NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SUB-POSTMASTERS

REPORT OF A MEETING

OF THE

NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

held on

2nd/3rd JUNE 1997

at

THE GRAFTON HOTEL, LONDON

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Present	Mr A M Burrows	Chairman
	Mr J E M Burford	
	Mr A R Butlin	
	Mrs J Kendall	
	Mr J Peberdy	
In Attendance	Mr C Baker	General Secretary
	Mr K Davis	Asst General Secretary

THE CHAIRMAN welcomed members of the Negotiating Committee to the meeting. He congratulated every member on being re-elected.

In view of the fact that Mr. J. Evans of Post Office Counters would be attending during the course of the meeting to discuss networking, it was decided to debate the following matters first: Government Affairs (PO PZ); Network Issues - Counter Automation (PC NW 06 01); Distribution (PO PC 03); Isle of Man (OI IM); National Lottery (CL LO 01).

A)   REPORTS OF MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings held on 3/4th March 1997 and 29th April 1997 had been circulated and were approved.

DECISION

GOVERNMENT REVIEW - PO PZ

The GENERAL SECRETARY reported receipt of a fax from Ian McCartney MP, Minister of State at the Department of Trade & Industry, who was scoping the problems, reviewing and taking stock of The Post Office. It was understood the Minister wished to understand the problem by the summer recess of Parliament, then put a paper to his colleagues and, if, Cabinet approval given, the detail would be considered. By using Utility Regulations, it may be possible to appoint a Regulator for The Post Office which might be a way of gaining commercial freedom. The GENERAL SECRETARY had been given to understand the Government wished The Post Office to remain wholly in the public sector as one entity. The Government was very keen on employee conditions and minimum wages.

With regard to the meeting with Ian McCartney, the GENERAL SECRETARY advised a small group had been requested.
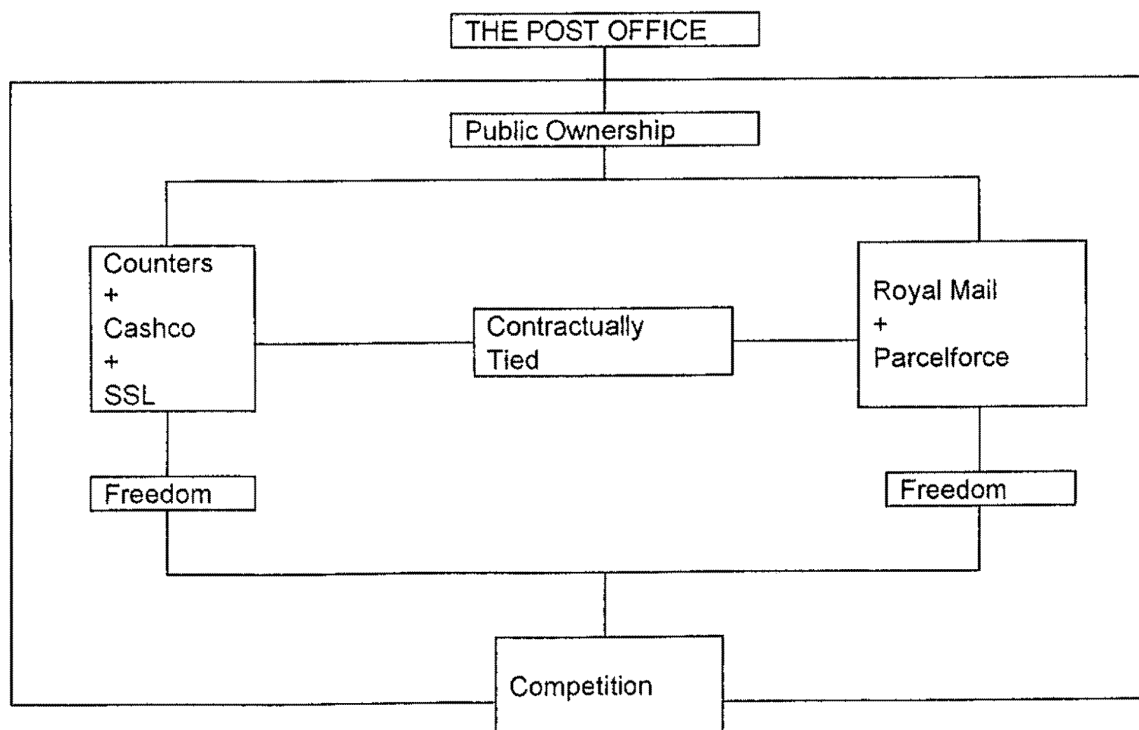
MR. BURROWS reported an opportunity had arisen to meet with Ian McCartney, MP, at 5pm on Thursday, 5th June. He suggested the team should consist of the General Secretary, himself as Chairman and, in accordance with custom, the National President. The Committee AGREED to the representative body attending the first meeting.

