism and suppressed worker organising, and heavy industry began to suffer. The political economy of these times is a familiar one but the impact upon communities and the responses of communities are perhaps less well known. This paper looks to trace one set of responses through close engagement with the history UWCs. Before doing so, though, it is important to contextualise the settings within which they emerged.

Figure 1 – United Kingdom unemployment statistics – 1971-2023⁵



The national trends are mapped out in the figures presented above. They reveal rising rates of unemployment during the 1970s and 1980s, including a significant acceleration from 1979 onwards. At the same time, it was also clear that public spending on unemployment in Britain was significantly reducing as a percentage of GDP during this time. This reduction is intensified in the mid-1980s. Some of this spending was redistributed with an increasing allocation of other forms of social spending, including spending on disability related payments. Overall, though, the trend was for a dramatic rise in unemployment at the same time as restructuring, and fundamentally reducing, spending on unemployment. Regionally, these overall trends were experienced deeply in industrial settings, particularly the North of England.

A BBC Community film produced by the Tyne and Wear centre revealed job losses in the North East in 1979. The list was quite staggering with workers made redundant at the following workplaces:

Courtaulds – 1560; British Shipbuilders – 900; I.C.I. – 500; Vickers Ltd. – 750

Doxford Engineering – 487; N.B.C. Hylton Colliery – 440; William Press – 600⁶

These job losses contributed to an overall unemployed community of over 5% nationally in late 1979, which would rise considerably in subsequent years, with unemployment peaking at just under 12% in 1984. These national statistics masked regional variations, though, with the North East experiencing 16% unemployment in the 1980s, whilst Merseyside would reach 21.5% in 1986. These numbers were shocking but behind each job loss was also a personal story and set of individual challenges and emotions. This was commented on in a *Marxism Today* article from 1984 entitled 'The Age of Unemployment'. As part of this conversation Sid Clay, TUC organiser for the Northern Region, commented on his own experience of becoming unemployed and the challenges this posed for the trade union movement:

The day I was made unemployed the bottom dropped out of my world. Being an activist in a factory, with my whole life structured and geared to the factory, and then suddenly, virtually overnight, to be divorced from all that, left me with a tremendous feeling of social isolation. That is one of the main effects of mass unemployment. [...] Who are the unemployed? As activists in the movement, we tend to overlook the importance of this question: the unemployed, in my experience, are not about to join the barricades, they are people with all sorts of problems. Many of them suffer from intense apathy, there are those at the bottom of despair. The unemployed are a broad spectrum of people.⁷

His comments shine light on the experience beneath the surface of abstract labour market statistics. He recognised the life changing impacts of unemployment, the issue of social isolation and more broadly the diversity of people considered 'unemployed.' These assertions were important for the political left and similarly so for any policy response to rising unemployment. They remain important in the present whereby political framings of unemployment and poverty continue to reproduce abstractions that fail to recognise the diversity of challenges faced by those people considered inactive within the labour market.

It was within this context, of rising unemployment and concern for the individuals and communities impacted by unemployment, that Unemployed Workers' Centres emerged as a response from the labour movement. This was a new initiative, and contrasted significantly with the 1930s unemployed organising where organised labour was often notable for its absence in supporting the struggles of the unemployed.⁸ At the same time, the centres did not emerge in a vacuum and should instead be linked to a wider set of activities associated with the political left in Newcastle and the North East region. Hilary Wainwright was active within the political left on Tyneside in the late 1970s and commented upon the centres emergence when interviewed:

They were an important transition from a very well organised employment-based trade union movement, to a trade union movement that has to cope with unemployment and precariousness and I think increasingly the idea of centres, you know, you had social centres at one point, in places like Italy and I think here Unemployed Centres was one of our responses.⁹

Wainwright's comments are insightful as they reflect the strong trade union foundations which made Unemployed Workers' Centres possible. Similarly, she points to the wider political left presence on Tyneside in the 1970s. Her archival papers reflect this with the presence of the Socialist Centre and books shops like 'Days of Hope', complementing the infrastructures of trade unionism. Newcastle Trades Council is particularly visible during this period, which alongside the spaces previously mentioned provided space for left political thinking and organising. It was within this context that a series of meetings and conferences emerged, and the idea of centres began to develop.

Tyneside Centre Against Unemployment (1978-)

It was Colin Randall who led this (the centre), came to the Trades Council committee, but we put this application in to the local Manpower Services Commission which had trade unionists on it for funding for a TUC Unemployed

Centre. We got the money which allowed us to hire premises which were at 5 Queen Street.

