

# LIVEWIRE

Issue 11 May 96

UNISON Manweb Branch

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## PAY 1996

The second part of the two year pay deal signed under the previous Manweb management took affect from April 1st 1996.

Under the deal all staff should receive a basic pay rise equal to the April inflation figure which will be published in mid May, and a one off bonus of 0.5% of salary subject a guaranteed minimum bonus of £75 pro-rata for part time staff. The bonus should already have been paid in the April salary whilst the pay rise is expected be paid in the June salary, backdated to 1st April 1996.

Not only does the two year pay

## UNISON UTILITY BRANCHES UNITE

**Unison branches in utilities across the North West have met to discuss working together in the face of attacks on terms and conditions by the powerful new super utility companies which are being allowed to grow unchecked.**

The ever more frantic drive of take-overs and mergers, now given a greater impetus by huge American utility companies such as Southern Company, is threatening basic rights of staff to trade union representation.

Already United Utilities is trying to crush trade union rights for 2,500 staff in their 'new'

deal include the pay rise and bonus but it also includes an increase in the percentage of the

subsidiary Vertex. As soon as enough staff had been pressurised into signing new personal contracts, they were rewarded with the announcement of job losses affecting 7,500 of the 14,000 strong workforce.

Rumours are rife in the press that companies such as Scottish Power are now potential targets for American Utility companies such as Southern Company.

With our government presiding over the dismantling of the industry only active campaigning trade unions can offer protection to the jobs and conditions of staff in the public utilities.

Profit Related Pay element retained by staff - up from 60% to 65%. This should also be included in salaries from 1st April 1996.

Standby payments and shift allowances should also be increased in line with inflation as they were last year. A new share save scheme is also reported to be under discussion by Scottish Power Executive.

### ~ FACT FILE ~

- National Power and PowerGen control 40% of the market and charged more than 50p per kilowatt hour during peak periods during January's cold spell compared to 2p in the off-peak period.
- National Power's operating profits have increased by 150% in 3 years. PowerGen's has doubled in the same period.
- National Power have cut their workforce by two thirds since privatisation. PowerGen have halved theirs.

# Department Round Up

## Pensions

Transferred to Scotland on 1st April. One or two staff remain at Manweb.

## Payroll

Being transferred to Scotland. The handful of staff remaining are all due to go on VSS this year.

**Agreement has been reached between the trade unions and Mike Kinski that any staff being relocated to Scotland will retain Manweb terms and conditions. So far no end date has been put upon the length of time these will be retained.**

financial year. Those remaining are still uncertain about where they will be located.

## Legal & Secretarial

No detailed proposals have been confirmed with staff or unions.

structure. The remaining 13 are currently involved in discussions with managers and Unison over a proposed facilities management deal to run the mainframe operations

## Finance

The devolution of staff to the divisions is complete leaving a reduced corporate function. A number of staff left on VSS on 1st April.

**Unions have won a commitment from Mike Kinski that staff whose jobs cease to exist at Manweb will be redeployed if they do not opt for VSS. Unions are keen to ensure that all staff who opt for redeployment are properly counselled and suitable jobs are found for them within Manweb.**

## H/O Power Marketing

The announcement that Energy Marketing functions were moving to Scotland has taken most staff by surprise. This U-turn comes just 3 months after the new structure for Head Office Energy Marketing was proudly announced to staff. Many staff are now under pressure to decide whether to move to Scotland to keep their existing jobs, take VSS or opt for redeployment.

## Internal Audit

Most staff left on 1st April when the department was wound up. Most audit functions transferred to Glasgow, a handful remain in Chester.

