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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SUB-POSTMASTERS

**REPORT OF A MEETING
OF THE
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

held on

16th, 17th, 18th JUNE 1997

at

THE ABBEY HOTEL, MALVERN

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A G E N D A

JUNE 1997

- A/1 REPORTS AND RESOLUTIONS of the**
Executive Council Meeting, held on 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th March 1997;
Special Executive Council Meeting held on 11th May 1997
Post Conference Meeting held on 14th May 1997

A/2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORTS

A/3 REPORT OF THE NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

The following reports refer:- NC/POCL 29.4.1997
 NC * 2/3.6.1997

POST OFFICE GROUP

Post Office Board

1. Post Office Board PO BD NC

Government Affairs

2. Government Review PO PZ
- The Minimum Wage *
- Commercial Freedom/Conversions
- The Post Office Inquiry - Trade and Industry Committee
- Extract from Tory Election Manifesto

Post Office Counters

3. (a) Post Office Counters Board PO PC 02
(b) Organisation of Distribution within POCL PO PC 03 *

Off-Shore Islands

4. (a) Guernsey OI GY NC
(b) Isle of Man OI IM
(c) Jersey OI JY

POST OFFICE COUNTERS LIMITED

Commercial

5. Marketing Briefings PC CM 01

Human Resources

6. Training for Subpostmasters PC HR 04 NC

Mailwork

7. Payment System PC MP 04

Network

8. (a) Network Forums PC NW 01 NC
(b) Local Area Network Plans PC NW 02 NC
 - Franchise Offices (*formerly PC FO*)
 - Conformance Trial - Raising the Standard
(c) Counter Automation - BA/POCL PC NW 06 01
(d) Counter Automation - APT/Bar-coding PC NW 06 02 NC
(e) Counter Automation - ALPS PC NW 06 07 NC
 - Goodwill payment for Sub-Postmasters
(f) Counter Automation - Mondex Trial PC NW 06 08 NC
(g) Funding of SPSOs PC NW 09 03—NC

9. **Security**

- (a) POCL/NFSP MeetingsPC NW 11 01 *
- (b) Devolution of Budget to RegionsPC NW 11 01 NC
 - Regional Security Forums
 - Custody of Keys
 - Personal Guide to Security
- (c) EquipmentPC NW 11 02
 - Trial of Smoke & Dye Packs
 - New SPSO anti-bandit screen (SPSO 2000)
 - Access Doors
 - Anti-intruder Alarm Grants
 - Proposed Trial of Remote Alarm Signalling
- (d) Trauma Care ProgrammePC NW 11 03 NC
- (e) CashcoPC NW 11 08 NC
- (f) RomecPC NW 11 09 NC

Product Range

- 10. Gift VouchersPC PR 06 NC

Quality

- 11. Customer FirstPC QY 01 NC
 - Change in Focus of the Quality Function
 - Putting the Customer First - Transactional Training
 - Putting the Customer First - Changes to the Questionnaire

Subpostmasters Contract

- 12. (a) Termination ProceduresPC SC NC
- (b) Introductory PaymentPC SC 04 NC
- (c) Trading HoursPC SC 05 NC
- (d) Advertising/CanvassingPC SC 07 NC
- (e) Loss of Office (Compensation Agreement)PC SC 12

12. (f) Paypoint (CashStop)PC SC 21 01
(g) NIPOCPC SC 28 NC

Subpostmasters Pay

13. (a) Pay ReviewPC SP
(b) Pay Claim 1997PC SP/1997
(c) Unit CreditsPC SP 01
- Postage Stamp Unit Credit
- Barcoded Bills and Ad Valorem
- Television Licence Savings Stamps
(d) Intermittent AllowancesPC SP 02 03 NC
(e) Telephone AllowancesPC SP 02 06 NC

POCL CLIENTS

14. **Benefits Agency**CL BA NC
15. **British Gas**CL BG NC
16. **British Telecom**CL BT NC
17. **Electricity Boards**CL EB NC
18. **Foreign Exchange**CL FX NC

Girobank

19. (a) NFSP/Girobank MeetingsCL GB 01 NC
(b) Products and Counter ServicesCL GB 08 NC
20. **Insurance**CL IN NC

Local Authorities

21. Home Help/Care Stamps CL LA 01 NC

Lotteries

22. (a) National Lottery CL LO 01
 - Prize Payments
 - Wednesday Draw
 - Errors

Motoring Organisations

23. AA CL MO 02 NC

National Savings

24. NFSP Meetings CL NS 01 NC

Personal Banking

25. Personal Financial Services CL PB NC
 - Trial in North Wales & North West Region

Payment Collection Services

26. Vodaphone CL PC 04 NC

Royal Mail

27. Priority Services CL RM 05 02 NC

28. Utilities CL UT NC

Water Authorities

29. (a) Welsh Water - Barcoded Transcash Bills CL WA 10 04 NC
 (b) Northumbrian Water - Barcoded Transcash Bills CL WA 19 04 NC

Western Union/Moneygram

30. MoneygramCL WU *

Organisations

31. POUNCFM OO NC

A/4 SPARE HEADING

A/5 SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

A) PUBLICITY AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

1. REPORT OF PREVIOUS P & D MEETING

14 & 15 APRIL 1997 - Buckingham

2. FEDERATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Annual Conference 12 -14 May 1997 - Llandudno

FM AC 1997

3. FEDERATION INTERNAL

a) Re-mandating Exercise

PC HR 03

b) Federation Publications

"The SubPostmaster"

FM PB 01

c) Branch Secretaries' Seminar

Keele - 13th & 14th September, 1997

FM MS 04

4. FEDERATION/PROMOTIONAL AND PUBLICITY

a) Sub Post Office Exhibition

FM PP 01

NEC Birmingham - 11th & 12th October, 1997

b) Charity Fund

Children in Hospital

Macmillan

FM PP 03

FM PP 03

5. CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS 1996

Subscription Review

96/86

Support for Branch Secretaries

96/90

Purpose and Format of Annual Conference

96/94/95

Future Dates and Venues of EC Meetings

Oct 1997	Monday 20 - Wednesday 22 October 1997	Malvern
Jan 1998	Sunday 4 - Tuesday 6 January 1998	London
March 1998	Sunday 15 - Wednesday 18 March 1998	Malvern
June 1998	Monday 15 - Wednesday 17 June 1998	Malvern
October 1998	Monday 19 - Wednesday 21 October 1998	Malvern

B) FEDERATION TRUSTEES REPORT

C) BOARD OF BENEVOLENCE REPORT

A/6 SPECIAL MATTERS

A) MEMBERSHIP

- (i) New Membership Computer FI MR 01

B) FINANCE

- (i) Treasurer's Report FI AC 02
(ii) Outstanding Branch Accounts FI AC
(iii) Re-mandating exercise FI MR 01
(iv) Membership - Developing a Strategy FM MS 03 *
(v) South Wales & South West Region FM OG 05 *
(vi) Union Facilities PC HR 03

C) JOURNAL

- (i) Editor's Report FM PB 01

D) TRADING

- (i) Eagle Star Scheme FI ES

A/7 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS PRIOR 1997

- 96/51 Payment Days
96/71 Advertising
96/83 Standardisation of Certificates of Insurance
and Cover Notes

A/8 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS 1997

A/9 MOTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

A/10 DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

(A) FOR DISCUSSION

POST OFFICE COUNTERS LIMITED

Network

1. (a) Sub Post Office Signage - AliflexPC NW 05 03
- (b) Review of HelplinesPC NW 10

Quality

2. (a) Customer FirstPC QY 01
 - Trial for compensating customers who wait longer than 5 minutes
 - Customer Satisfaction Index - Surveys

Subpostmasters Contract

3. (a) Christmas and New Year ArrangementsPC SC 05 01

Subpostmasters Pay

4. (a) APT SchemesPC SP 02 08

POCL CLIENTS

Benefits Agency

5. (a) Review of Form P80MACL BA 04

Girobank

6. (a) Girobank PDR's (Postmasters Daily Records) CL GB 08

Personal Banking Services

7. (a) Personal Banking Trial - Co-operative Bank
Extension Review CL PB

Payment Collection Services

8. (a) Vodaphone Pre-pay CL PC 04

A/10 (B) **FOR INFORMATION**

Commercial

1. (a) Market Research PC CM 02

Network

2. (a) Post Office Stores: Scheduled
Ordering - Transaction Stock PC NW 04
- (b) Post Office Stock PC NW 04 01
- (c) Sensitive Waste - Portable Shredder Trial PC NW 04 02
- (d) Counter Automation - BA/POCL PC NW 06 01
- Research
- Customer Education
- (e) The Smart Money PC NW 06 08

Product Range

3. (a) Postal Orders PC PR 01
- (b) Postshop Retail Products - Sales to Sub-Postmasters .. PC PR 05

POCL CLIENTS

Benefits Agency

4. (a) P&A Order Book Redesign CL BA 03
- (b) Benefits Agency Reward Scheme CL BA 06

BBC

5. (a) TV Licence Fee Stamps/Saving Stamp CL BC 03

Girobank

6. (a) Alliance & Leicester - Giro/Post Office Report CL GB 04

Lotteries

7. (a) Littlewoods Scratchcards CL LO 02
 - Scratchcards - Lucky Jackpot and Win for Life
 - Future Sales Strategy
 - Stock Withdrawal

Department of National Savings

8. (a) Account Opening - Evidence of Identity CL NS 07 03

Parcelforce

9. (a) Parcelforce Contract Customers CL PF 05 05

Royal Mail

10. (a) Mails Markets Liaison Meeting CL RM 01
- (b) "Success through Sales" CL RM 05

A/11 REPORT ON CENTRAL APPEALS

A/12 GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Web Site on the Internet

Discussion on the Future Structure/Strategy of the
National Federation of Sub-Postmasters.

