

BREADLINE BRITAIN 1990s

PROGRAMME 2

POST-FILMING SCRIPT

FINAL MASTER: 26.03.91

TITLES

SUB-TITLE: Living off the State

Wyness family, letter
from DSS arrives

COMPILATION:

1. Wynesses
2. Roberts
3. Yvonne
4. Julie

COMM

Richard Wyness has been
unemployed for 6 years. The
Department of Social Security is
deducting £10.00 a week from his
benefit to pay off gas arrears.

RICHARD

...get a personal interview or
something like that with them.

JOYCE

Oh well, something will have to
go, like your coffees.

RICHARD

I mean you've got your phone
number here, haven't you? Phone
them up. Ask for the extension
number, what's on the letter, say

it's too expensive. It's all you can do. No, we can't afford to take ten pound out, it's too much.

ACTUALITY CHAT

Paula Roberts in
bedroom

PAULA, 183/2

Cutaways 184

As you can see we've got no carpet in this bedroom; we just have to place it round the bed and that to make it a bit warmer, because we can't afford to buy proper...well, fitted carpets, it'd cost us too much, and on our money we can't afford to buy it. Also we have our clothes on the maiden all the time as we've got no wardrobe, which means they get damp, and it's not good for Jimmy's back. We also have clothes on the back of my door, as the maiden's not much...not very strong, so things fall off. In my son's bedroom, James', we do need a single bed for him, but as you know, they're like a hundred pound a go, and you just

can't go out and buy one straight away.

Paula, Jimmy and kids
downstairs

COMM

Four years ago, Jimmy Roberts was paralysed by a serious accident at work. Now the family depend on State benefit.

JIMMY, V/O, SYNC, Roll 52, SI 195

We find it very difficult to manage with the money. When I was working we found it pretty easy because my wage was, 4 years ago, £130, quite a lot of money then. But now, we're getting less money than I was earning then. Paula can't really go to work because she has to help me around, and James is very very hyperactive, we have a lot of trouble with him.

SYNC

So, all the outcome on life that I wanted to do is...it's just like a big jumballoon that's just been deflated so... It's hard to

explain till you've been there,
you know. Sometimes you just
feel like throwing in the can,
you've just had enough.

Taking kids to park

YVONNE, V/O, 632/2, p6

My children, they haven't got any
warm clothing for the winter;
they lack like jumpers, trousers;
my daughter's only got sort of
summer dresses; they need coats.
They need warm footwear, which
they haven't got.

COMM

Yvonne Barnett is separated from
her husband. Unable to work she
is left to bring up their 3
children on State benefit.

YVONNE, V/O

With the baby, they're constantly
growing anyway. So he's totally
out of clothes especially for
winter. He's got his all-in-one
whereby he's growing out of that.

And I mean it's very very difficult on the money that I've got to be able to buy these things, I can't afford it.

JULIE, V/O, 152, pp2/3

I usually put about five pounds a week in fifty-pence pieces in my electric bill; I have to spend two pounds a week on my phone.

JULIE, V/O, 154, p22 (or p26)

I pay rent on this flat; I have to pay part of the rent as well.

COMM

Julie Smith is a 77-year-old widow. She lives in Birmingham, and also depends on the State.

JULIE, V/O, SYNC, 152, p31

After that there's the food. And I reckon when I've spent it all I've got about two pounds left over to sort of look round for

clothes, or save up for anything.

COMPILATION

COMM

These are among the 11 million people found to be in poverty by a special survey commissioned for Breadline Britain. They all fall below a minimum living standard laid down by society at large.

This is a rise of 3½ million since the first Breadline Britain survey in 1983.

Of those in poverty, two-thirds are dependent on State benefits.

This programme looks at how changes in the benefits system have contributed to the rising tide of poverty.

Julie at Post Office

(FX FX FX)

Julie lives on the State pension, and a small occupational pension from her husband. They total £55.00 a week.

JULIE, V/O, SYNC

Well it's not rock bottom, but it's very very low. I feel that the older...I mean, we've lived through two wars, as I say, people of my age, and I think we ought to have a little bit more respect from the Government than we get now. To be poor, it's...it's not very nice. It's a thing that we've all got to come to, old age, so why can't we have just a little bit of comfort in our old age?

More Julie at P.O

COMM

One reason for rising poverty among pensioners has been Government policy on benefits.

Up to 1979, pensions rose in line with earnings. Since then, they have only risen in line with prices. As earnings have gone up by a third more, Julie's pension is £12.00 lower than it would have otherwise been. She feels cheated.

JULIE, SYNC, 155/1, p30

I mean, you hear the television,
and nobody mentions pensioners.
Everybody's putting in for rises,
all the car people, all the works
people, but nobody ever says
anything about pensioners. Poor
old age pensioners have to just
get on with it, and do the best
they can with it, and struggle.

