

# LIVEWIRE

Issue 10 February 96

UNISON Manweb Branch

## UNISON MEMBERS WARNING ...

# WE WILL DEFEND JOBS

The annual meeting of the Manweb UNISON branch showed its determination to ensure that jobs at the company are protected. The well attended meeting voted without opposition to ballot all

members on industrial action if any members are given notice of compulsory redundancy.

Members reported that certain Scottish Power managers were pressurising staff to move to Scotland and demanding answers from staff before there had been any proper discussions about alternatives.

Finance staff had been presented with a list of newly filled senior jobs and told to tick boxes marking their preferred work areas and whether they wanted to do 'Level 2' or 'Level 3' work !! There was no explanation of what level 2 or level 3 work was, or what the grades would be.

Similar stories of confusion and distress were reported from a number of other areas. Branch officers assured the meeting that these matters

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### FACT FILE

- Since 1994 the National Grid has saved an estimated £43m by reducing spare capacity from 61.7 mw to 57.2 mw
- In the last 6 months there have been 3 'near misses' where demand almost exceeded supply.
- **"Our task will not be to keep the lights on whatever the cost. It will probably pay us to overstress our plant"**  
Walter Marshall Chief Executive CEGB 1989

would be taken up to ensure there was proper consultation and discussion with all members about planned changes before they were implemented. In summing up the meeting, Jim Brown the Branch President urged all those present to remain vigilant, to help recruit to UNISON and make sure that if there was any evidence that members were being forced to relocate to Scotland or take VSS against their will this should be reported immediately to their steward or the branch office.

### JOIN UNISON TODAY

I hereby authorise subscriptions to be deducted from my salary at the appropriate rate and paid accordingly to UNISON.

Name..... Employee Number.....

Location..... SIGNED..... Date.....

(Please detach and send to UNISON, Shotton by Internal Mail or return to your steward)

# Department Round Up

The Head Office closure plans appear to be having problems getting off the starting blocks. Despite a myriad of alleged 'interested parties' there has been precious little in the shape of what you would call.. a buyer!

Meanwhile the reorganisation and devolution of Head Office staff to the business continues. The latest picture is as follows:

**Pensions** - Control and work moving to Scotland over the next 12 months.

**Payroll** - Ambitious plans to move Payroll to Scotland as early as September 96 appear to have been shelved in favour of March 97. Staff have not all yet been given a clear

answer about new jobs or VSS.

**Internal Audit** -It appears that 3 audit jobs will need to be retained at Manweb. The other staff are still taking part in the Finance jobs lottery.

**Property Services** - Bit of a communication gaffe! Certain divisions appear to have been unaware that they would have to maintain their own buildings and hence have not budgeted for it. 23 property services staff however fail to see the funny side and would like some urgent answers about their futures.

**Legal** - No firm plans made available to date.

**Secretarial** - talks are ongoing with the full-time officers to ensure staff who wish to stay are found suitable jobs.

**Human Resources** - The staff are being advised on an individual basis what the structure will be.

**Information Services** - a bit of a conversion on the road to Damascus. The latest plan is to cut just 27 posts rather than 60. A possible FM deal is being looked at for 20 of the 27 staff but is subject to their accepting the package.

**Finance** - the jobs lottery approach has won few friends and reduced morale to about zero. If the plan was to deliberately demoralise staff into applying for VSS it could not have been organised better !

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Following the UNISON AGM, full time Officer Steve Williams has spoken to the Company to obtain assurances that staff will not be required to relocate to Scotland against their will and that suitable re-deployment and retraining opportunities or VSS where required will be made available to staff.**

After discussion the following assurances have been given in writing by Human Resources:

*Staff who, as a result of reorganisation, are offered posts in the new structures either in Scotland or Manweb should not assume that, if they refuse those offers, VSS is the only option which will be considered. The Company may want to utilise the skills and knowledge of such staff in other areas and it will be the Company's business requirements which will be the prime concern.*

*So far as staff being given little time to make decisions on job offers is concerned, we are trying to remove uncertainty by ensuring that all staff know their future position as soon as possible. Where we have significant restructuring, as you know we are managing this on a progressive, top down basis. Therefore any delay in filling the top posts in a structure means it is difficult to progress to lower levels. This causes considerable concern to the majority of staff who cannot understand why we are taking so long to finalise their position.*

*In conclusion, the Company must ensure that its businesses have the right number and level of staff to operate efficiently. Only when that has been achieved can we decide if VSS will be offered and, if so, to whom and with what termination date.*

# Who's Who in your Branch ?

At the recent AGM elections took place for branch officers and stewards for 1996. The following members have been elected:

President ----- Jim Brown  
Vice-President Linda Ingram  
Secretary ----- Helen King  
Treasurer ----- Eddie Rothwell  
Publicity ----- David Read  
Welfare ----- Hilary Jeffries  
Education ----- Sarah Jones  
Equal Opps ---- Linda Ingram  
Recruitment --- Chris Jones  
Health & Safety Mary Morgan

## **Head Office & Queensferry**

- Helen King (Power Marketing)
- Colin Jackson (Power Marketing)
- Mark O'Brien (Power Marketing)
- Dave Read (Information Services)
- Howel Watson (Information Services)
- John Bridge (Information Services)
- Geoff Littler (Finance)

