

SECONDS OUT AS STRIKE STARTS



LEFT, a boxing ring in London's East End at Bethnal Green was a popular venue for mass meetings (Photo, Jez Coulson, IFL).

THE headline, right, from Nottingham's Evening Post sums up the effects of the strike as an exchange crashes. More stories from round the country inside.

PHONE CHAOS

-10,000 lines crash
-Hospital 'isolated'

THE HEADLINE THAT SAYS IT ALL

John Golding reports

National Communications Union

Journal

SPECIAL ISSUE: JANUARY 30, 1987

HOURS OF INFORMAL CONTACTS LEAD TO ..

INFORMAL contacts with British Telecom management, before and during the three day Clerical strike and held against a background of increasing problems caused by the indefinite Engineering stoppage, resulted in talks restarting. Clerical news is reported below and on the back page. Engineering talks took place today (Friday) and were expected to continue through the weekend.

WEEKEND OF TALKS

THE RESPONSE to the call for Industrial Action has been magnificent.

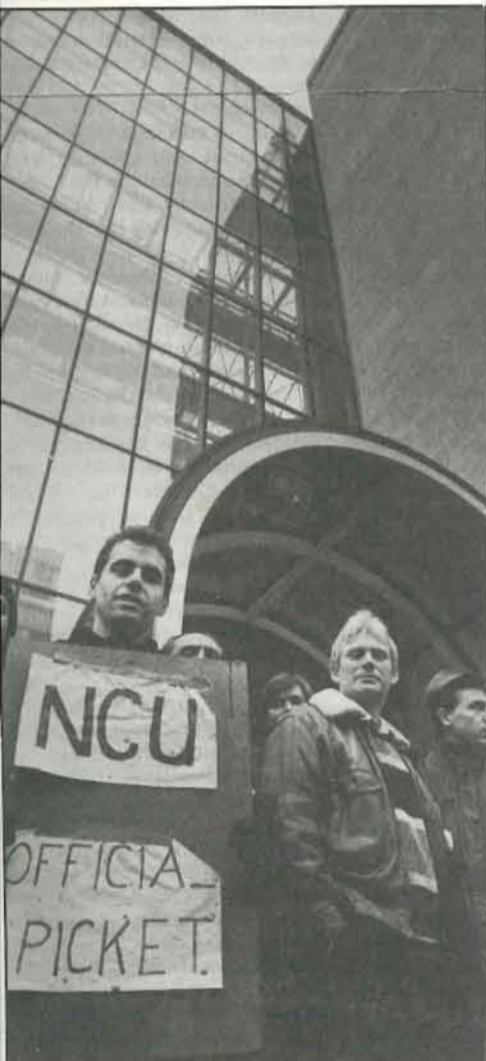
In the Clerical Group the action has led to an improved open offer. Following rejection by the Group Executive further talks are taking place.

In some places members have been allowed to return to work without giving either written or verbal assurances; in other places management are apparently being as pig-headed to Clerical Group members as they are to the Engineering Group and refusing to allow them back without giving assurances.

On returning to work our Clerical members have of course had to cross Engineering picket lines. The Engineering Executive has confirmed that Engineering Group picket lines are directed at those who would do engineering grades duties. This we believe to be in the best interests of the members.

The Clerical action having been called for three days it was important to stick to plan and keep in control of the Clerical Group dispute. Having forced a better offer and return to the bargaining table it is essential for the Clerical Group to see how the talks progress, recognising that if a satisfactory outcome is not forthcoming further industrial action will have to be taken.

In the Engineering Group talks have commenced again. Between Mr Vallance and me, talks are at a deadlock at the **Turn to back page**



DON'T DO OUR WORK

THE TUC has asked other unions not to cross NCU picket lines or do NCU work. Letter to Branches 1877 gave details of advice ASTMS, GMB, and the EETPU had already sent to their members.

The AUEW was also instructing its members, and offers of help - including money and premises - had been received from many unions at national and local level.

A message of support had come from the German DPG condemning BT's lockout.



Clerical negotiations continue



FRIDAY: Clerical negotiations are expected to continue with BT, though a revised offer - now formally on the table - has been rejected (See story on back page).

Members were returning to work after the 3-day strike, but not to work normally. Problems caused by a letter from management were being sorted out. Left, South London District Secretary S. S. Rekhi discusses the letter with members (Photo, Jez Coulson, IFL).

Above left, pickets in the Fleet Street area (Photo, Stefano Cagnoni, Report)

Normal

A blatant example of the clear intention of BT to use "bully boy" tactics was the case of a member being suspended - after refusal to work "normal" overtime. He hasn't done any overtime in the last ten years!