We created the first ever job for a Welfare Rights Officer. We created a job for someone to be the secretary, and doing the administration and then they created a job for someone to be the trade union leader to recruit unemployed people into the trade unions and to run the campaign to persuade the unions to allow unemployed people into the union.¹⁰

Alec McFadden's words above introduce some of the early stages of setting up the centre. McFadden would go on to become centre coordinator in Newcastle and was similarly involved in the early stages of establishing the centre. The centre officially opened in 1978 with Colin Randall a prominent figure. Randall made the case for the centre during meetings and conferences during this period, arguing that 'Employed and Unemployed – Unite and Fight'. He regularly called for the trade union movement, and wider Labour movement and community organisations, to take a more active role in addressing the struggles of the unemployed. This position was articulated at several meetings in the early 1980s where trade unionists and labour activists would come together to discuss how best to address the challenges of rising unemployment.

UWCs were one such initiative, and the Centre Against Unemployment was opened at 5 Queen Street on the Quayside in Newcastle. Once established, centre activities focused upon three core areas of activity. McFadden's quotes about reflect these activities, with key roles including:

Counselling and advice: to provide unemployed people with information and advice about opportunities and assistance for training.

Contact: to provide a focal point in the community where unemployed people could make contact with each other. To encourage the unemployed to participate fully in the work of the Centre.

Representation: to assist and represent the unemployed on issues pertinent to their welfare.¹¹

These TUC Guidelines reflected centre principles and the centre on Tyneside was also notable for establishing an Unemployed Workers' Union. This small group of unemployed activists were a visible force in campaigning on struggles of both workers and unemployed workers. The language of 'unemployed workers' was similarly important and reflected the direct challenge to other more stigmatising language around unemployment circulating during this period. It was underpinned by a deeply felt trade union sensibility, and one that looked to extend trade unionism beyond the workplace. Language was important and the use of 'workers' retained a strong sense of identity aligned with the trade union movement and workplaces.

Kevin Flynn commented on the importance of these connections:

[A] lot of people who I've spoken to were active in their workplace, as shop stewards and when they found themselves without a job they found a way, the TUC Unemployed Workers' Centres, were a way of continuing that. So where you would have championed the rights of people in work, you found yourself

championing the rights of people out of work. Both in the sense of campaigning for more jobs but also out of solidarity.¹²

This sentiment is an important one and reflects the transferability of trade union skillsets. In more recent times, David Stead has been a prime example of this, describing how:

When I retired from work and therefore Trade Union activity, I decided that I still wanted to continue using that experience in the community. Therefore I saw involvement with the centre was a natural progression. I decided that I wanted to continue representing people, so therefore involvement with the centre was a natural progression for me.¹³

This work of supporting individual claimants would often parallel trade union representation within a workplace, in that centre users request support in navigating the welfare system. This often included help with administrative matters, form filling and often appeals and support during more challenging times, such as tribunal. Such efforts were never just made in a purely charitable sense, though, and were often tied to a spirit of solidarity. This was central in differentiating the centres from other services that might be used by unemployed people, such as Citizens Advice Bureau. Throughout oral history interviews, activists and centre staff identified the spirit of *solidarity not charity*, and linked their advice work to campaigns and organising. These campaigns were often critical of government, local authorities, employers and labour market intermediaries. Similarly, this organising was not limited to the issues directly faced by the unemployed, but also expressed support for ongoing workplace disputes and fundraising for trade union struggles.

These fundraising campaigns included town centre collections, with centre activists a regular presence in North East town centres, support at regional picket lines and involvement in broader campaigns. This included solidarity efforts in the winter of 1984, where the Toy and Turkey Campaign looked to support the miners' strike. These fundraising efforts raised over £20,000 (according to an oral history interview) to support mining communities at Christmas and included support from Jack Charlton, then Newcastle United Football Club manager.¹⁴ Alec McFadden spoke fondly of the efforts made to support the miners, highlighting the wide ranging support during this time:

There was a lot of young people who were activists and they were members of the Tyneside Unemployed Workers movement and they worked night and day for the miners.

They were all political, there was anarchists, Communists, probably Greens, all kinds of different people but they all took the position of supporting the miners [...] I'm talking about young men and young women, twenty-three, twenty-four years of age you know, some of them had probably been on YOP [Youth Opportunity Programme – changed to Youth Training Scheme in 1983]¹⁵

There were many successes on Tyneside then. These ranged from individual service users seeking advice, support and help in navigating the welfare system, to unemployed volunteers and activists who utilised the space as a means to remain involved in political organising.