A/13 NFSP TRADING LIMITED

A/14 EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORTS

A/15 MATTERS RECEIVED TOO LATE FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA

A/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
held on 16th, 17th, 18th JUNE 1997
at the ABBEY HOTEL, MALVERN

Present: Mr J Peberdy, National President and Chairman

Mr I Abernethy	Mr B G Ingham
Mr J Brennan	Mr J Jannetta
Mr D T Broadwith	Mr C Jones
Mr J E M Burford	Mrs J G Kendall
Mr A M Burrows	Mr D F Marshall
Mr A R Butlin	Mr B McMahon
Mr M Challinor	Mr H Morgan Jones
Mr M Darvill	Miss E O Parcell
Mr R Edmondson	

In Attendance: Mr C Baker
Mr K Davis
Mr P Heasman

General Secretary
Assistant General Secretary
Assistant General Secretary

Apologies: Mr. N Bradbrook
Mr. D A Evans

THE CHAIRMAN welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Mr. R. Edmondson. GRO
Mr. D. Evans. GRO Apologies had been received from Mr. N. Bradbrook. GRO

It was noted that two Sub-Postmasters had been honoured with the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, namely Mrs. Win Smith aged 87 years and Mr. Charles Sparrow who had served for 57 years. The usual letter of congratulation would be sent together with a copy of the Centenary Book.

MR. EDMONDSON, National Treasurer. GRO
GRO apologised for the fact that he had not been able to prepare a Treasurer's Report for the meeting. In view of the fact that GRO
Mr. Edmondson requested that until further notice all expense claims be forwarded to Mr. P. Bloor, marked "private and confidential" at Shoreham. As regards the Federation's finances, Mr. Bloor would be producing the six month balance sheet of accounts which would be circulated to the Executive Council early in August. He requested Executive Officers not to wait until the October meeting to ask questions. GRO

MR. EDMONDSON informed the Council that the financial situation of the Federation was still very tight. They were only just keeping their head above water and during the past six months had used £400,000 of the investments which reduced the interest earned. The Federation could not afford to cash any more of its investments. The increase in subscriptions would commence at the end of August but the position on re-mandating was known. He stated the very existence of the Federation was under threat. MR. EDMONDSON begged the Executive Council not to commit the Federation to unnecessary extra spending, with one exception to be notified by the Chairman of the Publicity & Development Committee. He drew attention to the report *Membership - Developing a Strategy* prepared by Mrs. Davis at his request and hoped the Council would agree to more information being sought and planning for the future.

Irrelevant

- A/1 REPORTS AND RESOLUTIONS of the**
Executive Council Meeting held on 16, 17, 18, 19 March 1997
Special Executive Council Meeting held on 11 May 1997
Post Conference Meeting held on 14 May 1997

The reports had been circulated and were APPROVED.

DECISION

A/2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORTS

MISS PARCELL expressed her thanks for the research undertaken in respect of the lay member elected to the General Purposes Committee.

MR. BURROWS felt there was still some ambiguity as to the lay member of the General Purposes Committee. In order to clarify the position he gave notice of motion for the October 1997 meeting of the Executive Council to the effect that the lay member shall not be a member of any of the Executive Council Committees and to be elected annually.

THE CHAIRMAN confirmed the motion would be debated at the October meeting of the Executive Council.

A/3 REPORTS OF MEETINGS OF THE NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

1 POST OFFICE BOARD - PO BD

MR BURROWS, Chairman of the Negotiating Committee, advised there was nothing to report under this subject, Board activity being understandably quiet in the period of political change.

2 GOVERNMENT REVIEW - PO PZ

The correspondence referred to the new Government Review of The Post Office which was announced on 16th May. The letter dated 21st May from the Minister had been circulated to the Executive Council from which it could be seen that the Federation had been invited to discuss with the Minister its views on the existing Post Office regime, the proposals to grant the Post Office greater commercial freedom and the particular interests of members. That letter was received on 30th May and a meeting took place with the Minister on 5th June 1997. The National President, General Secretary and Mr. Burrows were the Federation's representatives at that meeting which it was understood was the first meeting of a series when the Minister understood the problems. There would be other meetings when he would be on a problem solving mission.

The Negotiating Committee met on 2nd and 3rd June and following a brainstorming session developed a line which the representatives could follow. The timescales meant it was impossible to consult with the Executive Council prior to the meeting with the Minister. Therefore, the Executive Council was circulated with a copy of the Brief which had been used. The Brief maintained the views of the Federation which have consistently been held over the years as successive Governments have reviewed The Post Office.

A number of commitments were sought from the Minister which we did not seriously expect to get and which he was reluctant to provide. He did, however, leave us with a number of points to consider, namely alternative proposals for funding the rural network. Whilst he would give no commitment regarding conversions for Crown Offices he did ask our view regarding whether legitimate conversions should take place. With regard to the EFL, he made it clear that this was a *golden goose* for Government and needed to remain. He did, however, indicate that he would try to find a way of making the finances of The Post Office stack up and he indicated he would be going to the Treasury to do that.

He also indicated that he felt that automation of the network was essential and he supported the principle of PFIs which, of course, was part of the new Labour approach to funding as set out in their manifesto. He left us to consider the possibility of further joint ventures with small businesses and we were left clear that Sub-Postmasters in this context were considered to be small businesses and asked us to consider what joint ventures we could put to him for consideration.

He made it clear that the review was not about privatisation as he felt that the Post Office should be publicly owned and be a service. He made it clear that he felt that the Post Office brand was the next to the strongest brand on the high street and there was every intention to retain the cypher and Crown for Royal Mail. He was, however, eager to find a way of giving greater commercial freedom and seemed not to be as worried as the Conservative Party regarding the competition, although having a responsibility being part of the DTI in ensuring that competition was considered. Having made comments on the EFL and the £30 million cross subsidy, the Minister asked us to make direct submissions to the Low Pay Commission and the General Secretary wrote on 13th June.

The meeting that the Negotiating Committee had with Jonathan Evans on 3rd June was to do with the Post Office's submissions to the Government review. Jonathan Evans made it clear that the finances of the Counters Business would be particularly strained now that the conversion programme had been stopped by the Government. There was also a possible impact upon security, automation and pay.

- **MISS PARCELL requested a formal report of the meeting held on 5th June 1997 with the Minister be circulated to the Executive Council.**

ACTION

THE GENERAL SECRETARY requested that the Executive Council advised him of any suggestions they had regarding the requests made by the Minister.

3(a) POST OFFICE COUNTERS BOARD - PO PC 02

The correspondence dated 10th April 1997 referred to changes to the operational workings of the Counters Board which effectively made Jonathan Evans the Operations Director, even though his title will remain Network Director. There were a number of other changes which did not directly impact upon the workings of the Federation with Post Office Counters, but one area of disappointment was that Dave Morphey, who was David Taylor's replacement for Business Strategy was the Director, Human Resources, replacing the role that Jonathan Evans took away from Bob Peaple. Our disappointment being that we have yet to meet Dave Morphey and we sense a distancing between the Federation and the Human Resources section of the Post Office Directorate. As our dealings are now mainly with the Retail Development Centre it was even more disappointing to report that Alex Docherty ^{GRO} was unlikely to be seen within the next 4 or 5 weeks. That had implications for all the disciplines in which the Federation was in discussion with Post Office Counters and our frustrations would be reported under the appropriate agenda items.

3(b) ORGANISATION OF DISTRIBUTION WITHIN POCL - PO PC 03

The Issue 2 of the Logistics '97 was circulated on 4th June to the Executive Council and it was seen that the Counters Business was taking the matter of distribution seriously. We needed to ensure full involvement in this function to ensure that Sub-Postmasters received what they wanted, how they wanted it and when they wanted it. We were pleased to see that Post Office Counters was developing this unit which should focus upon Sub-Postmasters' needs. A watch was needed to ensure that it did not become yet another empire within the Counters Business, Sub-Postmasters coming at the end of the line. Therefore, full involvement would be maintained with the distribution function and Executive Officers advised of developments as they occurred. Part of that involvement was a meeting which took place between the Negotiating Committee and Byron Roberts and 3 members of his team on 28th April. That had started the ball rolling and a further meeting was being sought.