COMM

Julie at home?

The Breadline Britain survey
found that people think the poor
should not be excluded from
rising prosperity. The minimum
standard they set has risen since
1983.

As pensioners' living standards
have stood still, more and more
have fallen below what is
regarded as an acceptable
minimum.

JULIE, V/O, 154/1, p.23

I mean, people in the old days,

they used to go out, and on Saturdays they used to have a good night out. I mean, I haven't been out for nights for ages and ages; I've got no money to go with.

JULIE, SYNC, 154, P.20

It is terrible. Because, no way can anybody live now the way they used to live. I don't care who they are.

Julie at home

COMM

The Breadline Britain survey found that, by the minimum standard laid down by society, a fifth of pensioners are poor today.

That's a sharp rise over 1983, when only one in ten were in poverty.

And it's not only pensioners who have become relatively worse off.

Paula, Jimmy & kids
in lounge

Slates 250/252)

(from p8)

Jimmy used to work for Birkenhead
Council on Merseyside. But
because of his accident, neither
Jimmy nor Paula can work. They
live off £120.00 a week in State
benefit.

Invalidity Benefit has also
fallen well behind earnings over
the 1980s. Without the relative
decline, they'd be getting £46.00
a week more.

PAULA, W/T I/V, PP2/3

It's really embarrassing in a way
if somebody comes to the house.
You know, like they say, 'Oh,
we'll come up and see you', you
say, 'Oh no, I'll come and see
you'. You feel a bit ashamed.
Even though you're clean you
still feel ashamed, because
things don't fit, or things don't
look as nice as their house does.
And the things you want, and you
want your house to look
beautiful, you know, you just
can't afford to get it.

COMM

What household goods they have were bought when Jimmy was working. But they're now wearing out.

Lacking the money to buy basic furniture, another disabled friend - Dave Haywood - has made a local radio appeal.

ACTUALITY - Radio Appeal

ANNOUNCER: Now I understand at the moment Dave there is a particular appeal that you're interested in, isn't there?

DAVE: Yes, Mr. Jimmy Roberts and his family.

ANNOUNCER: What's the problem there?

DAVE: Jimmy Roberts had an accident when...3 years ago, and it's left him absolutely paralysed down one side of his leg. When I approached Jimmy, not realising how bad he was, I went to his house and I got the shock of my life. No carpets on

the floor.

ANNOUNCER: I'm sure that, from the many listeners to the Johnny Kennedy show there will be some who will ring you and offer you furniture and carpets, or whatever. But if anybody has got any household effects at all, carpets or furniture of any kind, Jimmy Roberts and his family would be able to make very good use of them indeed. So Dave, thank you very much indeed for that. Thanks Dave.

JIMMY, V/O, SYNC, 197, pp15/16

You dug a ditch and you can't get out of it, and you keep going up the side, you fall back in again. I find it very difficult. I'd love to work, to be able to work, to be normal, as we call normal.

SYNC

But...there's people worse, the same as us, or people worse off than us, and we'll just have to manage the best we can, because we're not going to get any help from anywhere.

COMM

Disabled people are the next group most likely to end up poor.

The Breadline Britain survey shows that over one in five of them are in poverty in Britain today. That compares with one in six in 1983.

The unemployed have also fallen steadily behind average living standards.

Wynesses in lounge
Without work, Richard and his family have lived off State benefit in Manchester for the last 6 years. They get £74.00 a week in Income Support.

This replaced Supplementary Benefit in 1988, and has also fallen further and further behind earnings. The family are £19.00 a week worse off than they would otherwise have been.

RICHARD, V/O [New I/V], p19

Our standard of living as far as I'm concerned is double low, you can't get any lower. Because we're struggling every week to make ends meet, and we can't afford new clothes for the kids or nothing. Because it's ridiculous the amount of money they expect you to live on today, it is stupid.

JOYCE, V/O [New I/V], pp13/14

Joyce & Tricia
around Moss Side
Tell you the truth, I'm getting a bit fed up of, you know, doing without. Me kids do without, me hubby does without, and I do without.

COMM

The Breadline Britain survey found that just over a half of the unemployed are in poverty today, compared with just under a half in 1983.

The final group heavily dependent

on benefits is single parents like Yvonne Barnett.

Yvonne at home

With no maintenance from her husband - who only works part-time - she too is left on Income Support - of £58.00 a week. Because of the break in the earnings link, she's getting £9.00 a week less than she would otherwise have had.

YVONNE, SYNC, 632, p10

I think it's disgusting. And I think it's very hard to maintain some standard of living on 57.85 a week with three children.

YVONNE, V/O, SYNC, 632, p.12

And I know not just myself but many more people are in the same situation. Whereas if I was working, life was still difficult, but yet I can just about manage.