Fundamentally, the role of the centre was to provide a space for trade unionism to intervene in unemployed matters. The impacts of this were perhaps captured best by an anonymous account of connecting with the centre in Newcastle:

I know the truth, but I'm also very aware that other unemployed people don't feel the same way as I do. I mean I'm not proud of being unemployed, but I don't walk around with shoulders shrugged and my head down, trying to pretend I'm not unemployed.

A lot of unemployed people do feel guilty.

A lot of unemployed people never tell their neighbours. They go out in the mornings and come back at night and pretend they have jobs.¹⁶

The quote above gives a qualitative sense of the individual impacts of involvement within the UWC movement. At a time where the language of scroungers was being articulated by politicians and media, the centre offered an alternative space of solidarity and collective endeavour. The testimony above reflects both these elements, identifying the stigma associated with unemployment but the alternative offered by the centre and the more dignified possibilities for working with unemployment. Following eight years on the Quayside of the city, the Newcastle centre would move to the Cloth Market in 1986 – the mural below is taken from this space – where it would stay until the mid 2010s. Some tension and challenges arose in later periods, but it should be noted that the Tyne and Wear Centre Against Unemployment remains active in Gateshead, providing invaluable support to individuals where the welfare system remains a harsh and punitive environment.¹⁷

Image 1 – Tyne and Wear Centre Mural¹⁸



National developments

Events in Newcastle were notable for their prompt response to the emerging regional challenges faced and in many ways provided a model for future Trades Councils to follow. They were not, though, the only responses of the time. Trade unionists responded in different ways to the struggles faced in their communities. In 1981, for example, the People's March for Jobs witnessed 250 unemployed people march from Liverpool to London to protest against the rising unemployment levels and lack of government intervention. March organisers operated through regional Trades Councils and received wide ranging media attention. In describing their campaign, march organisers highlighted how:

Ours is a different army. The young unemployed now descending on London may not have starved. They have never tasted Army life. They have grown up against the background of the post-war consensus of economic policies which have had at their heart a commitment to full employment and the welfare state. Skinheads from Bolton, punks from Manchester, the mother and her unemployed son from Whaley Bridge, blacks from London and their older marching companions; what brings them together is the cry for work and dignity.¹⁹

The march was primarily organised through the North West, West Midlands and South East Trades Councils with regional coordinators including Colin Barnett, Pete Carter and Jack Dromey. It articulated a sense of frustration towards the rising levels of unemployment, reflecting trade union concerns and the need for action.²⁰ Their sentiment was shared by those involved in the Unemployed Workers' Centres movement. Indeed, it was the combination of ongoing trade union discussion and debate, and the visibility of march for jobs, which prompted a more coordinated response from the Trades Union Congress, through regional Trades Councils. In the early 1980s, the TUC produced guidelines and resources, through regional Trades Councils, to help establish centres. The TUC General Secretary Lionel Murray pledged a commitment to the centres in a letter instructing all affiliated unions and Trades Councils:

- Affiliated unions should do all that they can to retain and recruit more of the unemployed, and to publicise union services available to unemployed members;
- There should be an action programme for the development of unemployed workers' centres throughout the country.²¹