Irrelevant

5 MARKETING BRIEFINGS - PC CM 01

The correspondence referred to a draft *Courier* article which was changed after submission of the draft to the Federation and references to agreed standards were deleted. It is understood the article was reasonably innocuous and caused no concern to Sub-Postmasters. Post Office Counters was clearly concentrating and consolidating on their current retail offers and in the light of the Government review would be unlikely to extend into other areas for the duration of the review.

6 TRAINING FOR SUB-POSTMASTERS - PC HR 04

In questioning Jonathan Evans on 3rd June he made it clear that training for Sub-Postmasters was still a priority for the Counters Business for induction training and on-going training. That was, of course, quite apart from the training required for counter automation which would be addressed under that heading. Although the Training QIP had not produced anything of great merit, in spite of the attention given by the Federation, no reports were being received of Sub-Postmasters not being able to vacate their offices due to an inability of the Counters Business to produce trainers for the in-coming Sub-Postmaster. The question of training was still a subject which would be raised in the Network Forum meetings to be chaired by Jonathan Evans and training would remain a key objective of the Federation with Post Office Counters.

- Attention was drawn to the lack of trainers in the Leeds area, a case quoted of a new Sub-Postmaster who had to wait 3 months for training, which had been on-going with two Heads of Retail Network for the last month. **MR. BURROWS undertook to take the matter back.**

ACTION

7 MAILWORK PAYMENT SYSTEM - PC MP 04

The new payment system and agreement for mailwork seemed to be bedding down quite well. Complaints to Federation Headquarters had virtually stopped and now consisted only of individual office correspondence where there were specific problems. The next Mailwork Forum meeting was scheduled for 24th June when a further update on the offices which had migrated from A to B would be provided. There was evidence that there had been a significant delay in the mailwork specifications for individual offices which should have been prepared by now. However, the announcement at Conference regarding the £5 million being made available by Royal Mail to assess the quality of accommodation and ensure that they conformed to health and safety work standards was the subject of an article in the June 1997 *Courier*. Any delay in risk assessment visits, therefore, should soon be corrected as part of the programme. It was hoped Executive Officers welcomed the initiative which indicated the commitment to the new agreement by Royal Mail as well as Post Office Counters and should be seen as excellent news for the Mailwork Sub-Postmasters.

8(a) NETWORK FORUMS - PC NW 01

The combination of the announcement of the Government Review and the absence GRO of Alex Docherty meant there had not been a meeting of the Network Forum. That might, however, have been fortuitous as the networking plans of Post Office Counters have now taken a significant knock. It was even more essential that the Federation was involved in the networking decisions of Post Office Counters as the cessation of the conversions of Crown Offices could lead to Post Office Counters looking in the direction of the sub office network to make up the shortfall as a result of the embargo by Government on conversions.

We have started properly by making representations to the Minister and also by having Jonathan Evans to meet with the Negotiating Committee. Both the Minister and Jonathan Evans have promised on-going consultation and Jonathan Evans made it clear in his presentation that he welcomed the Federation's involvement at Regional as well as national level in the formulation of the Counters Business network plans. We will, therefore, be working with Jonathan Evans to put together a series of regular scheduled Network Forum meetings, constructing terms of reference and ensuring Regional involvement on the development of the plans. It was clear that Post Office Counters would want to include raising the standard of post offices as part of those Network Forums and the General Secretary was exploring the possibility of Professor Gary Davis of the Manchester Business School who had done considerable work on the retail side for Post Office Counters, including the involvement of Retail Network Managers, to address the Negotiating Committee as part of the Network Forums. The whole subject of the future of post offices was likely to take on a new dimension and the involvement of the Federation was essential and would be pursued with the Network Director and, indeed, with Government to ensure that Sub-Postmasters did not feel the pain of Post Office Counters cessation of its conversion programme.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY drew attention to the grave situation in which Post Office Counters had found themselves as they had been anticipating receiving £10 million from Franchise Offices. The Post Office was also spending £24 million on automation. The situation would impact upon Sub-Postmasters. The speed with which meetings had taken place with the Minister and Jonathan Evans was indicative of the seriousness of the matter, although the information could not be relayed to members. However, members could be told that they needed a representative body to represent Sub-Postmasters to the Minister and the Post Office because they were vulnerable. Government had given an assurance that automation was sacrosanct. The Minister had indicated he would contact the Treasury regarding the EFL.

In response to MR. ABERNETHY, the GENERAL SECRETARY said he was unable to itemise the breakdown of the £24 million to be spent on automation. It was necessary to accept the automation platform cost money but was not yet generating work. Items of current costs were the directorate, a project delivery group, liaison managers, payment to Pathway. It was a long term project for the future.

MISS PARCELL felt reference to lack of money was the Post Office preparing for pay talks yet they continued to spend money on Roadshows which cost thousands of pounds.

In response to MR. McMAHON's question as to whether Regions were being told in no uncertain terms to involve Executive Officers, MR. BURROWS stated they were not and suggested fighting their way in.

MR. BURROWS commented that Government could not take £10 million out of a profit expectation of £30 million, less £24 million, leaving £11 million and a profit of £1 million. Mr. McCartney had been prepared to take the matter back and had listened to the views of the Federation.

In reply to MR. JANNETTA's comment as to whether Mr. Docherty was totally indispensable that his Department could not work without him, MR. BURROWS advised day to day dealings were with Messrs. Granville and Evans. The difficulty at the moment was the Government decision which had decimated the budgets. Every budget had been re-visited both in the Centre and Regions. The embargo on the conversion programme had had more effect than the absence of Mr. Docherty.

Every time the Post Office sought new business it had to be referred to the DTI; wider commercial freedom was sought by the Post Office primarily for Royal Mail.

MR. BRENNAN pointed out 18,000 Sub-Postmasters were still waiting for a pay rise. He asked when pay would be settled, the reason for delay and why the Negotiating Committee was not negotiating with Post Office Counters.

MR. BURROWS reiterated the Government decision apropos conversions had seriously impacted on the Post Office as well as Sub-Postmasters. The Federation had explained to Government the repercussion, the effect on the rural network, security and pay. The Federation had been to Government on numerous occasions and would continue to do so because they were playing a greater influence in the running of the business. The policies of the new Government were not known. Pay negotiations with other organisations, including the UCW were on holiday whilst the business re-assessed its financial situation. It was hoped once the significance of the Government decision was re-assessed negotiations would continue. He did not intend to give up.

8(b) LOCAL AREA NETWORK PLANS - PC NW 02

Irrelevant

MR. MARSHALL advised Jonathan Clarke from Royal Mail would be working part time with the Retail Development Centre on Conformance and networking policy. At the same he would be looking at encouraging larger offices to change to a franchise contract.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

8(c) COUNTER AUTOMATION - BA/POCL - PC NW 06 01

The minutes of the Negotiating Committee of 2nd and 3rd June gave a comprehensive report on the position regarding Counter Automation at this time. Clearly far more work had to be done in the network than Post Office Counters had originally envisaged but the pilots in the North East and the South West were proving extremely valuable as the main issues were becoming clearer. The outputs from the meeting of the General Secretary with Paul Rich and John Bennett were appended to the back of those minutes but the important thing was that automation was proceeding and a considerable amount of energy and resources were being put into the network to ensure that the programme continues. Counter automation was an issue that was specifically raised with the Minister at the meeting on 5th June and, as reported, the Minister confirmed that Government would continue to press ahead with the automation of the Counters Business. Following the information given to Conference regarding the in principle agreements that have been reached with the Counters Business regarding the payment for the transactions undertaken under the platform, the General Secretary and Mr. Burrows were due to see Post Office Counters again on 26th June to continue the discussions. Clearly there will be some difficulty as Alex Docherty will not be present. However, an assurance had been received that Jonathan Evans and Mike Granville were empowered to make decisions. It was hoped so because the subject was very dear to Sub-Postmasters' hearts and one to which we should now be formulating answers. There was not only payment for the work but questions over payment for training and payment for modifications and alterations, including electricity, which also needed to be resolved and in spite of the financial difficulties which the Government Review had put the Post Office Counters under, there was a commitment to continue with automation and, therefore, the need to resolve those problems.

