

'We would still be out on strike'

THE Aftermath: After the magnificent effort by our members in order to obtain a just pay settlement, the moans and groans are coming out from the Broad Left.

First, a well known member of the Broad Left was seen on TV saying "We've Been Sold Down The River". Then the Broad Left letter saying "Sell Out".

We can therefore assume that, as dominated Broad Left Branches voted to stay out on strike, if a Broad Left Executive was still in control of the Union then agreement on the new pay offer would never have been accepted and we would still be out on strike.

This is the reason why the majority of the members of our Union voted out the Broad Left Executive last year, when they had a chance of a workplace vote under the Trade Union Act — this part of the Act a future Labour government is pledged to keep.

Bill Beazley



In fact, considering we were taking on a multi-million-pound company who showed contempt for their customers in their determination to beat us, we came out of the conflict with our shoulders high and many of the strings removed.

You may say that the basic increase was low, but so was last July's inflation 2.4 per cent. Remember the year before we only equalled inflation and it was the unfulfilled strings which caused so much trouble this time.

There is an old saying — it's easy to pull people out on strike, but it takes courage to send them back to work.

We need go no farther than our own Union when the Broad Left dominated Executive got involved in the Privatisation battle. They left members out too long when it was costing the Union £400,000 a week to keep members out, paying them full pay and shift allowances, and expecting our Labouring grade and others to pay a £2 per week levy.

When one of the Broad Left Executive members, with others, was given the unenviable task to negotiate our members back to work with a very weak hand, they stopped backing him because they didn't like the terms imposed by BT.

One of the reasons why the Union is so weak financially, is because of what happened during the Privatisation fight.

With the Broad Left letter is a list of their Executive Candidates. We will publish these in our Branch Magazine, together with the NCU First nomination and our own nominations, because it is important as to who our Executive members are.

It is my belief that a major factor in the support for the industrial action, greater than ever before, was because it was our Executive, voted by each one of us.

In this respect I pay Maggie

Thatcher the only compliment she will ever get from me. Thanks for bringing in the Trade Union Act — it united our Union, and gave us our self respect.

BILL BEAZLEY
Secretary
Bexleyheath

EC seem 'to have lost their bottle'

FIRSTLY, on a positive side, may I say that I am in many ways both proud and privileged to have taken part in the strike over our derisory pay and conditions offer from BT.

Like many others I did not seek to go on strike and was frightened as well as unprepared initially to be part of a strike against the supremely confident BT board.

As the strike progressed however, it was evident that the feeling among the ordinary rank and file members of our union was that we would stay out until we received a realistic and just award without strings.

The strike was conducted in a responsible manner, with

virtually no trouble on picket lines. Despite several attempts by management to discredit our members, we retained our dignity and sense of humour as well as our resolve.

Many of our members were very hard up after three and a half weeks on strike (yes, we in Newcastle had been out since Day One), but their support for the EC was undiminished as was evident from the result of the ballot on Sunday, Feb 8 — 99.6 per cent in favour of continued action.

Can you imagine the feelings then, when the EC recommended acceptance of an offer that was in almost all respects identical to the previously rejected offer that initiated our industrial action!

The 1986 award is almost as derisory as the original offer. True, BT have removed some strings, but my feeling is that these particular strings were put in by BT as "joke" strings that they knew they would have to jettison.

The 1987 deal is hardly worth mentioning. No wonder many members feel that they have wasted the great effort they made to secure a reasonable settlement.

The EC appear to have lost their bottle just when they had secured the support of 98 per cent of the membership. They have succeeded in turning much of the anger that was felt towards BT on themselves.

I have heard no one who thinks the deal was a good one, and even those who voted yes did so more from lack of confidence that the EC would be able to secure a better deal than any feeling of satisfaction of the one recommended to them.

It was apparent from the outset that the EC would have been happy to settle for the original offer.

BT management badly misjudged the mood of the ordinary NCU (E) members and so did the EC. The members have been magnificent and can feel proud of their stand. The EC were spineless and should feel ashamed of their capitulation at a time when most would agree that it was more difficult to lose the dispute than to win it.

BILL ALLEN
Newcastle



John Scott - Garner

'Self respect won back'

CAN I offer my congratulations to you all for a job well done. It needs courage to call an all-out stoppage, but it needs even greater courage to call it off.

It was with nostalgia that I saw the TV coverage of the

'Support sadly wasted'



Lawrence Huston

UNITED? — After having served on the Branch Committee for eight years I was recently elected to the post of Chairman of the Ballymena Branch. My first weeks in office will be long remembered for a number of reasons.

The Dep./Gen. Secretary's statement (QUOTE) — "Our Union has come out of this dispute stronger and more united than ever before. We have restored dignity, self-respect and pride to members who have become tired of being pushed around by management."

"We can all be proud of the stand we have taken. We can build for the future on the result we have achieved."

How anyone can think we are more united when 29,000 rejected the offer and a further quarter of our members did not even think it worthy of a vote. The members of my Branch are amazed by such statements. Does Mr. George think we are idiots.

My members feel we have been "SOLD DOWN THE RIVER" by John Golding and the Pay negotiating team. The magnificent support the members of this Union gave you was, sadly, wasted.

As one of my members said at our Branch meeting prior to the Ballot: "If we reject this offer, who have we to negotiate any further progress for us?"

The members of this Branch feel we have been let down badly yet again by our Negotiating team. I hope I never have to stand up at a Branch Meeting and apologise for the actions of our Executive again! **LAWRENCE C. HUSTON**, Chairman Ballymena

"Control Room". The publicity activity was very well done, and Spike, Tony, Eric and John came over very well as moderate leaders of a moderate union, whilst Bett and Vallance seemed to me not so impressive — but then I may be biased.