## Human Resources

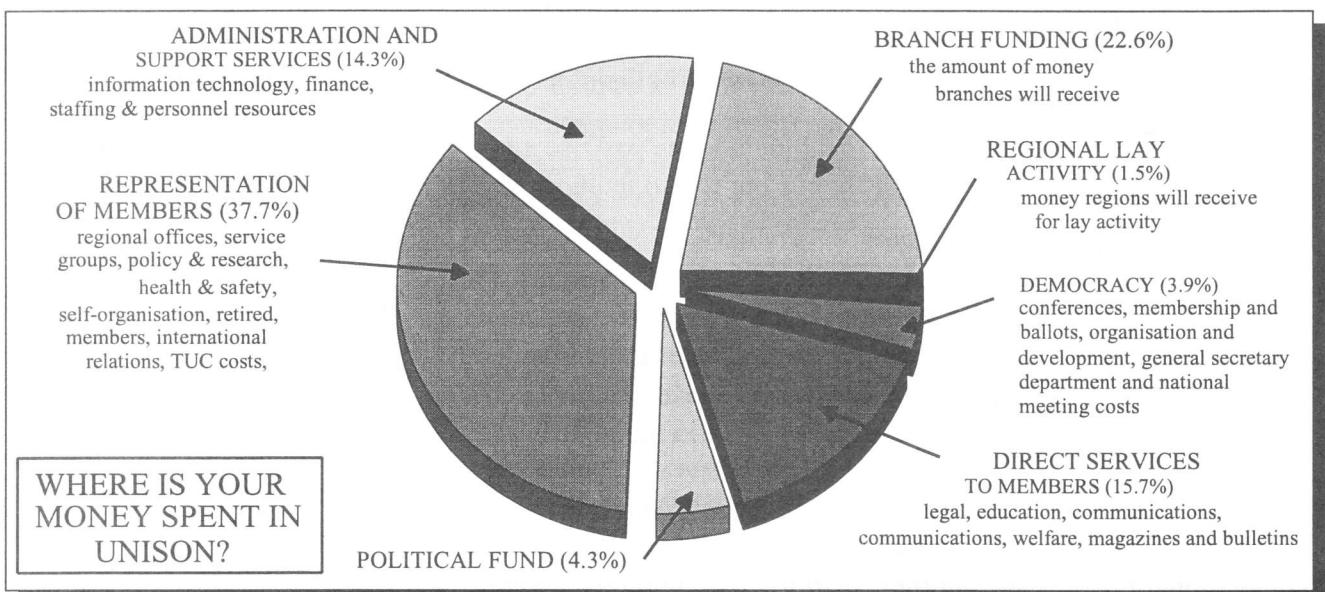
Staff are uncertain whether a corporate function will be retained or whether they will be completely devolved to divisions.

## Property Services

Transferring to Scottish Power Contracting in a Facilities Management deal. The majority of staff are leaving on VSS this

## Information Services

By 1st April only a handful of staff had been released on VSS. Apart from 13 all other staff have been slotted in to the new



## *H/O Distribution*

Most Distribution staff are in the process of moving to Prenton. Individual cases have been taken up by Unison to ensure staff are helped where the move adversely affect staff.

## *Customer Service Centres*

12 months after the closure of Retail we are surprised to learn that CSC managers still regard the Retail Agreement as being operative! This appears to fit nicely with their failure to implement their agreement to reduce Saturday working for CSC staff from 3 in 4 to 1 in 4 as for staff in the main business. Combined with their failure to acknowledge staff shortages in certain CSC's managers are testing the patience of staff to the limit. Unison stewards and officials are bringing pressure to bear to ensure a speedy resolution to both these issues



## *Call Centres*

A miracle has occurred! 10 new staff (albeit temporary) are being taken on in call centres after months of unions pressure on managers to tackle chronic understaffing. Lets hope this belated and relatively minor step

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

REMEMBER RETAIL? ITS ALMOST ONE YEAR TO THE DAY SINCE MANWEB ANNOUNCED IT'S DEMISE. TWELVE MONTHS ON THINGS HAVE NOT TURNED OUT QUITE AS EXPECTED FOR THE NOW CUSTOMER SERVICE STAFF.

THE TWELVE WEEKS TRAINING WHICH WAS TO MAKE CSC STAFF TOTALLY INTERCHANGEABLE WITH THE REGIONAL STAFF HAS BEEN CONDENSED INTO FIVE SMALL MODULES EACH OF TWO TO THREE DAYS DURATION. DESPITE THE REDUCTION TRAINING HAS NOT YET BEEN COMPLETED.