DECISION

The Negotiating Committee then considered the content of the submission to Ian McCartney with particular emphasis on protecting members' interests.

The following points were highlighted:-

- Retain Post Office title
- Merge/Amalgamate Royal Mail & Parcelforce (too small to survive separately in the competitive market, eg duplication for delivery vehicles)
- POCL to incorporate Cashco & SSL
- Romec to remain unchanged
- The Business to work closely together
- Both POCL and Royal Mail/Parcelforce to have greater commercial freedom
- Public ownership to be retained by Government but the 2 Businesses tied contractually together
- If monopoly removed, PO will suffer loss of work

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │  THE POST OFFICE     │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                                  │
                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │  Public Ownership    │
                        └─────────────────────┘

  ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
  │ Counters │      │ Contractually│      │ Royal Mail   │
  │    +     │──────│    Tied      │──────│    +         │
  │ Cashco   │      └──────────────┘      │ Parcelforce  │
  │    +     │                            │              │
  │ SSL      │                            └──────────────┘
  └──────────┘                                   
  ┌──────────┐                            ┌──────────────┐
  │ Freedom  │                            │ Freedom      │
  └──────────┘                            └──────────────┘

                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ Competition  │
                    └──────────────┘
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ROYAL MAIL

- Retain Royal connections (Queens head)
- Uniform tariff / universal service
- (International) Freedom to deal and make deals for growth but competition leads to danger. Nation-wide network assurances sought.
- If reducing market share leads to undermining network the need for underpinning.
- Full range of services at all Post Offices

PARCELFORCE

- Integrate with Royal Mail
- Harmonising Services
- Full range of services at all Post Offices
- If alternative networks used, POCL should be allowed to deal with competitors

POCL - COUNTERS BUSINESS

- Retain identity under Corporate Board
- Automated stable network (size and shape)
- Freedom to grow into new market places eg PO own bank, Share Shops
- Ability to grow as above (funds)
- Include Cash Centres/Carrying and SSL

EFL

- Set too high
- Counters low profit/high turnover
- automation
- restricts investment (into the business for future growth)
- no monopoly
- rural network costs
- security
- pay scales to show examples of how many Sub-Postmasters do not receive minimum wage

COUNTERS

Category One
Greenfield sites
Government commitment to use network
Minimum wage - who pays?
Loss of core work

Category Two
Decline of rurals (200 per annum)
Flagship offices
Mailwork
Creating new types of post offices
Maintain network of Crown Offices

Category Three
Sub-Postmasters investment £1 billion
Criminal activity
All items all offices
Image
Sub-Postmasters pay
Sub-Postmasters feel undervalued
POCL interfering in private business
Licence fee
Partnership - trust - decision making

Category Four
Need for training/refresher support staff
Seat on the Board
Equipment - automation
Quality of Service - TQM
Who speaks for Sub-Postmasters on
Corporate Board?