The greatest success is, of course, not in the words of the agreement but in the fact that the union, as a whole, will have won back its self respect, and the employer will once again believe it is worthwhile negotiating with executives who can deliver, or if necessary fight.

JOHN SCOTT-GARNER, retired NCU President.

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I ASK you to publish the letter (below) sent to Jeannie Drake on behalf of NCU (C) and (E) members in Canterbury because the action has been a salutary lesson to many members that the whole structure and organisation of the union is wrong.

Many times at our joint, large meetings held during the action there was the call "Why aren't we one union?"

If the basic issue of picket lines is not agreed prior to action, what hope is there of agreement and co-ordination on future larger issues? . . .

I have been asked by members taking industrial action to write to the Clerical Executive Committee to deplore the lack of co-ordination between the Clerical and Engineering Executives during the industrial action.

On the late afternoon of Tuesday 20 January I heard that the Canterbury Engineering Branch had agreed to place pickets on all clerical buildings in Canterbury.

I immediately rang the Clerical Group control room at Greytoke House to take instructions. Spike Wood, the President of the NCU, stated that clerical members should not cross engineering picket lines.

On Wednesday morning (21st) about 200 clerical members at different buildings did not cross the lines. On returning home later that day I rang the control room to report what had happened.

I was told that at a meeting late on Tuesday evening the Clerical Executive had agreed with John Golding that Clerical members could cross engineering picket lines! We were shocked at such an agreement and because of the misleading instructions we had received.

I was then instructed from the control room to approach the District Personnel Manager and say we could now cross the picket lines, but would only do so if they agreed not to give our members the letters to sign, and suspension etc.

I phoned our DPM around noon. He came back with their decision at 5.15 p.m. that day. The decision was that we would be treated the same as the engineers and would have to sign the letter, or face suspension.

During Wednesday and Thursday management circulated a memo to staff who did cross the picket line saying that the two executives had agreed they could. The

WE MUST ACT AS ONE

confusion was then used as an excuse by those members not wishing to support the action.

At our first union meeting on Friday (23rd) I explained to our members out on strike what had happened. We felt we had to stay out because of the letters and many wanted to support the engineers.

At our second meeting on Tuesday (27th) with the engineers, a motion from the floor asked me to write to you deploring the lack of co-ordination between the two groups, and the misguidedness generated.

We deplore the fact that if we are one union why are we crossing engineering picket lines? It is clear that with the two groups working in isolation, instructions are going to be given that threatens the credibility of branch officers.

We ask that at least during the industrial action, please get your act together.

ANNE SHENOW
Secretary
Canterbury Clerical

Thanks

ON behalf of the Ipswich branch of the NCU(E) committee I would like to place on record our appreciation of all the efforts that everyone at HO put in during the recent dispute, elected members, permanent officers and staff alike.

Particular thanks are due to Reg Kelly, Pat Lee, Derek Bourn, Vicky Kidd, John Price and Jim Flack who made the journey up the A12 to Ipswich. Without their support the action would not have held as solidly as it did.

Also thanks are due to all who answered calls in the control room (too many to mention!) and the switchboard operators.

STEVE WILLETT
Ipswich

Machines friendlier

WHO's with the Woolwich? After almost three weeks on strike, I decided to see the building society manager at the Woolwich. I was informed, even if I was unemployed, under no circumstances could payments be suspended for even one month.

The manager seemed to take no small pleasure in pointing this out. I said in future I would take my mortgage debt elsewhere, and I would not be the only NCU member to do so.

I would have received more human compassion from an automatic cash dispenser.

JACK BEITH,
Paisley



I WOULD like to put on record for you, at the end of your traumatic dispute, my keen appreciation of the excellent press and public relations exercise by your Communications Department.

The team have kept the Industrial Correspondents and others, who include me as a free-lance, supplied with up-to-date information about the progress of the dispute — and have beaten British Telecom's effort into a cocked hat.

A daily bulletin dropped into the hands of industrial correspondents is something they have rarely, if ever, enjoyed. The operation seems to be a model that other TUC-affiliated unions could do well to emulate.

MIKE EDWARDS.
● The team comprised Charles Harkness (see facing page at bottom), Aileen Boughen (below left), Kashmir Bilgan (below right) and various officers drafted in from day to day.



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'Taken up the river'

Thanks to John Golding, the EC and all concerned — 12 months ago the left wing of the Union (EC) should have been negotiating our 1986/87 pay claim. The only problem, BT management would not talk to them.

Towards the latter part of 1986, the membership voted and returned, what I would term, a more moderate executive, to represent them. BT might have thought with a moderate EC they would be a walkover. In fact, quite the reverse. Just one more error of judgment by BT management.

To those who say "Sell out," and "We have been sold down the river" — the membership of the NCU voted overwhelmingly for John Golding, and the EC members so I say to the membership, "Either put up, or shut up." JG and the EC have taken up the river with a 12.75 per

cent two year deal with some strings, where as we could have had an EC taking us down the river with 0.0 per cent and all the strings.

They say there are no winners in an industrial dispute. Both the Union, and BT state they are happy with the result. I have a smile on my face. If the STE had been with us the smile would have been bigger, but apart from the NCU(C), we were left out in the cold, high and dry.

The reason we should all support this Executive, I know! There are a few bogey men, waiting to wipe that smile of my face.

So congratulations to John Golding, the EC and all concerned at Greystoke House. Thanks to the NCU(C) but most of all to the 99 per cent of the membership who supported the action.

PHILIP WALKER
Milton Keynes