SYNC

But now, you might as well say,

you just exist, you're just about existing on what you're getting; it's just from hand to mouth, or from hand to bill. Not even from hand to mouth, it's from hand to bill. And it is very hard.

COMM

More film
to cover this new comm

In Britain today single parents are the most likely group to end up in poverty.

The Breadline Britain survey found that two out of every three are poor. This compares with under a half in 1983.

CAB WOMAN

OK, if you'd like to wait in the waiting room, someone will call that number.

WOMAN: Thank you.

COMM

On top of the relative drop in the value of benefits, other

changes have made claimants absolutely worse off.

YVONNE

Yes please, I'd like to see someone about my Social Fund.

WOMAN: Right, I'll give you a number.

COMM

Yvonne has come to the Citizens' Advice Bureau in Birmingham.

ACTUALITY

COMM

In 1988, the system of payments for special needs like clothing and bedding was changed. The number of grants was cut by 80%.

Instead, those with special needs have had to apply for a loan through a new Social Fund.

The Government's aim was to encourage claimants to become

more self-reliant.

Yvonne applied for a £158 loan for children's clothes but was turned down.

YVONNE, V/O, 632/2, pp9/10

If I didn't have to go to the DHSS I wouldn't have, but I am in need. What is actually coming in from Income Support can not maintain to cover the bills as well as buy food and cater for the household. It can't even buy clothes.

ACTUALITY I/V, 554

MARY:

I'm told that you've applied for a loan from the DSS.

YVONNE:

Yes.

MARY:

You've been turned down. Can you tell me about it. What did you apply for?

YVONNE:

When I applied, I applied about two weeks, and then they answered me, replying saying that my case was not urgent enough.

MARY:

What made you apply for this?

What situation arose that made you feel you must go and apply?

YVONNE:

Because my daughter's coat, she's almost outgrown it, the sleeves are short; my son hasn't got a coat at all; and the baby, he's grown out of all his clothes.

MARY:

How far do they have to go to school?

YVONNE:

Well we walk every day, and it takes about half an hour to get there.

MARY:

So that's where you need some sort of warm clothing.

YVONNE:

Yes.

MARY:

Well now, what I think we

might...

Continued discussion

COMM

Before 1988, Yvonne would almost certainly have got money for children's clothes she needs.

But in order to limit Government spending, the new Social Fund has a fixed budget. Many families get turned down, not because of lack of need, but because the Fund has run out of money.

ACTUALITY I/V

MARY:

And what about the boy? Is he fit enough?

YVONNE:

He's fit, but he suffers with bed-wetting. I think...

MARY:

How old is he?

YVONNE:

He's almost 6.

MARY:

And he's still...

YVONNE:

He's still wetting the bed.

MARY:

How does that affect the bedding?

YVONNE:

Well, we haven't got enough sheets as it is. So it makes life very difficult. And another thing is, you know, we are all having to share one bed.

MARY:

Have you ever made any attempt or requested any help to get bedding or another bed or bedding?

YVONNE:

No, for the simple reason that I thought personally I wouldn't be able to pay back the money to the Social Security.

More chat

COMM

The second problem with the Social Fund is that the money comes as a loan, not as a grant.

Yvonne is already finding it difficult to manage. Repaying a loan would make life even more

difficult.

OR W/T I/V, p29

YVONNE, SYNC, 632/2, p7

The reason why I took such a small amount is so that I could be able to pay it back, or pay back some reasonable amount of money on a weekly basis. I didn't want them to take too much.

ACTUALITY DIALOGUE

RICHARD WYNESS, 438/2

I've just received this Poll Tax this morning for £91.00 for me...£91.00 for me, and £91.00 for the wife. I don't think there's any possible chance of me paying for it.

C/U, S1 439/2

RICHARD, 439/2, p7

I'm very much afraid, it'll have to be filed away, under miscellaneous, or lose it somewhere. But I cannot afford that, that is...right out of the question.

Wynesses in park

COMM

And there's another way in which families on Income Support have been made absolutely worse off. They now have to pay a fifth of their Poll Tax, and all their water rates.

Previously, these costs were met in full. Although the basic rate of Benefit has been increased a little to compensate, it's left the family £5.50 a week worse off.

They can't afford to pay the Poll Tax. But under the new rules, it'll be deducted from their benefit.

RICHARD, V/O, 438/2, p2

They'll have to stop so much out of my money again, which that'll put it well down. I mean I'm down to 63, so that'll be another fiver, so it'll be about £57, £58 a week.

RICHARD, 439/2, pp7/8

I can't manage, not with 2 children and a wife. There's no way possible you can afford to pay the tax, this tax. No way.

COMM

The only way Joyce can clothe the family is through charity.