BT had a picket on their own front doorstep when the first informal contact was made with management, and the pickets (above left) were later joined by the media (above centre). Photos, Jez Coulson, IFL.

Finding pickets was no problem following the suspensions and lock-outs. Manchester's "Powerlink Newsletter", left, shows how BT's tactics misfired.

Exchanges crash as the faults mount up

EXCHANGES crash, customers complain, new members join up, the sick get help, faults pour in, JCBs run riot. The day by day stories are told in a round the country round-up of district reports.

WEST LONDON: This is where it all started with the first suspensions about 11.00 a.m. on Friday January 16. Seven fitters were sent home for refusing to do overtime that weekend.

In ten minutes the entire 1,200 Met West Branch were out and the following Monday all 4,500 District staff staged a 24 hour stoppage.

On that first Friday, the Chiswick Exchange was off the air for most of the afternoon and evening. Since then, District management has kept a tight control on information about service faults.

However, extraordinary measures are having to be taken to cope with the Union's action. The BBC's outside broadcast on the Sizewell enquiry had to be beamed from Suffolk to a satellite over Africa and bounced down to Shepherds Bush rather than taking the usual land line route.

Emergency cover is being provided by members. On Tuesday January 20, a car park attendant was murdered in Hammersmith and staff provided three lines for the police "murder room".

● *One member had a most dramatic introduction to his working life with BT. After a year on strike at Wapping over the News International dispute, he joined BT on the day the District staged its 24 hour stoppage and has been "out" ever since.*

The action is attracting new members. Met West alone has picked up 30 and even the local EOTA organiser has joined the Union and gone on strike.

CITY OF LONDON: Reports have come in of problems encountered by Arsenal Football Club, Allied Carpets, Coca Cola, Channel 4 and the Inland Revenue.

Exchanges are going off and on. On Saturday January 24, the TXE4 Exchange at Kingsland Green was "lost" for six hours. On Tuesday January 27, BT faced major problems when a contractor put a Kango drill through a 400 pair cable in Hackney, East London.

District management has refused to co-operate with the Union's offer of emergency cover. Mass meetings have been held which filled the Odeon, Leicester Square, one of the largest cinemas in the country seating some 2,000.

London North Central Internal Branch has set up 24 hour cover at its office and organised 24 hour picket coverage on all BT operational buildings in the Branch area to dissuade local AEs from doing the work of NCU(E) grades.

FAULTS: On Wednesday January 28 telephone operators in London were having severe problems with lines to Peterborough, Swindon, Oxford, Slough, Haverhill, Aylesbury, Orington, Maldon, Manchester, Ascot, Canvey Island,

The Princess and the pickets



Mansfield, Lewes, Canterbury, Wentworth, Sevenoaks, Glasgow, Lea Valley. Some 33 London Exchanges were also reported to be experiencing difficulties.

ANGLIAN COASTAL: Engineers have been out since 2.00 p.m. on Friday 16 January, following suspensions at Norwich and Clacton. Clerical colleagues refused to cross picket lines, were suspended on Wednesday January 21, and have been out ever since.

At Norwich, there have been meetings every day of the Internal and External Engineering Branches and the Clerical Branch with "massive turn-outs".

The Norwich Main Exchange was lost for periods on Monday January 19 and there was a power failure the same week at the Clacton Exchange.

In the small village of Ilketshall St. Margaret between Norwich and Lowestoft, following a cut cable, there is now only one working telephone but management has refused the Union's offer of emergency cover arrangements. Management had to give a Cellnet 'phone to the wife of a seriously ill man in the village.

One of our members reports that his mother - who is not on the telephone - had gas supply connected on Wednesday January 28 and the men from the Gas Board managed to smash the BT duct and mess up a 100 pair cable.

SMALL BUSINESSES SQUEAL: The National Federation of Self-employed and Small Businesses are acutely conscious of just how badly their members are suffering from the NCU's industrial action. So concerned are they about deterioration in the service they have issued a press release urging the government to reach a no strike agreement for essential services.

CENTRAL MIDLANDS: The District was among the first to become involved in suspensions and walk-outs on Friday January 16. Further suspensions and walk-outs took place on Monday January 19 and, from the following day, everyone in the District was out for the duration.

District Officials have been operating from the Trade Union Resources Centre who have been "absolutely smashing" and assisted with the production of leaflets, stickers and badges.

The City of Birmingham is described as "going down in bits".