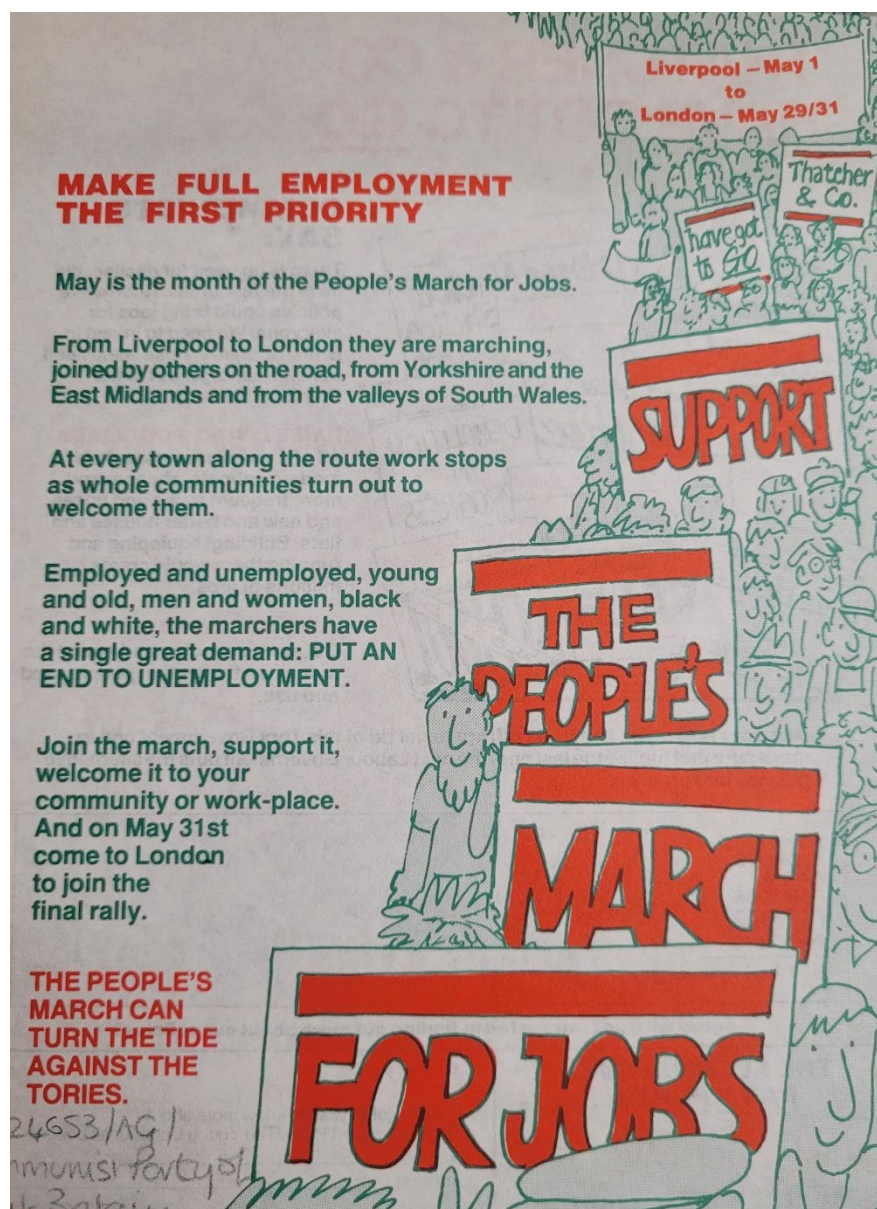
In response, Unemployed Workers' Centres grew considerably in number. By 1982, there was over 150 centres nationally and a 'Combine' network of centres was also established, and by 1985 over 200 centres were established. TUC support for the initiative was prominent within conferences yet wider calls for greater involvement, participation and membership of the unemployed within Congress remained a source of considerable tension. That said, the centres grew in number and began to provide vital services across the country as well as providing organising spaces for the trade union movement. The potential here for collaboration between those in-work and those out-of-work was clear in the principles outlined by centres. An oral history with John

Knight highlighted the need for such an intervention, as an active trade unionist within Derbyshire:

You could be in work one week and out of work the next and we need another arm to be able to say look we've got people who can support you there so such things such as one fund for all became the popular thing to do and it would have worked had we had manufacturing industry and so on. It not only helps people with their benefits but it gives people a voice, and I think that is very, very important because people feel dejected, they feel that their on their own.²²

This sentiment was captured in several national campaigns, including working against 'welfare snoopers' and campaigns against increased conditionality, and coordinated work between centres. Perhaps on the most notable developments was the establishment of the One Fund For All (OFFA) scheme whereby workplace Trade Unionists committed to contributing funds towards their local centres. This would provide an independent revenue stream for centres and generally allowed some more overtly 'political' work, which might sometimes be suppressed with local authority and government funding arrangements. The impact of such funding was perhaps most noticeably on Merseyside where an OFFA project generated a significant proportion of centre. In 1986, *The Guardian* reported that £120,000 was raised by OFFA for centres in the Merseyside region. Some of these funds still continue today where centres remain active and assist in some of their work and related campaigning.

Image 2 – People’s March for Jobs²³



The work of centres was wide-ranging and would sometimes vary in emphasis. Some centres were known to prioritise welfare advice work, whereas other centres might stress education or position themselves as organising the unemployed. Many centres would attempt to combine these different roles. Industrial relations scholars conducted surveys in the 1980s to consider the work of centres nationally and estimated 'approximately 10,000 unemployed people would be in contact with a centres each week'.²⁴ Their report stated that there was 353 full time, 446 part time, and 509 volunteers staffing the 115 centres surveyed, with a gender balance of 58% male and 42% female. They also revealed the breadth of work found within centres, as well as the 'main emphasis' of their activities. 57% of UWCs identified 'advice work' as their main emphasis, with 19% citing 'education' and 11.5% 'campaigning'. The survey gives some sense of the work of UWCs and the scale of activity. These were significant spaces providing crucial advice and support for marginalised communities. This

survey data aligned with interview reflections found within oral histories with many participants commenting on the combination of welfare advice and campaigning. Indeed, it was this combination that many described as being most distinctive about their work and as being the primary driver for their involvement.

