

LIVEWIRE

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UNISON Manweb Branch

Yes to Pay rise ...

10 months after submitting this years pay claim and after months of protracted negotiations the Joint Trade Union Negotiating Committee are reluctantly putting the company's final offer to a ballot of all union members at Manweb.

The actual pay offer of 3.3% this year backdated to 1st April and RPI plus 0.5% in year two is amongst one of the better offers in the Privatised Electricity Industry. However the strings which the company have attached to the deal have left a bitter taste in the mouths of Union representatives.

Blackmail

The company's 'take it or leave it' approach is little more than blackmailing staff into accepting the end of company bargaining in return for an inflation proof pay rise for two years. Although the unions welcome the stability this brings to pay during what will certainly be a time of

For a "shower of thieves"
can I put down
"very dissatisfied"?



great change in the industry, the uncertainty which the move to Business based bargaining will bring may be judged by many members to be greater.

The company has failed to explain what the attached strings will mean and in the absence of a clear explanation Manweb UNISON branch cannot recommend acceptance of the deal in the current ballot.

...No to Strings !

...Pay 1997 continued

In reality the moves to business based bargaining taking place in electricity companies across Britain is not a surprise. It is a further step along the road of divide and rule by fat cat directors who recognise that the smaller the groups of staff they have to deal with, the weaker the collective bargaining strength the staff have.

The integration of Manweb into Scottish Power does not require the abandonment of company bargaining - the existing agreement caters quite adequately for the requirements of each division whilst protecting the pay and conditions of staff in the many and various roles they play in the daily life of the company.

Indeed it is the commonality of pay and conditions across the company which encourage greater flexibility of staff to move between divisions and bring their skills and expertise where they are most needed to support the company's different business strategies.

If Scottish Power and Manweb were as forward looking as they often like to claim, rather than splitting staff into a plethora of different agreements with all the inevitable overheads, they would instead be looking to consolidate a group wide agreement which took the best of all the existing agreements to attract and retain a vibrant and skilled workforce.

Whatever the result of the ballot, UNISON will continue the fight to defend and improve the existing pay and conditions of its members whether through company or divisional bargaining structures.

Metering Staff Face Setback

The July ballot by Manweb Metering staff on the new Metering Business Agreement narrowly rejected the company's proposals by 102 votes to 100.

Unfortunately the ballot North of the border was not as clear. Although the AEEU members rejected the deal, the aggregate vote in Scotland was narrowly for acceptance. The case for rejection was not helped by full time union officials of all unions who, in the face of strong grassroots opposition to company proposals during the negotiations, nevertheless recommended the final deal.

The inconclusive outcome of the ballot has unfortunately demoralised many members who were prepared to make a stand in defence of existing terms and conditions. In the end the announcement by national full time officers of the largest union the AEEU that they were prepared to sign the Metering Agreement marked the end of effective opposition.

Nevertheless Manweb UNISON refused to sign the agreement without the consent of the Metering members at Manweb and accordingly instructed our branch organiser to conduct a ballot of the 23 UNISON members in the Metering business. The 19-2 result confirmed the decision to sign with many members no doubt hoping that the guarantee of employment for two years will at least offer a degree of stability albeit at a hefty price in terms of salary and increased hours.

UNISON will ensure that no stone is left unturned in seeking to protect and improve upon the new terms for Metering staff including the use where necessary of legal action in support of equal pay for work of equal value and to ensure new pay rates do not fall short of any new minimum wage legislation.

David Read, Branch President