Also discussed under this subject heading was the recruitment of Sub-Postmasters and their staff as Field Support Officers. The information regarding that was appended to the back of the minutes of 2nd and 3rd June. The need to recruit Support Officers had been created because of the Government Review when, because of the cessation of the conversion programme, it meant that staff originally scheduled from Branch Offices and trained as Support Officers would no longer be available. Therefore, there was a specific need to recruit. Regrettably the Federation was not consulted regarding the financial reward that the Field Support Officers would receive and the Counters Business had been asked to desist from further recruitment until the question was addressed. Other correspondence on the subject of automation was the correspondence dated 8th May regarding non-cash account offices. That information was provided to Conference and had been the subject of further discussions since then. Our argument was that non-cash account offices could easily remain non-cash account offices if they chose to do so until the point at which they were automated. At that time, although they would become cash account offices, there would be no need for a cash account to be completed. That point was put to Jonathan Evans on 3rd June and he took it away. A response was awaited, but it was understood the matter was currently being reviewed. There was also the letter dated 29th April advising that benefit receipt copies could be kept in transaction order and would not need to be sorted into value order.

MR. BROADWITH informed the Council that he had received a letter advising his office would not be going on-line in November as originally scheduled as the Post Office was concentrating on non-APT offices. THE GENERAL SECRETARY was not aware of that policy decision. He stressed any information was vital and should be advised to Federation Headquarters.

MR. EDMONDSON confirmed priority for non-APT offices in the Leeds area. Due to misleading information in respect of health and safety requirements and space being given during a survey, a Sub-Postmaster had not signed the agreement to install automation.

MR. JANNETTA wondered as to progress for a payment for training. Did the Federation have a policy? Screen 2000 did not conform to the size required for automation.

MISS PARCELL reported of a case where the installation of Screen 2000 had entailed the whole office being re-designed and the wall safe being moved. The Retail Network Manager had refused financial assistance and the Sub-Postmaster now refused the automation equipment.

With regard to Field Support Officers, MR. MARSHALL advised they had been recruited from within the Post Office and not from Sub-Postmasters.

MR. BROADWITH advised Branch Secretaries in the South West had recently been invited to an awareness event which had been quite well presented.

MR. BURROWS drew attention to the correspondence circulated regarding Field Support Officers. The Post Office had anticipated between 500 and 700 staff being released under the conversion programme to be re-trained for the implementation of automation. The concept was for a Field Support Officer to be with the Sub-Postmaster for 2½ days when the office was automated. It was advocated that the Federation approached the Post Office and tried to get Branch Secretaries and other enthusiasts involved to assist Sub-Postmasters in automation. The difficulty of a mis-balance when automation commenced needed to be discussed with the Post Office. He recommended that Sub-Postmasters be invited locally to offer their services as Field Support Officers for the delivery of automation as he felt many Branch Secretaries and activists would jump at the opportunity to help their colleagues to ensure smooth transition. It would be necessary to ensure that local holiday reliefs would remain available to Sub-Postmasters.

MISS PARCELL questioned who would pay for the training of Sub-Postmasters' assistants.

MR. INGHAM pointed out there would not be a problem if the Sub-Postmaster conducted the training, but if the Post Office extended a payment through the Sub-Postmaster that would involve national insurance payments.

- **THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGREED to an in principle agreement for Sub-Postmasters to be included in those who became Field Support Officers**

DECISION

THE GENERAL SECRETARY reported on his visit to the trial taking place in Newcastle. The problem of lack of information to Sub-Postmasters was being addressed by Post Office Counters.

With regard to the awareness sessions and training, MR. BURROWS pointed out it was at the discretion of the Sub-Postmaster whether or not to circulate the letter to their assistants from Post Office Counters.

Attention was drawn to the complications of national insurance with two separate contracts for Field Support Officers; many part time assistants had more than one employer.

It was felt the position of Field Support Officers should only be open to Sub-Postmasters to apply, giving rise to the question of equal opportunities.

- **THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGREED to seek the Post Office to restrict the applicants for the position of Field Support Officers to Sub-Postmasters.**

DECISION

THE CHAIRMAN pointed out the initiative had been in the North East Region only. The matter had been raised with Jonathan Evans who had agreed to take the matter back. They were progressing the national approach in which the Federation would have some input.

MR. BROADWITH suggested as the project was vital that Sub-Postmasters might be prepared to attend training sessions at no payment to themselves, but a payment be made to assistants.

MR. C. JONES expressed concern that if the training payment was not pursued it might hinder the Federation as members would object. He advocated a payment for training, with which MR. JANNETTA agreed.

MR. MARSHALL drew attention of the difficulty at smaller offices which would have to close in order to attend training.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY commented training was mandatory. It was necessary to agree a payment for the transactions. At the moment Sub-Postmasters in the trial area had not been asked to contribute to the cost of any modifications required in their offices.

MR. BURROWS suggested a compromise by Sub-Postmasters themselves not being paid but a payment for assistants be sought. The Post Office had taken back the travel and subsistence elements. Sub-Postmaster would benefit at the end of the day and automation would be the safeguard of the network and individual business, from which assistants would also benefit financially.

MR. CHALLINOR pointed out Sub-Postmasters were already contracted to provide training for assistants.

MR. ABERNETHY put forward the suggestion that small or one-man offices could be visited by a trainer.

MR. DARVILL commented normally assistants were trained on the counter. The Post Office stood to gain a lot of money out of Horizon.

MR. BURROWS agreed the contract could be used to make a point but had difficulty balancing that with the transactional training around the country where Sub-Postmasters' assistants were paid. It was a new innovation. Peritas had been set up to train Sub-Postmasters and their staff who would have to go off site for training. For the small offices it might be possible to use a multiplier to calculate loss of work. He confirmed substitution and travel would be taken back, likewise payment for assistants.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY pointed out the debate would not be published anywhere except within the minutes which were strictly confidential to the National Executive Council.

- **THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGREED** to the Negotiating Committee seeking a payment for Sub-Postmasters' assistants; subsistence and travel; compensation/compromise where an office was closed to attend training; with flexibility regarding payment for training sessions attended by Sub-Postmasters.

ACTION

In response to MR. BROADWITH, the GENERAL SECRETARY confirmed awareness seminars were considered to be training seminars/sessions.

After the presentation on 16th June 1997 organised by Pathway, the following points were made:-

Lack of communication, particularly in the South West Region where it was not known that Jackie Hackston, Horizon Awareness Manager, was working. It was suggested she became the focal point.

Branch meetings be utilised to communicate.

Publish an "Automation Corner" in *The SubPostmaster* journal.

In Ireland 2 cases were known where the Retail Network Manager was not helping to make automation a success.

The Awareness Event be split into two presentations.

It was suggested more input be given to Federation Headquarters, possibly by weekly updates from Executive Officers rather than wait for meetings to pass information on. Feedback to be received from the 2 Regions involved in the roll out.

Concern in respect of the mis-information emanating from Regional General Managers.

At the time of survey a mock-up or carcass of the kit should be taken to assist with assessment.

Concern was expressed regarding the necessity to swipe the card through the keyboard, although it was understood the attachment of equipment to the side of the screen would necessitate re-structuring the system and add to the costs.

Seek to address the problem of passing information between Pathway and Post Office Counters and involve the Federation.

The General Secretary to visit the Stroud area.

Try to secure an input from the Federation into the ergonomics.

Executive Officers to contact Regional General Managers and build up a repartee.

8(d) COUNTER AUTOMATION - APT/BAR-CODING - PC NW 06 02

It was suggested that this subject was discharged to be brought back should there be any further need to discuss it.

MR. CHALLINOR expressed concern at the lack of availability of further APTs. Norweb had commenced a trial in the NWNW Region. Post Office Counters did not have a signed contract but an assurance from Norweb that a contract would be signed when the Post Office was in a position to have automation throughout the system. If Horizon could be installed in offices without APT machines then every office in the NWNW Region would have equipment to enable Norweb to roll out. He requested pressure be applied to Post Office Counters. He believed automated transactions were carried out by Vortex (similar to BACS) who were in a position to offer Norweb a full automation system for the bill payment market. If the Post Office could not put more offices on line it was likely Paypoint would gain the work. He understood Girobank was going to be the marketers and sales for Post Office Counters.

MR. BURROWS advised the General Secretary had written to Stuart Sweetman on 30th May, but a response had not been received. Nothing was known about Girobank acting as the sales force for Post Office Counters. At a recent meeting with Richard Banks of Girobank no mention was made of the change.

- **THE GENERAL SECRETARY undertook to make further enquiries regarding Vortex and Girobank acting as the sales force for Post Office Counters.**

ACTION

MR. JANNETTA reported complaints from Sub-Postmasters who considered 12p for APT transactions was too low when the bar-coded transactions were transferred to plastic card payments. The specific complaint was that the APT transaction at 12p was not cost effective because of the size of the in-payment and make up. MR. BURROWS stated in many cases it was the client who wanted to change to plastic cards in order to be more efficient. If Sub-Postmasters did not accept the changes, then others would pick up the business, ie Paypoint.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY requested evidence as to the volume of in-payments made for the transactions in order that he could pursue the matter with Post Office Counters.