Figure 2 – Aggregated value of centre advice work

YEAR	Aggregated value of Individual Claims and Appeals associated with Derbyshire UWC
2015	£3.28million
2016	£3.56million
2017	£4.05 million
2018	£4.60million

This work was undoubtedly impressive on an individual level but the scale of activity begins to come through in the survey described above. Figure 2 provides further insights into the extent of this work and the impact on service users. The data used is based upon annual reports from the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres and reflects the economic value of the advice work that continues to this day. It reflects work between 2015-2018 but the numbers provide some indication of the work of one region, which might reflect the potential found within these spaces historically. The aggregated values include appeals against the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), mostly with regards to Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independent Payments, and wider work with general enquiries (e.g. regarding Universal Credit applications) and outreach work (e.g. home visits). The economic impact is significant then in that this money is returned to claimants and undoubtedly re-enters the local economy. It is also noticeable that work within the Derbyshire centres has been targeted towards helping people within these increasingly punitive welfare schemes. The wider point here is that these more recent statistics reflect the continued role of centres and it could also be assumed that a similar collective impact was made through UWCs during the 1980s too.

This work is significant in many terms, but the trade union sensibility that underpins the everyday activism (of welfare advice and care for people in challenging times) should be recognised as part of this engagement. Oral history interviews across the centres were keen to stress the distinctiveness of their work as aligned with a trade union emphasis on advice *and* campaigning. This is crucial to highlight the distinctiveness of UWC work. Participants consistently stressed the importance of approaching the issues encountered through an ethic of *solidarity* not charity:

You can't find out what the problems that people are facing who are out of work unless you offer advice. So you have to offer advice, but when they come in, we're not just going to sit there in a bovine fashion and just say well, we can help with that, we can't help with that, you can claim that, you can't claim with that. If we saw that there was an injustice, then our job was to get people together to do something about that injustice.²⁵

We don't ever want to be perceived as we're just doing this out of a voluntary sense or things like that. Our members campaign [...] they're into campaigning on all the things that matter to people and it's always underpinned with the sense that if you know what you've been sanctioned or whatever, it is not you that's at fault it's the system and we're out there trying to educate people as well and to agitate.²⁶

Other oral histories indicated the distinctive nature of UWCs as a working-class space of solidarity, which might contrast again with other more charitable welfare advice services. Participants were keen not to directly criticise other services providing support for unemployed people, often acknowledging the crucial work of welfare advice services, but did also recognise the distinctive feel of a working-class space when tackling the challenges of unemployment.

Liz Smith, from Merseyside, for example, indicated how the Merseyside centre:

Was very much, not an exclusively working-class organisation, but it was an organisation where anybody from a working-class community would have walked into and felt at home. So in that sense I think that was quite an achievement really.

This sentiment was expressed by many during oral histories. Participants also recognised, though, that these working-class spaces might not have been deemed approachable for all communities, with some centres admitting to a gendered imbalance in both centre organisers and users, and others struggling to reach minority groups in their community. These imbalances were often despite the presence of feminist and anti-racist politics within these spaces, and generally an emphasis was upon providing an open and accessible centre. These tensions must be acknowledged in the making of alternative spaces, though, and it has been particularly refreshing to hear from centre organisers who are quite willing and open to reflect upon the challenges of widening the reach of their work. Indeed, these challenges should not be viewed as undermining the work of UWCs, but instead as important to acknowledge when thinking about these histories and their connections to present day organising.

Conclusions

I want to keep this place [UWC] alive because it did keep me alive when I was in a terrible state before that time when [x] came to my job centre appointment because he was just brilliant and nothing happened, and it was like wow, the threat, the level of threat was there, and then it was like nothing happened.²⁷

This short paper has offered some insights into the world of Unemployed Workers' Centres. An article of this sort can't fully portray the nuance and detail of particular

centre histories. With over two hundred centres, and regional variations in their approach, it wouldn't be possible to give a full picture of the centres in a short article like this. Indeed, some will likely feel that their centre experience is not captured in the accounts above. That said, the paper primarily focuses on some small details from the Tyne and Wear centre and some broad-brush strokes in terms of national campaigns and demonstrations against rising unemployment and increasingly punitive approaches of government. These histories are important as they provide some indication of the persistent organising of trade unions and communities in responding to the challenges of 1980s Britain. These histories should be used as prompts for more detailed engagements with other centres in other places.