LEICESTER Drawing Office, right, sums up members' views. Their mass meeting wholeheartedly endorsed the Executive's pursuance of a settlement without strings.

The Victoria Exchange was out for four hours on Wednesday January 28, the Central Exchange is providing a severely reduced service, and other units have been out for various periods of time.

At the Erdington Exchange on January 28, a compressor failed due to a lack of oil and management had to rush around to find a spare compressor to prevent cable joints from admitting water. As in other parts of the country, most TXE4 Exchanges are giving intermittent service because they require such regular attention.

Over 25% of the trunk links in and out of Birmingham are off. On the 140 megabit links between the major cities, all spares have been used up because of failures on existing routes. This is now cutting into capacity.

There are thousands of outstanding faults in the area and around Birmingham and that this figure is increasing by thousands every day. However, management is "virtually ignoring them". Throughout the city, approximately 1,500 public all offices are out of order.

The Conservative controlled Solihull Council experienced embarrassment and inconvenience when it extensively advertised the new telephone numbers for a new non-BT switch that was due to be commissioned next week. It cannot now be brought into service.

Meanwhile the Spring Fair at the National Exhibition Centre is virtually without telephones, and it is rumoured that BT is being required to pay compensation as a result.

The Union is not providing emergency cover in the District because management has taken away kit and van keys. When two members of management went out to restore a doctor's line they finished up after 3½ hours pinching the line of the next door neighbours.

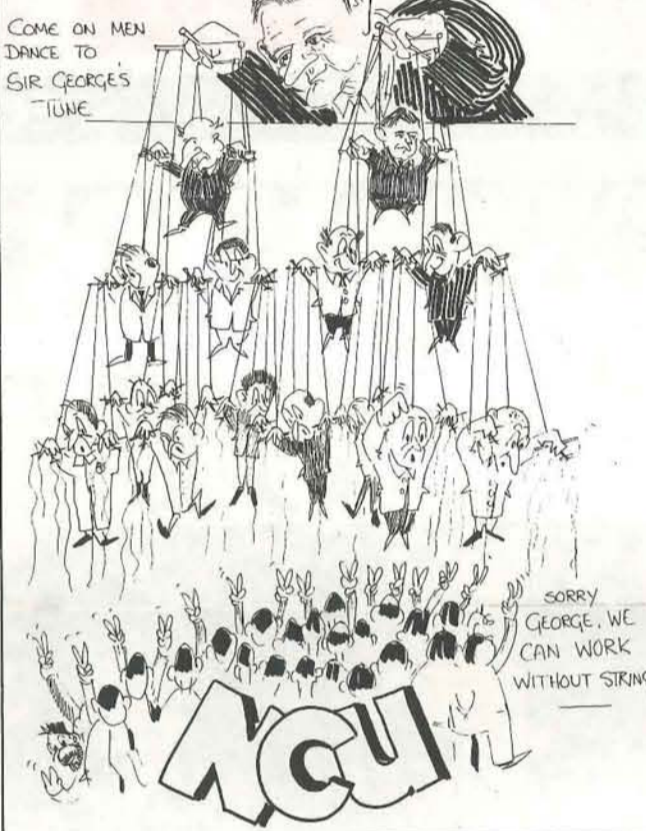
On Thursday January 22, the Central Hall Birmingham witnessed a mass meeting of 1,400 members. Even Birmingham Internal's AGM attracted 500 members. The membership position is described as "astonishing".

● Birmingham Internal has received 100 new applications for membership while losing only three members as a result of the action.

EAST OF SCOTLAND: The Edinburgh Branches have already held two mass meetings, on Friday January and Monday January 26. On each occasion, over 600 members attended.

The action is beginning to "bite". At the end of last week, 9 private wires going into Air Traffic

GEORGE'S B.T. PUPPET SHOW



Control at Edinburgh Airport "went down" and they are now down to their second tier of service which is simply two PWs.

More recently, on Wednesday January 28, all the independent radio lines between Edinburgh and London were "out" which was affecting all independent radio stations.

The Edinburgh External Branch has been anxious to cover genuine emergencies.

● A gang provided a new line to the local Humble Exchange to ensure that the local doctor in this small community was able to make and receive calls;

● Committee members repaired a line to a domestic subscriber with a handicapped child;

● and a police enquiry caravan in Edinburgh was supplied with two lines to assist a murder enquiry.

NORTH OF SCOTLAND: The first action in Scotland came on Thursday January 22 when all three Districts were called out. Both Engineering and Clerical members came out for the day and then, following negotiations that went on until 3.45 a.m., members returned to work on the Friday without being required to sign any documents.