8(e) COUNTER AUTOMATION - ALPS - PC NW 06 07

Under this heading was the question of the goodwill payment for Sub-Postmasters and a claim had been lodged with the Retail Development Centre. The Executive Council was advised at the March meeting that the matter was unresolved. Since then Alex Docherty has not been seen and the Review of the Counters Business has been announced which had thrown the finance projections into disarray. The point would continue to be pressed but it was an extremely difficult time in which to expect the matter to be resolved.

8(f) COUNTER AUTOMATION - MONDEX TRIAL - PC NW 06 08

It was **AGREED** to discharge this item from the A/3 agenda.

8(g) FUNDING OF SPSOs - PC NW 09 03

This subject was now firmly captured in the discussions with Post Office Counters on the distribution function circulated under 3(b). The issue was considerably wider than funding of sub post offices, indeed it included the cash, stock and forms and the centralisation of the distribution function. The Federation's involvement would need to be ensured and it was suggested that the previous correspondence forwarded under 3(b) be transferred to this subject heading to be discussed under Network, but under the title of the Distribution within Post Office Counters. **AGREED**

SECURITY

- 9(a) POCL/NFSP MEETINGS - PC NW 11 01**
- 9(b) DEVOLUTION OF BUDGET TO REGIONS - PC NW 11 01**
 - REGIONAL SECURITY FORUMS**
 - CUSTODY OF KEYS**
 - PERSONAL GUIDE TO SECURITY**
- 9(c) EQUIPMENT - PC NW 11 02**
 - NEW SPSO ANTI-BANDIT SCREEN (SPSO 2000)**
 - ACCESS DOORS**
 - ANTI-INTRUDER ALARM GRANTS**
 - PROPOSED TRIAL OF REMOTE ALARM**
 - SIGNALLING**
- 9(d) TRAUMA CARE PROGRAMME - PC NW 11 02**
- 9(e) CASHCO - PC NW 11 08**
- 9(f) ROMECS - PC NW 11 09**

MR. BURROWS reported that the minutes of the last meeting held on 25th April 1997, had been cleared and circulated to the Executive Council. Two issues would be referred back to Post Office Counters. Much of the information required by the Executive Council was contained within the minutes. The question of devolution of budgets to Regions was discussed and reported under Paragraph 2.4. There was a question regarding the reported £1 million now totalling for the Screen 2000 budget. However, following the meeting with Jonathan Evans it is now known that all the budgets within the Counters Business were to be reviewed. Therefore, information regarding the security budget can only be taken as being appropriate up until the announcement of the Review of the Counters Business. That point had been made during the meeting with the Minister.

Progress could be reported on the **Regional Security Forums** and Executive Officers were urged to press the Security Division to ensure that the Regional security budget was not raided for other purposes within the Region.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

ACTION

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

- 11 CUSTOMER FIRST - PC QY 01
- CHANGE IN FOCUS OF THE QUALITY FUNCTION
- PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST - TRANSACTIONAL TRAINING
- PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST - CHANGES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Nothing to report.

SUBPOSTMASTERS CONTRACT
 12(a) TERMINATION PROCEDURES - PC SC

A response was awaited from Post Office Counters Ltd. to our latest representations on termination procedures. It was known that the Counters Business was running the latest draft past their Solicitors Department, which was a lengthy process. Mr. Granville was reminded on 3rd June that a response was awaited. It had been made clear that the Federation wished the matter to be resolved within the next 3 weeks and a meeting was being sought.

MR. DARVILL drew attention of the problems in respect of Toft PO in the North Thames and East Anglia Region. He requested the case be pursued further. MR. BURROWS stated the case had already been referred to Federation Headquarters and Post Office Counters Headquarters.

12(b) INTRODUCTORY PAYMENT - PC SC 04

There was nothing to report. One heel tap remained as a result of the pay review discussions, that being those Sub-Postmasters who were already paying the introductory payment, which had not been resolved with Mr. Granville, but the point would continue to be pressed.

MR. EDMONDSON drew attention to the financial advantage to Post Office Counters with the change to monthly payment of the introductory fee as any pay increase was subject to the 25% deduction.

- **THE GENERAL SECRETARY** stated the monthly deduction of the introductory fee was being verified with the Retail Development Centre.

ACTION

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

12(e) LOSS OF OFFICE (Compensation Agreement) - PC SC 12

The amendment to the Trust Deed was agreed at the pre-Conference meeting and the letter of 16th May confirmed the agreement. The document would be signed shortly.

12(f) PAYPOINT - PC SC 21 01

The letter of 30th May to the Managing Director was an action point from Conference in an endeavour to increase the APT network. The publicity generated about Paypoint was not all that favourable to them. Nevertheless Paypoint was establishing themselves as an alternative network to Post Office Counters for bill payment work and we must not ease up in our campaign to get as many automated post offices as possible. That point was raised specifically with the Minister and it had been established that 5,600 offices contained APTs. It was understood from Mrs. Kendall, as reported in the Negotiating Committee minutes, that Paypoint had signed a contract with Northern Electric for 3 years which was exclusive to them but there was some doubt about whether Paypoint could establish the outlets that they required with what they were prepared to pay.

MR. INGHAM reported Paypoint was opening an outlet in Sheffield in the near future.

12(g) NIPOC - PC SC 28

Following pressure applied to John Legg to resolve the NIPOC problems with Post Office Counters, the letter dated 10th June confirmed that POCL would consider removing individual Sub-Postmasters from the non-staff model.

- It was suggested the information be published in *The SubPostmaster* journal and a Fact Sheet prepared to cover the point in order to advise any Sub-Postmaster so affected that it was possible to withdraw.

ACTION

SUBPOSTMASTERS PAY**13(a) PAY REVIEW - PC SP**

The Branch Secretaries' Circular dated 6th June 1997 contained the agreed contractual amendments which would be sent to each Sub-Postmaster. Also provided to Branch Secretaries were copies of the revision documents and the pay advice, both of which had been promised at Annual Conference. Some of the Box 13 issues remained outstanding from the pay review. No further meetings had been held with Post Office Counters. Progress had been thwarted by the sickness of Mr. Docherty and the need to process the 1997 pay claim. One issue raised at the March Executive Council meeting and which remained unresolved was the question of those Sub-Postmasters who were currently paying the introductory fee. We have pressed Mr. Granville on this as hard as we possibly can and although he has yet to convey formally his decision in this regard it did appear they were unlikely to agree, arguing that there was only a finite sum of money which could go to Sub-Postmasters and there was a question mark over whether that was the best use of those resources implying that if they ceased to take off the residue of the introductory fee for those new Sub-Postmasters there would be less to share in the form of a pay increase or possibly directed towards the automation costs than would be had those payments continued. A formal response was awaited but it seemed unlikely it would be favourable.

13(b) PAY CLAIM 1997 - PC SP/1997

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th April with Post Office Counters had been circulated. A further meeting was awaited with Post Office Counters on this subject. In discussing the matter with Jonathan Evans he made it significantly clear that whilst the Government was reviewing the Post Office and whilst the moratorium on conversions was taking place, Post Office Counters could not assess how much of their budget was available for Sub-Postmasters' pay increase. That may have been a threat or, indeed, make us reflect that view to the Minister to convince him to regenerate the conversion programme. Whatever it was, a response to our claim was still awaited from Post Office Counters and we must proceed cautiously but, nevertheless, continue to press for a meeting. Unfortunately no progress could be reported and it was also important that the reason was retained strictly within the Executive Council confines. The Negotiating Committee would continue to press Jonathan Evans to respond and not wait for the return of Alex Docherty. Further information would be provided as soon as available.

MR. JANNETTA commented the membership would not appreciate the pay increase being prolonged. He urged the matter be swiftly resolved.

MR. BURROWS stated the case had been made to Government to try to break the deadlock. At the moment Post Office Counters refused to negotiate pending confirmation of the decision of the Government. He was concerned that Post Office profitability was dependant upon the conversions and questioned the Post Office financial situation. Both Mr. Sweetman and Mr. Evans had indicated they wanted a swift decision this year following the prolonged pay review.

MISS PARCELL asked what could be told to members.

MR. INGHAM was of the view that the more the Post Office delayed, the worse light the Federation appeared in the eyes of the membership.

- **THE GENERAL SECRETARY** stated an explanation on pay would be contained in the next General Secretary's Notes to be published in the July edition of *The SubPostmaster* journal.

ACTION

Irrelevant

- BAR-CODED BILLS AND AD VALOREM

Post Office Counters had indicated on a number of occasions that they wished to re-examine the current agreement on payment for bar-coded bills. It was fair to assume that this was likely to result in an attempt to reduce the current payment of 20p plus ad valorem. For that reason the Negotiating Committee had not pressed Post Office Counters on the issue. The position remained the same as stated in Mr. Coleman's letter of 30th May 1996 when he said: "I can confirm that we will not seek any changes in the remuneration rate for utility bills (ie 20p plus ad valorem) as a result of the introduction of bar-coding until we have had discussions with the Federation on the issue."

