

LIVEWIRE

Issue 20 June 2000

UNISON Manweb Branch

Enough is Enough...

Members of the industrial unions in Manweb and Scottish Power have voted by 85% for strike action to defend jobs.

This massive vote is the culmination of months of bitterness and frustration at yet another round of job cuts and reorganisation in Power Systems which would see another 450 jobs disappear merely to prop up Directors' share options.

One sixth of Power Systems

Unison members also face redundancy with no guarantee that some of these would not be compulsory.

Super Profits!

With ScottishPower just announcing record profits of £736 million, up £91 million on last year there is **no justification** for more job cuts. The real reason for the cuts is to protect profits from the regulator and hence retain the lucrative share options which Directors award themselves year on year.

...Strike to defend jobs

All attempts to negotiate this issue have failed to deter managers from their plans. Clearly the only language which is understood is that of industrial action.

To ensure maximum unity and protect our jobs Unison are now balloting all their members in Power Systems from early June to seek endorsement for strike action.

Unison meetings will be held across the region to explain the issues and ensure we win a similarly significant vote for maximum unity.

SUPPORT YOUR COLLEAGUES!

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Letter to All Power Systems Members

In the last two months Unison representatives have been involved in negotiations over management proposals to make 450 redundancies in Power Systems and introduce organisational changes which will have a significant impact on members throughout the business. Despite all efforts of your negotiators to resolve issues through negotiation it has become clear that the Company are not prepared to conduct a meaningful dialogue. In particular:

- There was no consultation with Trade Unions prior to the announcement of 450 redundancies
- Throughout the Level one and two appointments there has been no release of meaningful information regarding the impact changes will have at lower levels
- Letters have been sent to all 'Level 3' staff without the agreement of your negotiators

- Assurances that staff will not be forced to take redundancy are being contradicted by reports from members on the ground who are being given effective ultimatums over their options

As you are aware the three industrial unions AEEU, GMB, TGWU have already registered a formal dispute with the company and having won a decisive vote from their members for strike action are now making detailed preparations for this.

At a subsequent meeting between the unions and Power Systems managers on 19th May it became apparent that Managers see this as an opportunity to drive a wedge between the clerical and industrial unions who until now in Manweb have always worked together. The Management indicated they would consider withdrawing the redundancy proposals for the **industrial staff**, a clear warning that unless we stand alongside the other unions we could be seriously disadvantaged.

MARCH & RALLY

CHESTER SUPERSTORE

**SATURDAY
10TH JUNE**

Leafleting from 10 a.m.
followed by March to
Chester FC stadium and
Rally with speakers from
Strike Committee

Show your solidarity with
your colleagues in Power
Systems. Join the march!

UNISON BALLOT TIMETABLE

The timetable for Unison to run its ballot is dictated by legal requirements. The following guide is produced by the North West Region to outline the likely timescales.

As we go to press we hope to complete the ballot in time to be able to join the industrial unions

in action from Friday
23rd June.

Day 1 - Notice of intent to ballot sent to employer

Day 8 - Ballot papers go out

Day 18 (min) - Ballot closes, result announced

Day 19 - Report seeking approval to Head Office

Day 20 - Action approved

Day 21 - Notice of intent to take action sent to employer

Day 28 - Action begins

Unison have given full support to our industrial colleagues throughout this period and we have indicated our intention to seek permission to ballot our members in Power Systems to ensure maximum unity to protect jobs.

Having undertaken the necessary stages of consultation over the last three weeks we have therefore now placed a formal request to the North West Regional Secretary of Unison and provided a list of names and addressed of all Power Systems Unison members for ballot papers to be issued.

The Unison Region will be required to adopt a formal timetable for balloting to comply with legal requirements and a copy is attached for information. We expect that ballot papers should go out shortly - no later than the first week in June.

Clearly there will be many questions and we will be arranging UNISON members meetings across the region in the next two weeks. I would urge all

members to try and attend the nearest one to you so you can get up to date information. We will be issuing details of these shortly and further communications as things develop.

There is also a March and rally being planned for all union members on Saturday 3rd June in Chester starting with leafleting at the Scottish Power Superstore and culminating in a march and then rally in Chester City FC stadium. Details of this event will be out soon and we urge all our members who can to attend.

All members should be in no doubt that stakes are extremely high in this dispute. Scottish Power are not alone in trying to protect excessive profit levels from the regulator. However after years of watching jobs disappear from the industry and Directors share portfolios reach ever more dizzy heights we have to say that Enough is Enough. Decisive and united action from all the Trade Unions in Power Systems is now clearly the only way to make management listen and we urge all members to vote YES for industrial action in the ballot in unity with our

Picket Lines

The Industrial Unions have called strike action for three consecutive periods:

8am 9 June - 8 am 13 June
8 am 16 June - 8 am 20 June
8 am 23 June - 8 am 27 June

During these periods there will be picket lines at all locations in Manweb. We would encourage all Unison members to show support to our industrial colleagues.

Clearly our members cannot take action without having had a ballot (a position recognised and endorsed by the industrial

unions) as they would be in breach of contract and would face disciplinary action. We can however give both verbal and financial support to those on the picket lines and to those collecting for the strike fund.

Members can also show solidarity on the picket lines outside working hours, including at lunchtime without falling foul of either the law or breaching their contract.

Remember, although it is Power Systems staff today, it could easily be YOU tomorrow.

Support your colleagues

Q's & A's ...

Could hospitals suffer power cuts?

The unions have arrangements to deal with genuine 'life and limb' emergencies. Our fight is with Scottish Power not the sick and elderly.

Would there be strike pay?

Each union has its own arrangements for strike pay. Unison pays strike pay of £12.50 per day for any action lasting more than 3 working days.

Can we win?

Yes. Management talk of contingency plans is hot air. Any attempt to use scabs from other parts of the industry would merely

Manweb Pension Fund Trustees Elections

Once again the elections for Manweb Pension Fund trustees is upon us. The Manweb Pension scheme includes:

- 3 members representatives
- 3 pension representatives
- 3 company representatives (each with 2 votes)

Although the trade unions do not formally stand candidates there are usually current and retired union activists seeking support. Issues such as company 'pensions holidays' and how surplus funds are distributed are of significant interest to all of us.

Having trustees with experience of trade union issues can only help ensure these matters are fairly addressed in the interests of all beneficiaries.

Chris Jackson (current Unison Health & Safety Officer) is standing in the members section and **Jim Brown** (former Unison Branch President) is seeking to renew his existing position in the retired members section.

European Courts Uphold Part Time Pensioners Rights

A ruling by the European court has come down in support of the appeal by Trade Unions (including Unison) to allow backdating of claims for part-time pensioners to 1975.

Although Unison and other unions are carefully considering this ruling, it is likely to mean that thousands of pensioners could claim pension payments from

employers worth billions of pounds. Estimates have put the cost at up to £17 billion, although it is unclear at this stage whether many pensioners would be able to afford to make contributions themselves which may put them outside the compensation scheme.

As soon as we receive advice from the National Legal Team we will make this information available to the 48 pensioners in Manweb who are part of the group on behalf of whom the ruling was sought.

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 at the address below or return to your steward)