

# Nudge Nudge

NUJ Daily Express, Sunday Express, Daily Star and Daily Star Sunday chapel newsletter

January 2004

## £14million bonus ... for the boss!

The management has failed to improve on its pay offer of three per cent at a time when company revenue is soaring. The latest boost to the coffers is the result of a 5p increase in the cover price of the Daily Star. Circulation has not apparently been dented by the price increase.

That adds up to an extra £42,500 per day – or £14million per year. If that extra income were shared out purely among the journalists, our pay rise would be 75 per cent! As it is, the company has allocated £600,000 for all pay rises.

But journalists are the essence of any paper. "It's journalism that sells papers," said Barry FitzPatrick of the NUJ. "This company is run on a shoestring even though it is making record profits. It should take another look at its figures and improve pay and conditions for journalists."

In the country as a whole, the average level of pay rises was 3.7 per cent in November 2003, according to the Office for National Statistics.

In a series of talks with chapel officials, the management has failed to move on the following issues:

**3 per cent.** It will not improve on the basic increase.

**Minimum flat rate increase.** It will not accept the chapel's suggestion of a minimum £1,100 increase to protect the lower paid.

**Sick benefits.** It will not deal with the discrepancy where some journalists have only 10 days sick pay a year.

**Holidays.** It will not increase the minimum holiday entitlement to more than 20 days.

**Bonus scheme.** It refuses to consider a bonus scheme.

**Late workers.** It refuses to extend four-night week working to late-working journalists.

**Reduced hours.** It refuses to reduce shift lengths for journalists working after 10pm.

**Screen breaks.** It ignores the fact that many staff are unable now to take proper screen breaks because of pressure of work.

### Agreed:

Casuals on the minimum rates will get the same percentage increase as staff (but from April 2004).

### Is there movement here?

The management is investigating whether the company should make the same percentage contribution to the pension fund for casuals as it makes for staff. The chapel believes it is probably illegal to discriminate between the two groups.

The management has said it may give casuals on other than minimum rates the same percentage increase as staff although "high earners" who are paid £150 a shift may be excluded.

### The next step

NUJ members will shortly be receiving a ballot paper on industrial action, as agreed by the chapel.

### **Express Newspapers Company Policy. Working with VDUs.**

"In order to minimise the risk of eyestrain and fatigue, short, frequent breaks from screen work should be taken. It is not possible to stipulate definitive rest breaks but in any event users will not be required to work continuously for a period of more than 90 minutes without it being followed by a break from screen work of 15 minutes."

**Fact:** RSI is common at Express Newspapers and there are increasing cases of conjunctivitis being reported. The NUJ recommends a break of 10 minutes after every 60 minutes.

### **Express Newspapers Company Policy. Working with VDUs.**

"All workstations will be assessed for potential health and safety risks. Records will be maintained and reassessments carried out when any significant change takes place."

**Fact:** It is sometimes impossible for journalists to find a suitable chair, keyboard or mouse. We know of no records being kept or any recent workstation assessments.

### **The tax and prices index**

(The increase in earnings workers need, taking into account tax and prices) 3.3 per cent (December 2003)

### **House price inflation:**

Annual rate in January 2003: 26 per cent

Annual rate in January 2004: 9.9 per cent

### **Headline rate of inflation:**

3.1 per cent in July 2003.

### **Pay deals**

The median level of pay settlements for the third quarter of 2003 was 3.3 per cent, according to Income Data Services. Some bus drivers in London and the South East enjoyed increases of 10 per cent plus.

### **IDS also reports:**

The average basic hours of manual workers are typically 39 while most non-manual staff are on 35 or 37 or 37.5 hours. Average holiday entitlement is 25 days. A majority of employers offer service-related holidays on top of basic entitlement.

### **In Germany**

Journalists have 35 days of holidays, plus 16 bank holidays.

### **Other journalists**

The *Daily Telegraph* NUJ chapel has rejected a pay offer of 3 per cent.

The *Guardian* and The *Observer* have been offered 3.1 per cent plus a £1,000 bonus.

**Note to management:** Newspapers are high-stress high-skill places where journalists should be rewarded for the anti-social hours they have to work.