Whilst the paper has largely provided a positive portrayal of centre histories, it is important to acknowledge the significant decline in their number. This decline follows trends in UK trade union membership with trade union density reducing significantly over the last forty years. Following their peak in the mid-1980s, many centres would close due to changes in local authority funding arrangements, particularly the replacement of the Manpower Services Commission which left many centres without funding. At present, there is likely ten to twenty centres remaining, and these have variable levels of activity, which is a considerable decline from their peak during the 1980s. The remaining centres, like the Derbyshire centres previously mentioned, continue to conduct remarkable work and punch above their weight. Their persistence is noteworthy, given the many political challenges faced, from Thatcherism to austerity, and most recently a cost-of-living crisis. Yet their decline should also be acknowledged where the working-class presence of Britain has changed considerably since the period where centres were opening.

The concluding quote above is taken from a more recent interview relating to the Tyne and Wear centre and offers a more hopeful endpoint. It indicates a sentiment that might be considered transferable across space and time as a message encountered in many places and throughout the history of UWCs. Individual 'service users' would describe centres as an empathetic space where they felt comfortable and supported. Crucially, the involvement of the trade union movement, in building these spaces and networks of support, shaped a distinctively working-class approach as described above. This perhaps points to the history as a usable past for the trade union movement. At a moment where trade unions face many vulnerabilities and challenges, the history of UWCs indicates the importance of retaining connections with struggles beyond the workplace. More recent efforts by Unite to develop a Unite Community membership scheme (open to those out of work) has been one initiative that picks up some of the sentiment shown above and it is notable that remaining centres have aligned closely with this scheme. The struggles of the unemployed continue then, and the ongoing history of UWCs should provide many lessons for those organising practices.

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 - 3 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*. (Middlesex: Pelican, 1963)
 - 4 See I. Tyler, *Stigma: The Machinery of Inequality*. (London: Zed Books, 2020)
 - 5 Unemployment rate (aged 16 and over, seasonally adjusted). Source ONS: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/timeseries/mgsx/lms> [Last accessed: 24/4/2024]
 - 6 'Tyneside Centre for the Unemployed', Community Organising Film (1981). Available from British Film Institute.
 - 7 *Marxism Today*, January 1984, p.31.
 - 8 D, Watson, *No Justice Without a Struggle: The National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the North East of England, 1920-1940*. (London: Merlin Press, 2014)
 - 9 Hilary Wainwright oral history interview.
 - 10 Alec McFadden oral history interview
 - 11 Adapted from Centres for the Unemployed - TUC Guidelines, 1990. Personal document accessed via research participant.
 - 12 Kevin Flynn oral history interview.
 - 13 David Stead oral history interview.
 - 14 See *The Journal*, November 13th, 1984
 - 15 McFadden oral history interview.
 - 16 On the Stones, published by Newcastle Trades Council Centre for the Unemployed. Available from Labour History Archive and Study Centre. Hilary Wainwright Collection. Box 13 File 8.
 - 17 See P. Griffin, Expanding labour geographies: resourcefulness and organising amongst 'unemployed workers', *Geoforum*, 118 (2021), pp. 159-168.
 - 18 Photograph reproduced with permission from Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centre
 - 19 People's March Co-ordinators, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, May 5th 1981, p.13
 - 20 P, Griffin, Solidarity on the Move: Imaginaries and Infrastructures within The People's March for Jobs (1981), *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, early online version (2023).
 - 21 Letter to the secretaries of all affiliated unions, regional councils, Wales trades union council, CATCs and Trades Council. Modern Records Centre, MSS. 292D/135.58/1.
 - 22 John Knight (1949-2021), Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres, oral history interview.
 - 23 Reproduced with permission from the Working Class Movement Library, Salford.
 - 24 "An LRD survey of unemployed workers' centres" – produced by K. Forrester and K. Ward, available from Modern Records Centre. MSS 292D/135.58/3
 - 25 Colin Hampton, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres, oral history interview.
 - 26 UWC interview, August 2017. Participant chose to be anonymous.
 - 27 UWC member interview, May 2018. Participant chose to be anonymous.