However, once the national stoppage commenced on Monday January 26, the Engineers were back out and, of course, the following day they were joined by their Clerical colleagues.

RIGHT, Clerical Chair Jackie Boothman at a Blackburn meeting (photo, Nick Clarke). Far right, Birmingham pickets (photo, John Harris IFL).

ONLY a solitary PC and a line pickets from the Princess in sweeps by for a school opening deter the lads and lasses, and Photos by Jez Coulson (IFL)

District. On Monday January 26 over 350 members were at a meeting in Aberdeen and support came from representatives of the Transport and General Workers Union and the local teachers' union, the Educational Institute of Scotland.

LANCS AND CUMBRIA: All Engineering members in the District have been out since Monday January 19. Clerical members in Preston came out on Tuesday and Wednesday January 20 and 21 in support of Engineering colleagues, while Clerical members in Blackburn and Lancaster came out on Tuesday January 20 and remained out.

Joint meetings between Engineering and Clerical members have been held in Blackburn and Lancaster and these are described as having been "highly successful".

Engineering Branches report very high attendance at a series of mass meetings of 350 at Blackpool, 200 at Southport, 200 at Rochdale, 150 at Kendal and 500 in Preston.

Up and down the District, there are reports of serious network difficulties. Barrow has had major congestions on its STD system and in Carlisle the Royal Automobile Club is completely off the system and having to use the radio contact.

In the Preston area, all seven TXE4 Exchanges have gone completely at times and most of these Exchanges are still experiencing "massive problems".

One Exchange covering Lancaster and Morecambe was completely isolated for three hours on Thursday January 22. Lines between Preston and Liverpool, and Preston and Manchester, have been particularly trouble-prone.

These difficulties have attracted considerable attention from the local media. The Preston Traders Association has complained to local newspapers about interruption to service and loss of business. Red Rose Radio has given "superb coverage" to the dispute, and there have been interviews with major business customers who are suffering from the action.

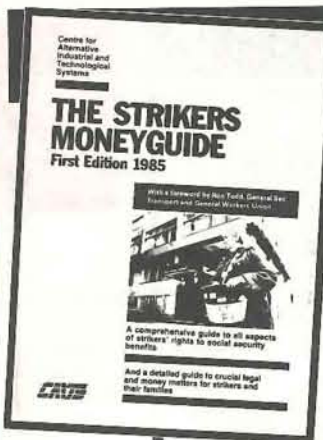
All Branches have offered



ABOVE, Assistant Secretary Derrick Dodds speaks at a mass meeting in Huddersfield. Photo by Edward Winpenny.



WHAT TO DO WHEN THE MONEY STOPS: CUT OUT GUIDE



THIS guide, above, is available for Branches, and there is an update too. Full details at the end of the article, right.



BILLS loom large when the money stops. But there is no need to panic, as Jim Moher explains in this "cut out and keep" article. Branches have already been given guidance, and authority to use Branch funds to tackle hardship. This question and answer guide explains the position.

HELP WITH THE BILLS: You may be entitled to financial assistance for your family from the DHSS during the present dispute. Your Branch or District NCU Officers will by now have alerted you to this possibility and they are also equipped to advise you how to claim. Here we repeat some of this advice for those who may have missed Branch Circulars. Others who have considered the possibility, may not have claimed for various reasons. Some

people wrongly assume they would not qualify. Others may hesitate because Supplementary Benefit may be regarded as a hand out with the stigma of means testing. **BANISH SUCH THOUGHTS.** You have contributed all your working life. Now your family are entitled to help from this Social Security Fund. **Supplementary Benefit** for your family is usually the best hope. Claim immediately if after reading this you feel you may qualify:

THE MEANS TEST:

- Q. How low must you go?**
A. Your cash and savings will be assessed by an Adjudication Officer. These must not exceed £3,000. BT shares, if cashable, will be reckoned.
 The good news is that major possessions are disregarded. These include,
 ● the value of your home
 ● regular bills for personal living and home expenses, eg mortgage interest payments
 ● rent, rates, fuel, telephone rental and calls
 ● fixed interest investments eg TSB term holdings
 ● personal possessions such as jewellery, furniture, televisions, stereos or cars
 Unless you know you have no chance of meeting the £3,000 limit, complete the large pink form (B71D). If in no doubt, seek advice from your Branch Officers. They will be in touch with the local experts such as DHSS and Citizens Advice Bureau or

- Unemployed Centres.
Q. But my partner works - won't his/her earnings debar us?
A. Such earnings do not disqualify the other partner from claiming. However, such take home earnings are taken into account when assessing how much is paid. Allowable expenses to arrive at his/her net earnings include
 ● income tax; ● occupational pension contributions; ● National Insurance Contributions; ● reasonable travelling expenses; ● 15p or the cost of each meal taken at work; ● child care costs; ● Trade Union contributions; ● other expenses considered 'reasonable' by the Adjudication Officer.
 So again you can do your own rough calculation.
Q. But is it worth all this hassle - how much can you get?
A. It depends on each individual's circumstances. First, they calculate the 'normal requirements' viz. living expenses and housing costs, of your family.