NETWORK FORUMS - PC NW 01

The Negotiating Committee highlighted the following points to be raised with Mr. Evans:-

1. Finance
    - Training
    - Quality
    - Security

2. Automation
    - Roll out delays
    - Who pays for: Training; Alterations

3. Network Plans
    - Private Business
    - Image
    - Conversions
    - Rural
    - Size and Shape

4. Future of Counters Business

COUNTER AUTOMATION - PC NW 06 01

The GENERAL SECRETARY reported he had visited Newcastle on 27th and 28th May in the company of Paul Rich and John Bennett in which area OBCS was being installed in 100 Sub Post Offices. The reaction from Sub-Postmasters was of delight.

The action points from the meeting were circulated (copy attached). Two Sub-Postmasters had had to have new procedures which indicated a problem on the hardware and the Post Office was checking to see whether they had been properly tested. Although the engineer responded within 4 hours to the call out, it took half a day to re-programme the equipment. To assist with creating space on the counter one idea was to install a parcel hopper which closed on the back of the front of the counter for security reasons.

With regard to signing off of work, it would probably be the responsibility of the Sub-Postmaster and the Retail Network Manager. Sub-Postmasters had felt they were not receiving sufficient communication. A central file would be held as to the location of the equipment in each office.

Each time equipment failed Sub-Postmasters would be asked to report the problem. The Committee suggested that an error log would save the Sub-Postmaster having to stop and report a system failure when busy. THE GENERAL SECRETARY to refer the suggestion to Post Office Counters.

| ACTION |

The Post Office was consulting with Peritas with regard to use of Post Office premises for training as some buildings were not suitable for disabled access. Pathway staff had been praised for their assistance.

The security policy was to be reviewed by Paul Rich and Jonathan Evans. It was understood there was a difficulty with the removal of the speech units in the screen.

The Post Office had come to the conclusion that "business as usual" during installation was impracticable and impossible.

MR. BURROWS thanked the General Secretary for visiting Newcastle, particularly as it was his first day after the holiday.

MRS. KENDALL circulated a letter being sent to Sub-Postmasters in the Leeds area inviting them to apply for the post of Horizon Field Support Officer. THE GENERAL SECRETARY advised he had requested the Post Office to desist from advertising for the time being, although the principle of Sub-Postmasters assisting was good and an opportunity for the Federation.

MR. PEBERDY had been approached by his Region with regard to the idea of Sub-Postmasters as Field Support Officers. The vacancy had been advertised internally in the Post Office, 100 applicants, 40 interviewed. In his

Region the idea was to offer Branch Secretaries a short term contract for six months, paid at the PA rate of approximately £10,000 per annum. He had drawn attention to the problem of selective advertising, breach of contract, conflict of self-employed, double employed.

MRS. KENDALL pointed out that £10,000 per annum was insufficient for a Branch Secretary to employ a relief.

MR. BURROWS expressed grave concern at the Regional activity for support staff. In his view the recruitment of support staff should be centrally controlled.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY advised he had discussed the matter with Mr Coleman.

MRS. KENDALL suggested recently retired Sub-Postmasters would be ideal candidates for support staff.

MR. BURROWS was perturbed that information was not being communicated and co-ordinated centrally.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY explained the PDA was a separate body from Post Office Counters, the Retail Development Centre was dealing with money and Sub-Postmasters' affairs, Paul Rich was Director of Automation and Jonathan Evans was Network Director. In his view there was a need for co-ordination both within the Federation and Post Office Counters.

MR. BURROWS enquired as to the position with regard to the non-cash account and small rural offices being asked what they intended to do when automation was installed and whether they were prepared to have the equipment.

MR. BUTLIN reported the Executive Officers had managed to stop the Post Office from approaching the non-cash account offices telling them they would become cash account offices.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY commented the ACC stated on retirement non-cash account offices would be converted but the Post Office was trying to pressure the change now.

MR. BURFORD drew attention to an office which had no mains electricity supply. THE GENERAL SECRETARY confirmed the Post Office was aware of the office in question.

MR. BURROWS understood small offices would have lap top computers but the Post Office did not appear to be offering that facility.

MR. BUTLIN drew attention to the Regional Security budgets not being able to fund screen changes required as a result of the installation of counter automation.

With regard to training for counter automation, MR. PEBERDY suggested seeking a training payment for assistants.