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

13(e) TELEPHONE ALLOWANCES - PC SP 02 06

Proposals were awaited from Post Office Counters in connection with a new way of providing Sub-Postmasters with a telephone and telephone call allowance as put to Conference. Undoubtedly progress on the matter had also been affected by the financial difficulties currently being experienced by the Post Office. The matter would be pursued as it was the subject of a Conference resolution.

- 14 BENEFITS AGENCY - CL BA
- 15 BRITISH GAS - APT BILL PAYMENT - CL BG 02
- 16 BRITISH TELECOM - CL BT
- 17 ELECTRICITY BOARDS - CL EB
- 18 FOREIGN EXCHANGE - CL FX

There was nothing to report on any of items, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

GIROBANK**19(a) NFSP/Girobank Meetings - CL GB 01**

The General Secretary and Mr. Burrows met with Richard Banks, Managing Director of Girobank, and Bill Sutton at Girobank on Friday, 6th June at which time Girobank demonstrated their new debit card acceptance card procedure. Girobank was anxious for the Federation to press Post Office Counters to take on the acceptance of debit cards at counters and we were impressed with Girobank's ability to process these payments. The difficulty was, of course, that prior to the automation going into post offices it would entail extra equipment for the card reader and printer. Whilst the size of that was impressively small it, nevertheless, was an extra piece of equipment at the counter which would be redundant once the automation platform was installed with debit card reading a function on that platform. There was no doubt of Girobank's ability to cope in the market place with the debit card scheme and having seen it can urge Post Office Counters to press ahead as part of the automation platform. There was also the possibility of two tier meetings with Girobank which would be carried out on an on-going basis. There would be a strategic level with the Managing Director and his team and an operational function to deal with issues which were required to deliver the product to the customer. There was clearly no need to duplicate attendances at the meetings and the Negotiating Committee would split with Mr. Burrows, Mr. Peberdy, the General Secretary attending strategic meetings, the rest of the Committee dealing with operational aspects.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY reported Girobank was spending a lot of money in preparing for automation. There was no difficulty with other banks being part of the platform and discussions were taking place with Post Office Counters.

19(b) PRODUCTS AND COUNTER SERVICES - CL GB 08
20 INSURANCE - CL IN

Nothing to report on items 19(b) and 20.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

PERSONAL BANKING

25 PERSONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES - CL PB
- TRIAL IN NORTH WALES & NORTH WEST REGION

Further information was being sought regarding the trial of personal banking in the North Wales and North West but there was no additional information other than the trial was so successful that it spread into the Midlands. Girobank's views were sought on the trial at the meeting on 6th June and Girobank was not concerned unduly about the trial, indeed, hoped that it would be a success. Naturally their contract with Post Office Counters would need to be structured again to reflect that they no longer had exclusivity but everyone, it seemed, was in favour of the trial and encouraging all to do well within it. Further information would be provided when available.

Irrelevant

ROYAL MAIL

27 PRIORITY SERVICES - CL RM 05 02

There was nothing to report on the matter. The question of the payment for Priority Service items, both inland and international, remained an item in Box 13, although it was reported that Post Office Counters continued to resist Federation proposals for any increase for this type of transaction.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGREED to delete both items from the agenda, to be dealt with under Sub-Postmasters pay

30 MONEYGRAM - CL WU

The correspondence circulated proposed a change to the method of payment for the money transfer service now being provided via Moneygram. It was recalled that when the service was provided by Western Union the payment to Sub-Postmasters for both sending and receiving transactions was agreed at 12% of the commission paid by the customer. Post Office Counters was proposing that the percentage-based payment should be replaced with a payment per transaction. They claimed that during the life of the Western Union contract the average value of the combined sent-and-received transactions was £350. As Moneygram's charge for transmitting £350 would, at £18, be much lower than Western Union's, that would produce, at 12%, a payment to Sub-Postmasters of £2.16, which was the amount offered by Post Office Counters as the transaction payment. The Negotiating Committee was of the view that the offer was unacceptable for the work involved in the transaction.

MR. BRENNAN suggested a percentage was sought.

MR. BROADWITH pointed out Moneygram was still a restricted service and asked if it would be expanded.

MR. DARVILL drew attention to the lack of advertising.

- **THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL mandated the Negotiating Committee to re-open negotiations and pursue all elements, including lack of advertising, to get the best possible for Sub-Postmasters.**

ACTION

ORGANISATIONS

31 POUNC - FM 00

The General Secretary and Mr. Burrows met with POUNC on 18th April to advise in detail the result of the Pay Review. The Chairman of POUNC and the Secretary seemed to grasp the intricacies of the new Pay Review and it was felt it would be a suitable presentation to the full Users' Council. On 16th July a demonstration would be given to the User's Councils of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland indicating the steps taken by the Federation to try to retain the rural network and, indeed, incentivise them for growth.

- **THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL APPROVED the report of the Negotiating Committee.**

DECISION

Irrelevant

A/5 SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

A) *PUBLICITY AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE*

- 1. REPORT OF THE PREVIOUS P&D MEETING:
14-15 April 1997 Buckingham**
- 2. FEDERATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Annual Conference 12 - 14 May 1997 - Llandudno - FM AC 1997**

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

3. FEDERATION INTERNAL

a) Re-mandating Exercise - PC HR 03

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

b) Federation Publications - "The SubPostmaster" - FM PB 01

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

c) Branch Secretaries Seminar, Keele, 13-14 September 1997 - FM MS 04

The overall timescale was planned to run from lunchtime Saturday until mid-afternoon Sunday, finishing in time to ensure that nobody had to leave before the end to catch trains or planes. Provision had been made as last time for the Executive Council to meet on the Friday to be briefed on the weekend's events. There were a number of topics scheduled to be discussed, namely: ♦ Support package for Branch Secretaries, ♦ Presentation to Branch & Regional Treasurers, ♦ Membership, ♦ Purpose and format of Annual Conference. The first two of these to also be presented. Mr Heasman would be working on the support package during the summer and, together with the P&D, would be circulating proposals for Executive Officers comments. This would be done by post, as the Seminar came before the next EC meeting, and would assume silence = assent. The last two items would be a two-way exchange in order to be worthwhile and achieve a lasting outcome. Membership was a Federation problem and whilst the EC might approach the Seminar with views, the Branches needed to have views as well so that when delegates left Keele there was a Federation plan with which all could agree. The same applied to the purpose and format of Conference. MR BRENNAN therefore asked that every opportunity be taken to encourage debate on these

subjects during the coming months so that Branches were prepared. It was also intended to show at least one film during the weekend, probably during the membership discussions.

Keele University required a commitment to a figure of people attending and this had been agreed at 250, so he requested Branches to encouraged to attend. The figure was not thought excessive because two would be invited from each Branch, but Assistant Secretaries and Membership Secretaries could attend if requested by Branches, plus Regional Representative, the EC and Headquarters staff.

MR JANNETTA suggested adding *Automation* to the Agenda but THE GENERAL SECRETARY discouraged that as he did not consider the timing appropriate. He suggest Peter Abraham being invited to speak on aspects of Employment Law.

MR BUTLIN proposed that area/district secretaries/representatives be invited. The Federation should support people who supported the Federation and these were the people doing the job, particularly of remandating. MRS KENDALL seconded the proposal, together with the idea of inviting Peter Abraham as the *Helpline* had proved a success.

MR BRENNAN agreed it was an excellent idea and Peter Abraham would be invited.

ACTION

MISS PARCELL felt there should be provision for Executive Officers to meet with delegates on Saturday evening and MR CYRIL JONES agreed, adding many would appreciate a form of workshop. But MR BRENNAN was concerned that care should be taken so delegates were not bored but such an arrangement.

There was some discussion on inviting area/district secretaries/representatives. It was ascertained that this would result in approximately the following additional delegates: NWNW +2, SWSW +4, NTEA +1, NE +1 (1 already Branch Secretary), Sc +1 (1 already Branch Secretary), NI nil, Midland nil, SE nil, ie, a total of 8 which was considered acceptable.

- **THE CHAIRMAN, therefore, confirmed the DECISION of the Executive Council to invite area/district secretaries/representatives to the Branch Secretaries Seminar in Keele.**

DECISION

4. FEDERATION PROMOTIONAL AND PUBLICITY

- a) **Sub Post Office Exhibition, NEC Birmingham, 11-12 October 1997
FM PP 01**

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

ACTION

5. CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS 1996
Subscription Review - 96/86

Irrelevant

6. FUTURE DATES OF EC MEETINGS

The January 1998 meeting would take place in London at the Hotel Russell at a 24-hour delegate rate of £110 per person. MR BRENNAN invited questions on the P&D Report.

MR JANNETTA asked if Mr Butlin's suggestion of an EC meeting in Northern Ireland was to be considered but that matter was directed to be left in abeyance pending the outcome of the P&D's decision.