Your own needs are disregarded. From these are deducted any income you may have, such as:
 ● last week or month's earnings;
 ● any partner's net earnings;
 ● any other DHSS benefit, eg child benefit; ● £17 per week Union benefit, even though not received.
 The current fixed rates are as follows:
 £23.85 per week for a partner
 £10.20, for each dependent child under age 11
 £15.30, for each dependent child aged 11-16
 £18.40, for each dependent child aged 16-17
 £23.85, for each dependent child aged 18 or over
 Don't addle yourself with the detailed calculation. Get Forms B710 and M11 (mortgage interest). DHSS leaflet SB18 explains matters more fully. Fill them in as best you can and send them off immediately. *Don't expect a lot.*
Continued overleaf

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RELAND: The Dis- out for the first day January 22 but return for one day undertakings being staff.

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Officials report that, bers first walked out,



there were 500 faults carried over in Haverfordwest alone, and they conservatively estimate a "minimum" of 1,000 faults every day throughout the District.

At the beginning of the week, a mechanical digger went through the Cardiff-Pontypridd No. 4 cable. The Union sorted out the 999 circuits in accordance with emergency cover arrangements, but the rest of the cable is still out.

Union members have ensured that they have covered all genuine emergencies. In one case they installed a telephone to a house where a terminally ill cancer patient was living but, when the wife of the patient told the local press and television, no one carried the story.

Generally, however, the Union has received "good press coverage" which is clearly upsetting the District General Manager.

SOLENT: The response of members throughout the District is described as "really solid". Mention should be made of members on the Cableships and in the Central Marine Depot at Southampton, since these have provided "excellent co-operation".

Several Exchanges have crashed at various stages. The Boscomb TXE4 Exchange went down on Monday January 26 and a number of UAX units have been lost through power failures. It is reported that there are "severe congestions on all STD routes".

The Dorset police have lost data links and their IDX is suffering considerable problems. Meanwhile, in Bournemouth, Barclays International and Chase Manhattan are just two of many companies suffering "reduced service" as a result of loss of lines.

However, Branches have been ensuring that emergency cover is provided for genuine cases.

- A family in Wareham, Dorset, was provided with a line so that they could maintain contact with their child who was in intensive care at a hospital in Southampton;
- Service was restored to a family in Bournemouth whose child was undergoing a hole in the heart operation in Southampton;
- And a woman of 87 who is crippled with arthritis and her phone repaired over the weekend in Winchester.

Throughout the dispute, there have been some splendid mass meetings. At the beginning, on Tuesday January 20, a meeting for the whole District was held in Bournemouth which attracted some 1,500 members, some travelling as far as 70 miles.

Then, on Monday January 26, the two Southampton Branches had a meeting with over 1,000 members and the Bournemouth Branch had one with over 900 members. The local media coverage has been "excellent" and on Tuesday January 27 Bob Brown, Secretary of Bournemouth

THE Financial Times may not be everyone's normal reading, but many Branches rang in to say the article, right, put the union case well - and in members' words. Calls to Union HQ suggested it should be reprinted, and this Journal Special is the first opportunity to do so.

Branch, did a radio phone-in on BBC Radio Solent.

STE branches in the District have held collections for the NCU's Hardship Fund and have now raised over £1,000 in this way. One individual BT manager sent an anonymous donation to one of our Branch Secretaries of £100. Even members of the public have been offering money to members on the picket line.

Finally, a story which indicates the sense of bitterness created by the strike. On Sunday January 25, members of the BT football team in Bournemouth who play in a regular weekend league refused to wear their traditional strip, but sadly the only alternative strip was the colours worn by a local club know as Mercury!

Still on the sporting front, on Thursday January 29 a "friendly" football match was being held between the Southampton strikers and the Bournemouth pickets.

SOUTH DOWNS: One of the very first Districts to come out, with the first suspensions and walk-outs on Monday January 19. A week and a half later, District Officials say "support is very solid" and "morale is very high".

