Up Against the Welfare State: The Claimant Unions
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a survey of movements & ideas

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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. 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.
The welfare policy of the United Kingdom has been a controversial issue in the politics of the United Kingdom, ever since the first welfare state was set up. The United Kingdom is a union state – i.e. a state where a state’s component parts have joined together due to a union of crowns, administrative standardisation occurs but the component parts of a nature still retain pre-union features (i.e. separate churches) and power is still centralised, but with limited devolution. Because of this, the