MR BURROWS wondered whether the timing of the June EC meeting was not too close following Annual Conference in May - he recalled having been at EC Meetings during Wimbledon fortnight. THE GENERAL SECRETARY said it could be investigated but he was not aware that the timing had altered to occasion a change, in that it seemed to have met on *Father's Day* for several years.

- THE CHAIRMAN confirmed that Council's ACCEPTANCE of the P&D Report.
- Before the commencement of business on Wednesday 18th June, THE GENERAL SECRETARY drew attention to an article which had appeared in a national newspaper reporting that the new Government intended doing away with the regulations requiring remandating of members of Unions. Whilst it was intended that this should be drawn to attention in a BSC, and he would try to be in contact with the Minister to find out the implications and timescales, the news did not immediately alter anything that had been discussed or planned and signalled no change to anything the Federation had or was organising.

DECISION

B) FEDERATION TRUSTEES REPORT

MR ABERNETHY reported the Trustees had met on 16th June when Mr Roy Edmondson, the National Treasurer, had been especially welcomed after GRO.
The Report of the Meeting of 17th March was accepted with no matters arising.

Irrelevant

The Trustees had approved the proposals for a new computer maintenance agreement. Tenders had been acquired from 3 companies, the costs of these being broadly the same. The decision had been made to accept the quote of Worthing Computers, totalling £4,274.41 per annum. This, however, represented only a marginal increase on what was already being paid £4,188.18 - although it was noted that an addition would need to be made in 18 months' time when the file server warranty ran out.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

- THE CHAIRMAN confirmed ACCEPTANCE of the Federation Trustees Report.

DECISION

C) BOARD OF BENEVOLENCE REPORT

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

- THE CHAIRMAN thanked her for the information, and confirmed ACCEPTANCE of the Benevolent Fund Report.

A/6 SPECIAL MATTERS

A) MEMBERSHIP

(i) New Membership Computer - FI MR 01

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

B) FINANCE

(i) Treasurer's Report - FI AC 02

Although MR EDMONDSON was not present to give an official Treasurer's Report, his remarks at the beginning of the meeting had been noted and THE CHAIRMAN asked that during his absence Executive Officers' claims should be forwarded to Philip Bloor at Federation Headquarters.

(ii) Outstanding Branch Accounts - FI AC

THE GENERAL SECRETARY requested Executive Officers to facilitate the prompt return of outstanding Branch Accounts to Federation Headquarters.

(iii) Re-Mandating Exercise - FI MR 01

(iv) Membership - Developing a strategy - FM MS 03

See Agenda Item A/5 3(a) Re-Mandating Exercise.

(v) South Wales & South West Region - FM OG 05

- **THE CHAIRMAN confirmed the Council's ACCEPTANCE of the Rules as recommended without discussion.**

DECISION

(vi) Union Facilities - PC HR 03

THE GENERAL SECRETARY advised the Federation had £135,000 from the Post Office but was still waiting to hear about the additional claim but in the light of the financial situation in which the Counters Business now found itself he was not too hopeful.

MR BUTLIN had sent a fax requesting a Motion to be put the current Executive Council Meeting but this had been ruled out of time and he, therefore, gave formal

notice of a Motion to be put to the meeting in October recommending an adjustment to the distribution of Union Facilities, the current method being unfair and incorrect. In this respect he drew attention to Philip Bloor's letter of 15 October 1996 and he held up a map of the British Isles on which boundaries of the SWSW Region was outlined indicating the problem with which that Region was faced.

In reply to a query from Mr Burford as to whether the Federation had tried to linked Union Facilities with the RPI, THE GENERAL SECRETARY said it had but that Mr Coleman required a new claim be submitted every year.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

DECISION

D) *TRADING*

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

ACTION

A/7 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS PRIOR TO 1997

96/51 Payment days

96/71 Advertising

96/83 Standardisation of Certificates of Insurance and Cover Notes

Nothing reported.

A/8 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS 1997

The circulated list was amended by moving Resolutions 19, 21, 23, 28 & 29 to be dealt with by the Negotiating Committee, Resolution 70 as already in hand, and the list approved.

A/10 DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

(A) *FOR DISCUSSIONS*

POST OFFICE COUNTERS LTD

NETWORK

1. (a) Sub Post Office Signage - Aliflex - PC NW 05 03

THE GENERAL SECRETARY advised Aliflex had reported that although hundreds of enquiries had been received, there had only be 12 orders which was disappointing. POCL had licensed more suppliers although they had given Plumb Signs coverage in the *Courier*.

MR DARVILL drew attention to a reluctance by RNM to support the product and to the high installation costs of the Plumb Signs in the London area (£450). THE CHAIRMAN felt some animosity remained because the Post Office product had fallen through.

(b) Review of Helplines - PC NW 10

MR DAVIS drew attention to the correspondence circulated on 12 June. In reply to a query regarding SSL, he advised the situation was Counters were re-scoping a number of options of which SSL were one. John Holroyd had said that if SSL did not live up to POCL's requirements it would not carry out the work and SSL will only handle customer enquiries. Customers would not know of the re-routing. It was a trial of the *Helpline* facility in one Region. *Helplines* were victims of their own success. The further success of the *Helpline* depended upon people understanding the problems that Sub-Postmasters met in their Offices in a working environment. He himself had maintained that the Federation/Sub-Postmasters would not tolerate any reduction in the standard of service.

QUALITY

2. (a) Customer First - PC QY 01

- Trial for compensating customers who wait longer than 5 minutes
- Customer Satisfaction Index - Surveys

THE GENERAL SECRETARY described the Counters Business as yet to reach a conclusion and make up their minds, so there was a need to continue, although there were some difficulties between the people doing the surveys.

MR DAVIS drew attention to his circulation of 12 June (*circulated under A/10(a) PC NW 10 above*). The information contained therein demonstrated that talking with POCL had been a success because the Federation had managed to effect a change over time.

SUBPOSTMASTERS CONTRACT

3. (a) Christmas and New Year Arrangements - PC SC 05 01

The correspondence advised of latest position. Tom Coleman had been at Annual Conference and witnessed the debate on the subject and had since advised the arrangements had been put to Jonathan Evans for a decision. MR DAVIS was hopeful that the proposals would be acceptable.

SUBPOSTMASTERS PAY

4. (a) APT Schemes - PC SP 02 08

There was nothing to add to the circulated correspondence.

POCL CLIENTS

BENEFITS AGENCY

5. (a) Review of Form P80MA - CL BA 04

MR DAVIS circulated the original of the form P80MA mentioned in the correspondence.

THE CHAIRMAN's mentioned that, in his view, it seemed pointless to object to the public being advised of a Sub Post Office FAD code, as that knowledge could easily be gained from various sources.

GIROBANK

6. (a) Girobank PDR's (Postmasters Daily Records) - CL GB 08

MR DAVIS expressed an interest in hearing the Council's views on the correspondence.

MISS PARCELL saw refusal as an ideal method by which to disrupt POCL in the hope of securing a swift 1997 pay deal.

Although agreeing in theory, MR ABERNETHY felt Post Office customers/clients would not agree with that concept. He wished to speed the impetus of automation. He recommended accepting the course suggested by Mr Davis.

MRS KENDALL foresaw disruption anyway, chaos in Girobank, and she did not consider the matter had been sufficiently thought through. She wondered whether it was really POCL which wanted the change, not Girobank.

MR DAVIS explained he wished for an indication of when it was considered appropriate for the method to start. The scenario described by Mrs Kendall could happen immediately as, once on EPOS, all transactions could be recorded on the day they were transacted. He had suggested the change be made on the day an Office went over to EPOS.

MR ABERNETHY proposed it should wait until EPOS took place, meanwhile sticking to the current method. THE GENERAL SECRETARY commented that the latest correspondence only having been received that morning, and bearing in mind POCL said it would be introduced before automation, the matter should be taken back to see what could be done without being restricted by a set mandate. And MR ABERNETHY withdrew his proposal.

PERSONAL BANKING SERVICES

7. (a) Personal Banking Trial - Co-operative Bank, Extension Review CL PB

There was nothing to add to the circulated correspondence.

PAYMENT COLLECTION SERVICES

8. (a) Vodaphone Pre-Pay - CL PC 04

Nothing to add to the circulated correspondence.

A/10(B) FOR INFORMATION

(The following was specifically noted)

Commercial

1. (a) Market Research PC CM 02

Network

**2. (a) Post Office Stores: Scheduled
Ordering - Transaction Stock - PC NW 04**

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

- THE CHAIRMAN confirmed the agreement of the Council to transfer the matter to the A/3 Agenda.