JOYCE, V/O, 411, p7

It's very hard really, you know, with the money I'm on. But most of the time I have to suffer sometimes. I have to go around shops, second-hand shops. I come here now and again because I can't afford clothes for the little girl and myself.

COMM

The Mission provides the poor with pre-selected bags of clothes.

Lady takes bag of
clothes out

JOYCE, V/O

I get shoes, socks; now and again
I get a coat for her, and
trousers and shoes for the lad;
it just depends what's in the
bag.

SHIRLEY ADAMS, SYNC

The Mission was founded in 1869
by Alfred Alsop, who was a focal
Manchester man who was very
concerned with the level of child
poverty and just scenes of total
destitution that he saw, in this
area in fact of Manchester. And
throughout its history it has
really just met the needs of poor
people.

Bringing bag in to Joyce

COMM

120 years on, the Mission is
still helping the poor. With the
relative value of benefits
falling, and with fewer grants
for special needs, more and more
families are turning to charity.

Joyce sifting
through clothes

ACTUALITY, JOYCE, SYNC

If I can't afford them I come here. Can't go to fancy shops with no money.

TO CHILD: What are you doing down there? Come out.

Ah well, you can come here every 6 months, or every 12 months, it just depends whether you need clothes for your little girl, or your boys, or your babies. And...mainly it's more or less like a charity.

SHIRLEY ADAMS, V/O

Over the last couple of years we certainly have seen an increase of families coming in. But I have to say that we don't advertise our service that widely. And I think if we for example would let the whole of Manchester know we would just be inundated with requests for help, and we just can't do that. I would say there's a lot of un-met need out there, if we were to let people know what we did.

SHIRLEY, V/O, 396, p22

We have over a thousand families on our books.

p24

Quite a few single families, single parent families I think come to us.

SYNC

A lot of families where both partners are out of work and receiving benefit. We even have pensioners coming to us; we had two come quite recently who had actually come to Wood Street when they were children and received help, and sort of, you know, much to their sadness I think, and a bit to their embarrassment, there they were, sort of 60 years later, having to come back again for help.

Furniture being delivered to Robert's house.

COMM

We see Dave Haywood at back of van
Dave Haywood's radio appeal on behalf of Paula and Jimmy has brought some help - a second-hand single bed for their son and a small second-hand carpet for the

Slate 242

bedroom.

PAULA

I honestly do feel degraded, having to go to a charity, to ask for these things that we need. I mean it would be nice to go out and buy new. It's, 'Oh, I got this nice wardrobe' and that. I mean, you can't really go out and say, 'Oh well, I got this given to me off a certain charity, and that given to me off a charity'.

DAVE, V/O, SYNC, 239/1

Well if I come across a disabled person, if they can't get furniture off Social Security, I will go on the radio and do it for them. I've been doing this for the last three years. Holidays as well, I have to go round and beg money off different charities for holidays. Telephones the same, go round and beg money for telephones.

You have to literally go out and beg for furniture, beg on your hands and knees, like an animal you know, which isn't good enough..

JIMMY, V/O, SYNC

I don't like going to charity at all. Not because of the principle of it, it's just, charity stuff is things that people don't want, and we get them they're normally battered and not much good anyway. If we do get...when we do get some stuff from a charity shop, my wife always gets clothes and things, we don't like it at all. Because even being seen in there, a lot of people don't like it, and we don't like it as well either. You feel like...nothing, you feel like that you're nothing at all, when you have to resort to going to places like that.

COMM

With growing financial problems, Joyce has decided to tackle the Department of Social Security about the latest cut to their benefit for gas arrears.

ACTUALITY

Telephone conversation

PAULA:

Can I have Supplementary for W please.

I got a letter saying that you're going to take £10 out of my money. It should be £73.69p, and you're going to take £10 out of it, and now I'm down to £63.69p. Is there any way that you could knock it down?

WOMAN:

What was the £10 for?

PAULA:

It's for gas, the gas bill's £233.34p.

WOMAN:

No, there's not. What happens you see is the Gas Board give us a figure to take out of the

benefit, otherwise they won't agree it and they'll cut your gas off.

PAULA:

So...so couldn't you knock it down at all no?

WOMAN:

No.

PAULA:

So you've arranged with the Gas to knock £10 out of my money every week?

WOMAN:

The Gas Board tell us how much to take.

PAULA:

Oh, the Gas Board tell you?

WOMAN:

Yep.

PAULA:

I thought you tell the Gas Board.

WOMAN:

No, the Gas Board tell us. If we don't agree the figure, then they cut you off.

PAULA:

Right.

WOMAN:

OK?

PAULA:

OK. Thanks a lot. Bye.

Well mainly they said that they
can't reduce the money, on £10 on
the gas bill. So I'm £10 worse
off again, as usual.

END OF PROGRAMME 2