MR. BUTLIN pointed out people attended quality training meetings and put forward the idea that Customer Charter be stopped for a while and the budget utilised for automation training.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY said that he believed a policy was required from the Executive Council and noted MR. PEBERDY's suggestion of conceding payment for Sub-Postmasters but seek a payment for assistants.

In response to MR. BURFORD's question as to training for one-man offices, MR. BURROWS stated the matter had been resolved but ideas were being put forward with regard to training at weekends or evenings so as to fit with the requirements of Sub-Postmasters.

MR. BURROWS stated a response was awaited from Post Office Counters.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

6 *TRAINING FOR SUB-POSTMASTERS - PC HR 04*

This subject had been encapsulated in the discussion under the heading of Counter Automation (PC NW 06 01).

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

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

In response to MRS. KENDALL's question regarding payment, the GENERAL SECRETARY explained a meeting was being sought with Post Office Counters.

MR. PEBERDY suggested there was an opportunity for the NFSP Trading Co. for the production and sale of a box to hold the foils.

MR. BUTLIN drew attention to the need for information in respect of the number of pensions.

It was suggested a Branch Secretaries' Circular be used to request the information sought.

MRS. KENDALL put forward the idea of waiting until a year after automation had commenced before agreeing a new payment. The figures produced by a member indicated on average 25% income would be lost to Sub-Postmasters. THE GENERAL SECRETARY pointed out that Sub-Postmasters were anxious as to their rate of pay and did not want to see any delay.

MR. BURROWS suggested trialling 120 offices.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY suggested awaiting the next meeting with the Post Office.

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

Nothing further to report.

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

Nothing further to report.

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

Nothing to report.

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE - 2/3 JUNE 1997

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Irrelevant

Elaine Austin

PC NW 06 01

POST OFFICE COUNTERS LTD/PATHWAY/ NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SUBPOSTMASTERS

MEETING RE AUTOMATION HELD ON 28 MAY 1997 IN CAMERON HOUSE

ACTION POINTS

ACTION	Action By
◆ Processor problems - quick attendance but down time excessive (half day)	PDA
◆ Need to integrate security into process	
◆ Surveys - a need to provide kit specifications etc., in advance to enable Subpostmasters to get heads around change	
◆ Cable length appears to be too constraining (affects where kit can be sited)	
◆ Idea! - Subpostmaster developed own housing unit (monitor encased, with printer on top)	
◆ Key board location may be an issue when swipe card kicks in (design?)	
◆ Keyboard design and usability needs considering when looking at housing unit solutions	
◆ Model of kit needs to be more robust and realistic and to represent space taken up (ie., includes cabling allowance)	
◆ Consistency of approach to preparation activity - standards?	
◆ Review of 'sign-off' processes (liability issues)	
◆ Identify primary customers for each of key processes ('exploded' process map)	
◆ Communication - co-ordinating all data gathered against each outlet during install process (survey - go live)	

ACTION	Action By
♦ Expert support - outlet focused 'case notes' Collating information generated by <u>all</u> parties involved Keeping outlets informed and up to date Who owns this Communication process?	PDA
♦ Robustness of communication network for systems	
♦ Subpostmasters <u>not</u> reporting <u>all</u> systems errors - distorting error rate figures	
♦ Surveys - need to communicate running order of surveys and number of 'gangs' working each day to enable effective use of resource ie., RNM - timeliness of information needs improving	
♦ Training & User Awareness Events - timely and accurate information re attendance/non attendance	
♦ User Awareness Events - consider timing as attendance rates may be adversely affected eg., double payment days, City Centre venues (expensive parking), access by public transport essential	
♦ User Awareness Events & Training - standards set by Peritas seen to be too high to exclude use of PO facilities	
♦ Pathway staff have been well received in outlets and during training. Also attitude of Subpostmasters	
♦ Health & Safety issues at automated outlets, particularly in one man outlets eg., ergonomics - left/right hand working , RSI liability? Ops first Liability issues next - POCL-NFSP	
♦ How can NFSP Branch network help? Showing kit? Briefings (LM/SJ - PDA/JE - CB)	