On Wednesday January 28, Brighton had a meeting attended by 700 members and on Thursday January 29 there was virtually the entire Branch strength of 200 at meetings in Eastbourne and Worthing.

In the early days of the action, Gatwick Airport was "severely affected". On Thursday January 29, WD1400 siren circuits - part of the early warning chain - had been out for eight days in Eastbourne.

● The most serious service problem in the District so far occurred on Wednesday January 28 when the Isle of Wight hospital was off the air for four hours.

Union members were available ten minutes away to provide emergency cover, but District management has refused to accept Union arrangements for such cover. So it took four hours for someone from Portsmouth to sort out the problems on the Isle of Wight.

● Reports compiled by Assistant Secretary Roger Darlington.

BT dispute puts years of goodwill on the line

Charles Leadbeater and Jimmy Burns on the grass-roots view of the telephone engineers' strike

IT WAS a rather unlikely group of pickets that gathered yesterday morning outside Baynards House. Within is one of the most important exchanges in the City of London, which carries trunk services and holds the packet switching so vital to financial services.

All were shareholders in British Telecom; some were readers of the Daily Mail, others of the Daily Telegraph; some were engineers who had worked for 20 years without joining a national strike, others joined the National Communications Union within the past few weeks.

But they were unanimous in their view of the causes of the strike of 110,000 telephone engineers, which began at midnight, and the significance they attach to it.

"BT has made huge profits on the back of the flexibility we have already delivered. Now they want more flexibility without paying for it properly or negotiating it properly," said Lee, a skilled technical officer, who has worked for the company for 11 years. "We have been forced to the point where we have to stand and fight."

At a time when "flexibility" deals are apparently sweeping through companies, it is easy to ignore the immense changes they can bring to people's working lives.

One of BT's proposals is for many engineers to start their working day at 7.00 am. "That would create an enormous headache for me, as I live more than 60 miles away," said Sean, who joined BT as a technician four years ago when he left school. He is also worried that the company's plan to reduce the number of pay grades, combined with the proposal to recruit senior technical officers from outside the company, will limit his promotion prospects.

"When I joined I hoped to stay with BT some time. Now I am thinking of getting another job," he said.

Though the pickets direct most of their hostility towards BT's senior executives, they say local management is also whittling away at hard-won agreements from the 1970s.

In Swindon, in the middle of the hi-tech M4 corridor, where a former BT manager is the Conservative MP, pickets were equally angry.

"They tell us we are not effi-

cient. But I have done 28 weeks' training, without asking to be paid. Why did I go on strike—because of the way they treated one of my colleagues," said one of the youngest pickets.

The colleague was an engineer who had worked for the company for 41 years. He was turned away from work last week for refusing to sign the company's "loyalty pledge" three weeks before he was due to retire.

"Anyone wanting to work on the latest technology has to give up the nine-day fortnight we won in 1978 and return to a five-day week," said Mick, a senior technical officer in the City, who has 20 years' service with the company. "This is just one example the way management has recently been introducing change through the back door, the men said."

BT is so out of touch with the demoralisation among the grass-roots that it failed to sense how the mood was changing in the course of the negotiations, they said.

"Six months ago we would have accepted five per cent or even three per cent as a straight pay offer without strings. But not now," said Mick.

BT managers' recent remarks about cases of sabotage have inflamed feelings. "I have worked 30 years in this company as a loyal employee, providing a public service. I do not much like it when a Johnny come lately senior manager who has been here for six years accuses me of deliberately endangering services," said John.

Attempts to involve them more deeply in the commercial success of the business have also been largely still-born, the engineers said.

All are shareholders, but Tony, one of the London pickets, said: "It makes no difference at all. It's just

another kind of bonus." "I'll probably sell my shares before their value goes down," said one of the Swindon strikers.

The company launched team briefings at Baynard House six months ago. "You are told what topics will be discussed. It's a forum for them to tell you what they are planning rather than to allow you to say what you think," said Mick. Middle management has apparently given up the briefings as a waste of time.

In a moderate union, staging its first national strike, the reality of cold picket lines, demoralisation and borrowing from the bank is just beginning to set in. Most of the monthly-paid engineers have one more pay cheque coming to them. However, even though the national union is financially crippled, many local branches, such as Swindon, have healthy funds to finance hardship payments.

"There is no denying the mood might change as the financial pressures begin to tell, but we all know why we are on strike. It is a members' strike, not a leadership strike," said Lee.