IN A RECENT REVIEW OF THE CSC'S SOME LOCATIONS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS OVERSTAFFED, YET THE STAFF ARE WORKING UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT ARE UNABLE TO MAN THE ENQUIRY DESK. SOME LOCATIONS ARE RECOGNISED AS UNDERSTAFFED, SO THERE IS A NEED FOR STAFF TO TRANSFER. AFTER A

in the right direction is not followed by another prolonged bout of inaction by senior managers.

FULL YEAR OF UPHEAVAL DURING WHICH STAFF HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY FLEXIBLE AND HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR COMMITMENT BY MAINTAINING THE STANDARD OF CUSTOMER SERVICE UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, THE UNCERTAINTY AND INSECURITY CONTINUES. THE ONLY THING THAT IS CERTAIN IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE CUSTOMERS, THEY TELL US HOW PLEASED THEY ARE THAT THERE IS STILL A MANWEB PRESENCE IN THE HIGH ST, ALBEIT A GREATLY REDUCED ONE. IT IS AMAZING THE DISTANCES SOME OF OUR CUSTOMERS TRAVEL TO VISIT A C.S.C. AND CONDUCT THEIR BUSINESS IN PERSON.

WE ARE ALL AWARE OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 1998. CSC STAFF ARE THE PUBLIC FACE OF MANWEB IN THE HIGH ST. AND THEY NEED SUPPORT AND TRAINING IF THEY ARE TO MAINTAIN THE EXCELLENT REPUTATION FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE MANWEB ENJOYED WHEN IN RETAIL.

**Have you got any more information about a reorganisation near you? If so contact UNISON and make sure you are represented.**

## HUSH MY MOUTH... A NEW SAFETY INITIATIVE!

As a Safety Rep, Health and Safety Officer and member of staff I should be delighted that Manweb have launched a safety campaign to improve the safety record within the Company. At present we are 14th out of 14 in the electricity league which we all recognise requires action to protect our own and our colleagues safety.

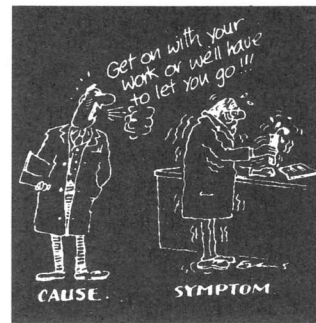
BUT...to offer staff a cash incentive has been described variously as insulting, patronising and tantamount to hush money. Instead of offering cash prizes to staff why not use that money to cover the cost of refresher training and providing improved safety equipment.

The scheme itself seems quite complicated and there are some accidents which are included and others which are not e.g. dog bites are not penalised as 'we have no control over them' which I am sure is a great comfort to all meter readers!!!! Surely the Company should be looking at providing dog stunners or thicker trousers rather than ignoring the problem. In addition, 'time lost' accidents ONLY are to be penalised - but there are many minor accidents that do not result in time lost but could be avoided and others costly to the Company through damage to equipment or vehicles.

Is it a great coincidence that Scottish Power's published safety record improved

dramatically after a similar scheme had been introduced?? - but they have a car as an incentive!!

We have always had a 'no blame' culture in Manweb to encourage people to report accidents and near misses to ensure problems are resolved and that further, potentially more serious, accidents can be avoided. There has been little evidence to show what plans are in place to reduce the number of accidents, rather the concern appears to be in an exercise aimed mainly at reducing the figures required to be published for general consumption. We want to improve our safety



# Stress can be caused by:

- your working conditions
- violence or verbal abuse
- shift work
- overwork
- low pay
- sexual and racial harassment
- cut backs in public spending
- lack of job security.

Stress at work can cause serious ill health

It is not necessary or inevitable

Employers have legal duties to prevent health hazards

**Stress is a workplace and trade union issue. It can be prevented or controlled by workplace action.**

## UNISON campaigning for health and safety

NOT for the chance of a cash prize but to ensure that **WHAT-EVER** our job the risks are minimal and that this is achieved through investment by the Company in appropriate training and provision of equipment. **DON'T** be tempted **NOT** to report accidents - **ALL** our lives may depend on it!

**Mary Morgan**  
**Health and Safety Officer**

### Stop Press !

After strong representation from unions Manweb have withdrawn the cash incentives. These will be paid instead to charity. **Watch this space !!**