ACTION	Action By
♦ Review some security policy eg., siting of parcel hatches, speech units (space taken up) (PR/JE/CB)	PR/JE
♦ View security options in context of automation - widen our options (PR/JE CB)	PR/JE/
♦ RNM workloads (general) impacted upon by Horizon (CEC,JE/PR - RGMs)	PR/JE
♦ Talking Shop idea! - article focusing on Subpostmasters who have been automated - audio tape (Link with CB) (PR/RD)	PR/RD
♦ Who 'owns' a problem and satisfies it for Subpostmaster? Important to Subpostmaster there is <u>one</u> contact point	JE?
♦ Urgent need for guidance of kit specifications, counter layouts to enable new Subpostmasters/those who want to modernise outlet prior to automation (PR/JE/DG)	PR/JE
♦ Business as usual activity - concerned re managing transfers, relocations etc	JE
♦ Improved information flow	PR
♦ Mechanism for reviewing (interim PDA measure). Live trial needs establishing (RGMs) (CEC/JE)	JE
♦ Attendance payments for training and User Awareness Events (CB/AD)	JE?
♦ How can NFSP Branch network help? Showing kit? Briefings (LM/SJ - PDA/JE - CB)	JE
♦ Attendance payments for training and User Awareness Events (CB/JE?)	AD

ACTION	Action By
♦ Preparation - out of hours? (solution?) work carried out in opening hours, noisy and lots of people involved eg., 6. Office closure as an option?	CEC input
♦ RNM workloads (general) impacted upon by Horizon (CEC, JE, RGMs, PR)	CEC
♦ Idea! - Account Manager approach to managing number of outlets (RNM Group? roll-out group?)	CEC
♦ Seek information necessary to manage issues - back to issue of who manages outlets	CEC
♦ Mechanism for reviewing (interim PDA measure). Live trial needs establishing (RGMs) (CEC/JE)	CEC
♦ Review some security policy eg., siting of parcel hatches, speech units (space taken up) (PR/JE CB)	CB
♦ View security options in context of automation - widen our options (PR/JE CB)	CB
♦ Attendance payments for training and User Awareness Events (JE?/AD - CB)	CB
♦ How can NFSP Branch network help? Showing kit? Briefings (LM/SJ - PDA/JE - CB)	CB
♦ RNM workloads (general) impacted upon by Horizon	RGMs
♦ Mechanism for reviewing (interim PDA measure). Live trial needs establishing (RGMs)	RGMs
♦ Systems communications links with Farnborough eg., stops being enforced or dropped, not being notified to database quickly enough. Further compounded BA insist on 2nd class post for books	JB/PC
♦ How can NFSP Branch network help? Showing kit? Briefings (LM/SJ - PDA/JE - CB)	LM
♦ How can NFSP Branch network help? Showing kit? Briefings (LM/SJ - PDA/JE - CB)	SJ

ACTION	Action By
♦ Urgent need for guidance of kit specifications, counter layouts to enable new Subpostmasters/those who want to modernise outlet prior to automation (PR/JE/DG)	DG
GENERAL ♦ PR to brief PDA & POCL operational people ♦ JBMcN/DC to meet with ICL (Barry Davies)	PR JBMcN/ DC

ID KEY

PR	Paul Rich
JE	Jonathan Evans
CEC	Counters Executive Committee
DG	Don Grey
CB	Colin Baker
LM	Liz Moran
SJ	Sarah Juggins
PDA	Programme Delivery Authority
RGMs	Regional General Managers
RD	Rob Durrant
AD	Alex Docherty
JB	John Bennett
PC	Peter Crahn

Dear Subpostmaster,

As we tackle our top business objective for the year we are looking to expand the Horizon Automation Project team and would like to utilise the skills and knowledge of existing Subpostmasters. As some of you have already expressed an interest in being involved, we are now looking to formally obtain names of either yourselves or your assistants who may be interested in joining the project. It is at your discretion whether or not you decide to circulate this letter to your assistants.

