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Post Office Ltd
Maidstone Area Office
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2 December 2004

Dear Paul

Thank you for your letter of 9th November 2004.

I have recently returned from holiday and write by way of follow-up as promised following our NFSP (Eastbourne) branch meeting held on Tuesday 16th November.

17 members attended representing 15 offices, together with 3 retired postmasters who provide locum services for holidays or sickness.

I have always found that the members who attend our meetings regularly are committed, involved, knowledgeable and professional. They tend to be longer serving postmasters with considerable experience. One indication of the above was the reaction of the meeting in unanimous condemnation of those postmasters who (as noted by our branch secretary in her report on an NFSP area meeting) had enrolled for a Sunday Face-to-Face meeting and then failed to turn up.

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I believe that all who were present have attended these meetings. We have provided feedback and criticism and many believe the removal of the previous system of payment of expenses to be unfair and negative in terms of motivation (we assume staff who attend from PO Ltd receive mileage allowance or have access to a company car). We believe that the stick has replaced the carrot that was part of the original sales training programme in Graham Cater's time. But - we still attend.

The recent discussions between you and me took up a sizeable part of the meeting:

I reported that you had advised me that the Post Office "offer" had always been made on the basis that no Postmaster should expect the PO side to do better than break even and that any profit must be gained from the private side.

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This was received with utter disbelief. None of those present, including commercial branches provide a retail side of any significant size. Most supply cards and stationery with self-selection, and payment at the PO counter.

I read our correspondence to the meeting and would report reaction as follows.

Most, like me, have received no system training from the Post Office throughout their careers. In 24 years, excepting various sales training initiatives and a laptop based

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product knowledge evening, my total system training amounted to one day for Horizon plus two assisted balances when Horizon went live. When I took on my first office in 1980 I learned from a fellow postmaster and paid for his help.

Two newly appointed Postmasters were in attendance and they advised that they had been made aware of and had been trained in, the zero balancing system, on appointment, and followed this system.

I advised that you had stressed that there is one policy universally applied and that no one postmaster could be allowed to be an exception.

15 members reported that they had not been trained in, nor were they aware of the requirement for zero balancing. All reported that if a discrepancy occurs during a holiday it is not adjusted by the locum but is dealt with on the postmaster's return. Also they operate the "old system" of showing any discrepancy in the final cash account and then making it good.

They were dismayed that they could be disciplined and threatened with loss of contract for not using a procedure of which they, like me, were unaware and in which they are untrained.

It may be that our branch is unique in this matter and that the policy has been successfully rolled out to all our colleagues. It seems more likely from experience that this policy is as yet far from universal in its application and is hampered by poor communication and lack of training.

From our correspondence I had assumed that I was the only one at fault and out of step. I now wonder how many others are in the same position as my Branch colleagues and me.

For a policy to work effectively and fairly it must first be disseminated universally and with appropriate follow-up training. It is clear from our meeting that whatever has been done to date is ineffective.

During the last two years I have had meetings at both my PO s and at my home with

Andrew Thompson
Geoff May
Glenn Sulley
Peter Wilkinson
Gary Condor

The universal policy was only ever mentioned by the latter earlier this year and it now seems that implementation is random.

In the circumstances I shall continue to balance, show discrepancies in my final balance, and then make good until I have heard from you.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Laurence Green

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