- Mary Morgan (Queensferry Metering)
- Liverpool**
- Ann Lysaght (Southport High Street)
- Mid Mersey**
- Paul Hepplestone (Customer Services)
  - Sarah Jones (Customer Services)
  - Andy McDonald (Customer Services)

## **North Wirral**

- S Old (Distribution)
- C Banister (Birkenhead High Street)

## **Dee Valley**

- Richard Vaughan (Customer Services)
- Hilary Jeffries (Customer Services)
- Jill Dodd (Customer Services)
- M L Holt-Jones (Customer Services)

## **Mid Cheshire**

- A Cartwright (Chester High Street)

## **Clwyd**

- Vacancy

## **Gwynedd**

- *Clare Hull (Distribution)*

## **Oswestry**

- *Lynn Joyce (Distribution)*

## **Aberystwyth**

- Linda Ingram (Aber. High Street)

*(Those in italics are contact points only)*

If you wish to fill any vacancies please

**Power Marketing** - The move from 3 to 2 Regional call centres is progressing, however concerns are appearing about the calculation and payment of excess travel expenses.

**Distribution** - Devolution to Prenton is thought to be the most likely option for most staff. However full plans have

not yet been made available yet.

While questions still remain unanswered UNISON representatives and full time officers will continue to press to retain as many jobs as possible and seek retraining and redeployment for all staff who wish to stay with the company.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS IN YOUR AREA CONTACT YOUR STEWARD OR STEVE WILLIAMS IMMEDIATELY**

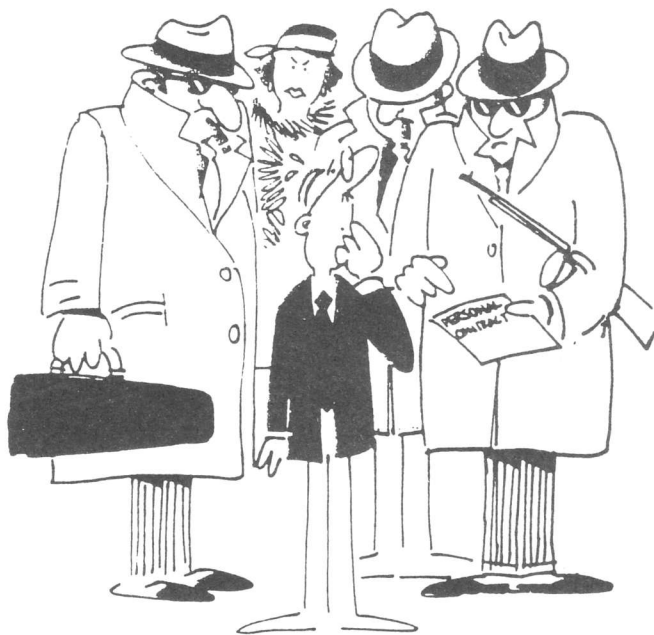
**NORTH WEST WATER.. NORWEB...**

# **UNITED UTILITIES...**

**Three months after taking over Norweb, North West Water, under the name UNITED UTILITIES have thrown down the gauntlet to Norweb Trade Unions as they already have in North West Water.**

They plan to set up a new, wholly owned subsidiary called VERTEX and all Norweb and North West Water staff who work in Customer Services, Accounting Services, Procurement, Supply, IT and Training are being expected to apply for jobs on Personal Contracts.

VERTEX expect Staff to work on a new set of terms and conditions but collective bargaining for pay and other purposes will be abolished. In other words Trade Unions will have no rights to negotiate anything in this new company on behalf of their members, staff will simply have to comply with the dictates of the management. Such an approach has more in common with the bureaucratic dictatorships of the former Eastern Europe economies.



**JUST SAY NO**

All Trade Unions in Norweb are to ballot their members for action in response to this management stance. UNISON's ballot of its members overwhelmingly supported the Trade Unions in their response, demanding the retention of collective bargaining.

If the North West Water Barons succeed in imposing these changes on Trade Union members in Norweb it could result in a dispute which **URNS OFF THE LIGHTS!**

In Manweb your Trade Union has led discussions with Mike Kinski and his team and obtained the following assurance:

*Following the announcement by United Utilities that they intend to derecognise Trade Unions for collective bargaining purposes in parts of their existing business, the recognised Trade Unions in Manweb have asked for assurance that the Company does not intend to follow the same practice. Mike Kinski, Chief Executive has made it absolutely clear that he and his executive team fully support the existing collective bargaining arrangements and have no plans to derecognise the Trade Unions. This reaffirms the Company's previous statement that any changes in terms and conditions will be discussed and negotiated with the Trade Unions through the existing collective bargaining arrangements. Mr Kinski added that he and his team have very positive working relationships with the Trade Unions and see this relationship as critical to the future development of the Company.*

UNISON welcomes Mike Kinski's commitment to achieve change by sensible negotiation with the Trade Unions in Manweb, a commitment which will be paramount to a successful future for both staff and the company.

# **...UNION BUSTERS**