In Swindon the strikers are privately critical of the union's leadership's handling of the negotiations and the start of the dispute.

Mr Gerry Emery, the local branch official, is confident the strike will damage BT more than the union: "If we were to go back tomorrow it would take at least a month to get things back to normal. Even then the damage this strike has created in industrial relations in the company will take years to mend."

The town has not been able to receive international calls for the past four days. It took a manager, brought in from Bristol, more than 12 hours to mend the town's main exchange last Thursday.

BT managers might have one eye on the coal industry, in which jobs and old working practices have been lost with the dramatic rise in productivity since the end of the 1984-1985 miners' strike.

The pickets, however, believe a long dispute will leave only a legacy of bitterness and demoralisation among a previously committed workforce.

WHEN THE MONEY STOPS : CUT OUT GUIDE

From previous page

Q. Is it true that they only pay half mortgage interest now?

A. Yes. From January 26th 1987 the Government has cut back on this allowance. Those who claimed in the first week of the dispute would however qualify for 100% mortgage interest.

Late claims are usually not back-dated unless you could show a very special reason. Not knowing about the change is not enough. You might have an argument if you were misinformed by somebody.

You should also contact your Building Society or lender immediately and ask if they will defer all payments during the dispute.

Q. But what about my other pressing debts?

A. First, explore every avenue for help, viz. DHSS, Local Council, Building Society, Bank etc. Your Branch Officer may be able to advise and assist you in approaching these bodies.

Don't just ignore the bills, hoping they won't press. Take the initiative - write explaining your temporary difficulties and with any offer you can afford.

Q. I'm not feeling well, now! Can I claim Sickness Benefit?

A. Yes. For the first 7 days, your word and explanation should be accepted. However, in view of the dispute, the DHSS may cast doubts on your claim. So it may be as well to get a doctor's certificate from the start.

SINGLE PEOPLE

Q. What can I get as a single person?

A. Again no Supplementary Benefit is payable for your own personal needs. You may however be entitled to a general rates rebate from your local Council. Get a form from the Housing Benefit office.

Mortgage interest payments are not payable unless you get Supplementary Benefit. If you are a parent with children, you should get Supplementary Benefit for their needs.

'Urgent needs' payments outside the normal rules may also be considered. A special interview has to be gone through to verify the position.

Q. I pay maintenance for my former wife and children. Will I get any help?

A. Orders for maintenance can be varied only by the Court. You would almost certainly get State Legal Aid for such an application, but that takes time. Talk to your former spouse first and see if some temporary arrangement can be made in the circumstances.

Q. Will my National Insurance contribution record be affected by this stoppage?

A. Probably not. As no contributions are being paid there will be a small gap in your DHSS record. However, unless the dispute lasts for a long period, this gap would not affect benefit claims at a later date.

Most members cover their contribution requirements in the first 13 weeks of each year (April to April). If there is some shortfall members can repair their contribution records with a small Class 3 payment once they are in funds again.

Q. Do I have to repay Supplementary Benefit when the dispute is over?

A. Not normally. If you get a payment for the first week back at work (the week in hand) this has to be repaid, however.

Even if you are unable to get

much financial aid as an individual from the DHSS - DON'T PANIC.

Many Branches and Districts have established close links with other trade unionists and sympathisers. Donations are being received. Branch funds are available in hardship cases. Contact your Branch officers. ALL MATTERS ARE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY.

Additional information for Branch and District Officers: Following the issue of guidance on Social Security claims (LTB 1861, Engineering, and 1867, Clerical), we have had much feedback which confirms the resourcefulness of Branch and District Officers.

Practical measures, of setting up local structures and networks of contacts to advise and assist members on Social Security and Hardship claims, have been taken all over the country.

Newcastle are linked up with the Unemployed Centre, tapping in to their wealth of expertise from the Miners Dispute.

Manchester District Committee are co-ordinating all clerical engineering branch advice and assistance.

Merton in South London are

linking with the Resource Centre and getting expert advice from CPSA colleagues.

Many other officers have established contacts with sympathetic advisers in Citizens Advice Bureaux. Facilities and assistance from other Unions locally have flowed in.

Don't forget your local Councils, particularly those with Labour majorities. Many Councils give concessions to the unemployed, e.g. free or reduced rates for sports facilities and other local amenities.

Free school meals is another help. They may be willing to extend this to our members and their families.

Further LTBs have been issued on hardship payments and using Branch funds (1873, Engineering, and 1878, Clerical).