(Agenda)

(b) Post Office Stock - PC NW 04 01

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

- (d) Counter Automation - BA/POCL - PC NW 06 01
 - Research
 - Customer Education
- (e) The Smart Money - PC NW 06 08

Product Range

- 3. (a) Postal Orders - PC PR 01
- (b) Postshop Retail Products - Sales to Sub-Postmasters - PC PR 05

POCL CLIENTS

Benefits Agency

4. (a) P&A Order Book Redesign - CL BA 03
(b) Benefits Agency Reward Scheme - CL BA 06

MR DARVILL mentioned what he described as a *plague* in London of Green Girocheques being completely manipulated so that it was impossible to detect, but Sub-Postmasters still being asked to make good the losses.

The Federation had tried repeatedly but, MR DAVIS said, those concerned were not prepared to take back the design.

BBC

5. (a) TV Licence Fee Stamps/Saving Stamp - CL BC 03

Girobank

6. (a) Alliance & Leicester - Giro/Post Office Report - CL GB 04

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Department of National Savings

8. (a) Account Opening - Evidence of Identity - CL NS 07 03

Parcelforce

9. (a) Parcelforce Contract Customers - CL PF 05 05

Royal Mail

10. (a) Mails Markets Liaison Meeting - CL RM 01
(b) "Success through Sales" - CL RM 05

A/11 REPORT ON CENTRAL APPEALS

There were no Reports.

A/12 GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

WEB SITE ON THE INTERNET

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

ACTION

Discussion on the Future Structure/Strategy of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters.

SUB GROUP 1 "COMMUNICATIONS"

MR CYRIL JONES reported that the Group had meet and spent some 2 hours analysing progress on the various proposals, considering the role and purpose of the *Communications* Sub Group and its terms of reference. He wished to note the progress made to date:

1. Production of Factsheets. It was felt the Factsheets already produced were useful and appreciated. The problem seemed to lay in getting them to Sub-Postmasters, although they were sent to Branch Secretaries. It was suggested that a full list of the Factsheets be published in the "Subpostmaster" and in order to *wet the appetite* that a précis of individual Factsheets should appear each month. It was not considered appropriate to print the whole sheet as that would take up too much space. There could be a small order form applying for the sheets for readers to send to Federation Headquarters. The Sub Group also wanted to know what more Factsheets were planned, on what subjects. He recalled one on electricity for automation having been suggested.
2. The proposed Surgeries by Executive Officers held before/after Branch Meetings had been discussed. Mr Marshall had held 3 such surgeries in a one-to-one situation to discuss individual Sub-Postmasters problems. At one of those meeting 2 Sub-Postmasters had attended, 1 at another meeting, and 0 at the third but those who sat down were satisfied. Therefore, the idea was considered worth thinking about and it was recommended to be taken up generally and Branch Secretaries requested to organise a meeting room facility for half-an-hour beforehand.
3. On Road Shows, material had been requested from Federation Headquarters 3 times but unfortunately nothing had been heard. The Sub Group would welcome something which would enlighten them in that area.
4. The most frequently asked questions from Sub-Postmasters concerned progress with pay and the Sub Group felt it should stress once again that there should be publications regularly in the "Subpostmaster" regarding what was happening with the Pay negotiations.
5. On filofaxes, in the light of the current situation it was felt that subject should be passed back to the P&D. The Group felt the idea could be taken up if it proved feasible.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

10. There was a feeling of uncertainty in the Sub Group as to their role. Communications was an extremely wide area and it was felt that a more specific term was needed, ie, as to what the purpose of the Group was and what it was responsible for. Also, that "Operations" needed a more clear definition. It was felt that some the setting up the Sub Groups had been no more than a mere *sop* for those not on major Sub Committees. It seemed to some that not a lot was happening and they queried the use of the time taken up. He therefore requested the Council to look at the role of the Sub Groups, ask whether they served any useful purpose and, if there was, was account going to be taken of what they said, and weight given to their views? MR JONES concluded his report by saying he personally thought they were a good thing.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY thanked Mr Jones for having effectively communicated. He said:

1. The Sub Groups were not a *sop*. Everybody on the Executive Council was a member of a Sub Group whether he/she was on another Sub Committee or not. There was a genuine desire within the Council itself to look at its own operation and all its functions. Brainstorming had commenced some 2 years previously. Perhaps it had lost *steam*. He had taken a conscious decision to stop *driving* it and *step back* as that was good practice by those involved in *Business Excellence*. Certainly the Groups did not serve any useful purpose if their findings were ignored. *Communications* was the biggest cross-subject concept, a *thread* through, and connecting, all other *boundaries*. He felt sure that all Executive Officers who were present at the start of setting up the Sub Groups would support him in what he had said.
2. On the production of Factsheets, he had an ambition for some years to produce a full list of Factsheets covering many subjects. Certainly reference to them could be tabulated regularly in the "*Subpostmaster*", together with an application form. But, later on, Mr Jones had mentioned that a Sub-Postmaster *first line of communication* was his Branch Secretaries and he wondered whether the suggestion would act as a paradox/disincentive to that. Other Factsheets planned could be on subjects identified as FAQ (*Frequently Asked Questions*). Peter Abraham of the DAS *Helpline* could be a useful information source for some Factsheets. Regarding instructions for the supply of electricity for automation, at the time of the Executive Council's previous discussion of the subject it was said that Sub-Postmasters were responsible but now it appeared, that POCL might themselves pay for some modifications. There was a wish to see what happened in Newcastle and the South West and what that might mean in the future and, therefore, no Factsheet had been produced.

(MR MARSHALL was able to confirm that in the South West where the cost changes to the electricity supply had been £65 POCL and Pathway were arguing about who should bear the cost, but the Sub-Postmasters had not been asked to pay.)

3. Surgeries by Executive Officers had already been dealt with.
4. On Road Shows, Mr Heasman would provide the Executive Council with the information. ACTION
5. Publication of communications on Pay presented a difficult balance of priorities. He passionately believed there was a responsibility to tell members but if, for instance, the Federation said pay was held up because of a Government review, that might be handing POCL exactly what they wanted. In this matter THE GENERAL SECRETARY took his instructions from the Executive Council.
6. The query and problem with Membership Cards would be taken back. ACTION

Irrelevant

8. As regards the lines of communication being definite and published in the "*Subpostmaster*". The *Communications Groups* findings reported to the Executive Council at it last meeting could be published in the journal, with the Editor permission. ACTION

MR CYRIL JONES said that it was not being recommended that there should be *chapter and verse* on the pay negotiations published in the "*Subpostmaster*", but a mention to say that something was happening, acknowledging that something was going on.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

SUB GROUP 2 "MEMBERSHIP"

MR DAVIS advised that the Group's spokesman, Mr Doug Evans, was absent. Executive Officers would have received a report of the progress made at the meeting of 14th February and a further meeting had taken place. Mr Evans intended to provide a written report on that meeting to the Sub Group and subsequently to the Executive Council and that the Group would then decide whether it required a further meeting.

A/13 NFSP TRADING LIMITED

MR CHALLINOR (Chairman) briefly reported on matter raised at the Annual General Meeting. Mr Jones had asked about Paperhouse, unfortunately at that stage he could not enlighten members on the subject. Mr Evans had raised the matter of National Stocktaking fees being rather high and this point would be raised with them at a forthcoming meeting.

Irrelevant

MR CHALLINOR also reported on the secure lending scheme with Girobank started in September 1996. Up to April 1997 34 loans had been taken out, value £2.365 million. Since April there was an additional figure of over £3 million of loans Sub-Postmasters had requested so the scheme was successful. Although NFSP Trading did not receive any direct commission, they had been more than generous in contributing to the Federation's Centenary Celebrations.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

- The Report of NFSP Trading was ACCEPTED.

DECISION

A/14 EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORTS

THE CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft verbatim Report of Annual Conference 1997 held at Llandudno, recalling criticisms of the standard of the 1996 Report having been received. He understood that correcting the Report was an onerous task and asked Executive Officers to read any sections applying to their Regions and advise Shoreham.

Irrelevant

A/15 MATTERS RECEIVED TOO LATE FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA

There were none.

A/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

MR MCMAHON said that, as the shortest-serving member of the Council, it fell to him to propose a vote of thanks for the way in which THE CHAIRMAN had conducted his first Executive Council Meeting as National President - it was his own second Executive Council Meeting and, had it been his first, he would have thought it much more than the Chairman's first because of the way he had carried out that task. The Chairman had kept Officers in line very well whilst allowing freedom of speech. He, personally, still found the debate overwhelming and agreed with Mr Cyril Jones comments (*in his report under A/12 Sub Group on "Communications"*) but his colleagues in the North West had indeed been very helpful. He had, too, been surprised to learn of the GPC Committee's work and now understood the extent of the Council's custodianship of the Federation. He offered his best wishes to the Chairman in his year as National President in conducting future meetings.

THE CHAIRMAN thanked him for his kind words, explaining he had been well taught by Mr Burford (*last year's National President*) and thanked Officers for their good humour. He urged the Council to progress the membership drive, and looked forward to the October Executive Council Meeting.

ELAINE AUSTIN
GILL PAYNE

GRO