The post of Horizon Field Support Officer involves supporting the actual installation at offices both in North East and North Wales / North West regions. We will be looking for people to take up posts from Autumn 1997 throughout the duration of roll-out. We are ideally looking for people who can give a longer term commitment i.e. for the duration of roll-out, but short spells of minimum 3 months would be considered. The skills and requirements of the job are outlined below.

JOB PURPOSE

To give technical support to Branch and Sub offices during installation of Horizon in N.E. and N.W/N.W. Regions.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Knowledge of Post Office accounting procedures and counter transactions.

Knowledge of current automation and computer skills.

Ability to communicate at different levels, deal with queries and explain procedures.

Able to plan and organise and have a flexible approach to work.

Good interpersonal skills and a practical approach to problem solving.

Team members must be fully mobile (with full driving licence).

Training will be provided.

HOURS OF ATTENDANCE

The post requires support officers to travel between a number of different offices in any given week. They are required to stay for the duration of installation and remain until the office closes. It is vital to the success of the project that support officers are flexible and able to react positively to changes occurring at short notice.

TRAVEL EXPENSES

Standard POCL mileage will apply for excess miles travelled. Access to own car is essential, however, pool cars may be provided for travelling and it would be expected that they be used if available. Some overnight stays may be required and expenses will be paid.

PAY

The rate of pay will be £4.83 per hour. This post is open to all, regardless of sex, religion, race, disability, ethnic origin or age.

SELECTION

The process will be by means of aptitude test and interview.

REPLIES

Could you please complete the attached proforma and return it to :-

**The Automation team
North East Regional Office
Post Office House
3 Infirmary Street
Leeds
LS1 1AJ**

Any enquiries should be made to the Automation team on **GRO** The closing date for replies is Friday 6th June 1997.

FIELD SUPPORT APPLICATION

Name:_____

Current Position:_Subpostmaster/Mistress or Assistant_____

Office Name:_____ Tel No:_____

Office
Address_____

_____

Describe your current duties / responsibilities

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What experience / qualifications do you have for this position

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How flexible are you with respect to unusual hours and travelling. What experience do you have.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How long are you willing to commit yourself to the project.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Are you available to travel within the North Wales / North West Region and stay in overnight accommodation.

_____

_____

_____

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TO : Stores Branch

FROM : Robert Stabler - Automation Team - Leeds NERO

Can you please copy the enclosed and send out to all Sub offices including MSPOs in the North East region on Wednesday 21st May 1997 for receipt the following day. Thanks very much.
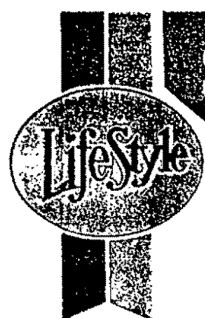NB This must not be sent out to franchised offices.

Robert -Automation

Tel: [**GRO**]

PC SC 21 01

Convenience Store, May 30, 1997

LETTERS

Star ☆ Letter

Meagre pay in PayPoint

Our company is an agent for Norweb and British Gas. In the case of Norweb we receive commission of one per cent.

We consider this to be less than ideal for the work involved, the fairly large sums of cash to account for and on which banking charges are levied.

Imagine our horror when we were informed by Norweb that they are going to contract out their scheme to PayPoint, which informs us that the derisory sum of 0.5 per cent will in future be the commission rate – 50p for every £100 collected! A large percentage of 50p will be taken up by our cash transmission banking fee.

PayPoint is taking a non negotiable stance in the belief that we should be satisfied with any increase in footfall and associated sales.

It is outrageous that we are being effectively driven into a corner to offer a 'none profit' service using the fear of the unknown potential loss of business if we refuse to take on the agency.

For PayPoint to ask agents to act on their behalf for such a margin and in addition then to cap any transaction fee at 13p is really the financial sector at its worst. Convenience stores are expected to have a fairly wide profit mix related to volume as in cigarettes and range in confectionery but half of one per cent less expenses?

Come on PayPoint fair play please.

name and address withheld