Some copies of "The Strikers Moneyguide" are available from the Union's head office despatch department. The 1986 supplement for this, price 90p, can be obtained from CAITS, Polytechnic of North London, Holloway Road, London N7.

The book and the supplement can be ordered from CAITS for £5.20 (20 per cent off for 10 or more copies). Other books and leaflets were listed in LTBs 1861 and 1867.

John Golding reports

From front page

moment. Mr Vallance is still adamant that no 1986 increase be given without strings.

I have told him as strongly that our members want an annual increase without strings. He says BT must have the jobs flexibility already agreed by Conference and for which some account was taken in the 1985 pay settlement.

We on our side say we agree to put a separate efficiency package to the members, but only on the basis that they get their annual increase independently.

BT say that if this were done we would fail to give them the flexibility which they need to meet competition and save jobs.

And so we are in deadlock. There is no doubt however that BT want a settlement. This dispute has bitten deep and, if it is fair and reasonable, so do I.

Mr Vallance proposed on Tuesday that exploratory talks take place between Eric George, the Engineering Group negotiator, and Mr Leeson, the BT chief negotiator. This has been agreed to and I hope that they are successful.

Whatever the outcome, unless we get total victory there is likely to be a lot of controversy over whether we should settle or not. That is why I believe that it should be for the members to decide when they should return to work, and on what terms.

It is not yet however the time for that return to work. BT will only listen to sense if the industrial action continues. We must all stay firm until they make a fair and reasonable offer.

Let's not throw away the magnificent sacrifice made by the members of both the Clerical and Engineering Groups in their industrial action.

National Communications Union Journal

SPECIAL ISSUE: JANUARY 30, 1987

FRIDAY January 30: The report to Clerical Group Members from Deputy General Secretary Jeannie Drake said:

All Clerical Group members were called out on a 3 day strike in pursuit of the 1986 pay claim on Tuesday 27th - Thursday 29th January 1987.

The Executive Council wishes to thank all members for their magnificent support for the strike call and for making clear to BT the strength of feeling of the Clerical members.

On Thursday 29th January the Clerical Group Executive Council received an improved formal pay offer. That pay offer was as follows:

1. A pay increase of 5.02% with effect from 1st July 1986 for all NCU Clerical grades;
2. A flat rate unconsolidated cash payment for £100 to all Clerical Grades at the first available pay date after 1st April 1987;
3. An increase in pay rates with effect from 30th June 1988. The value of the 30th June 1988 increase varies according to the position on the pay scale but ranges between approximately 1/2% on the recruitment scale to 1% at the maximum;
4. Increased annual leave



'We'll keep on talking'

entitlement as detailed in the original pay offer;

5. Increase in the general allowances payable to CO and typing grades of 5.02% with effect from 1st July 1986. Shift allowances to be increased according to the existing formula;
6. Associated efficiency measures. The pay offer contains conditions on efficiency measures in all those items listed in the original pay offer.

The Clerical Group Executive Council has advised BT that the Union rejects the revised formal offer, but that the Executive is willing to continue negotiations. Arrangements are being made for further discussions.

Furthermore, the Union reserves the right to take further industrial action in pursuit of the 1986 pay claim.

The Executive Council thanks all members for the magnificent support. Members will be kept advised of developments.



LEFT, Clerical Deputy General Secretary Jeannie Drake being interviewed for radio after informal talks were held with BT. Above, National President Spike Wood on duty in the Clerical Action Room. Below right, Clerical pickets in Croydon. Photos, Jez Coulson, IFL. Below left, one of the largest mass meetings in London's Leicester Square Odeon cinema (Photo, Andrew Wiard, Report). Far left, NCU members demonstrate in Edinburgh (Photo, Steve McTaggart).



Supporting

YOU'RE NOT ALONE: NCU Head Office and Alverstoke staff are behind you. The APEX NCU Staff Branch has decided to make a financial donation of £100 to the NCU Hardship Fund from its Branch funds and each member (about 75 members in total) has promised to make an initial minimum contribution of £2, plus a weekly contribution of £1 for the duration of the industrial action.

They have also been asked not to claim any overtime payment during the industrial action. The Branch held a special meeting on Friday January 30 and Vince Sutton, Chair of London North West Branch, plus two colleagues were invited to address the meeting to explain the dispute as seen by the NCU membership.

KEEP IN TOUCH: If talks make progress for either Group, Engineering or Clerical, the Executives may want to consult members quickly. Keep in touch with your Branch officers and reps, and make use of **HOTLINE 01-997-1049** and **VOICEBANKS 01-725-7801** or **061-400-2004**

