

# Nudge Nudge

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

29 October 2008

## 13 days to go?

The management is giving people until 11 November to decide whether they want to volunteer for redundancy or to seek a quotation. They told union representatives that the closing date for applications would be 31 October but have decided for some reason to extend the closing date.

At a meeting on Thursday 23 October, NUJ representatives were told that 25 people had by then asked for quotes with about 30% in the management's "target area".

No one had actually volunteered to go and nor, as far as we know, has anyone received a quote.

The management confirmed that it is prepared to consider redundancy requests from people who want to move from full-time working to part-time working. The redundancy payment would be "pro rata".

We said we were disturbed to hear that new staff were being taken on for jobs which could have been taken by people who would otherwise be made redundant, but they said only one graduate trainee had recently been given a contract.

The management said it would try to accommodate people who wanted to leave quickly.

They said the "end point", with the exception of sport, would be 31 December. Volunteers for redundancy would have left by then. The management's aim is still to save lots of money. Talks will continue about how various rotas could operate.

Editorial director Paul Ashford will be making the final decision about who goes and who

stays. He has also been asked to begin negotiation on the annual pay review which, according to the house agreement, should have started in September.

NUJ representatives have again been invited to see how the new Woodwing system is progressing.

However, we have been waiting for five weeks for a firm date.

The management believes that everyone involved in developing the new system is more optimistic than they were about how well the new system would operate. By contrast,

journalists who have undergone training so far do not agree with this assessment.

"My training revealed nothing as to how the new system would work with fewer people," said one who had seen neither page templates nor style sheets.

The production flow seemed to be a typical "pass the parcel" situation. "No one knows how it is to work or

even who is responsible for it.

"Writers filling defined holes seemed to be utterly problematic – and anyway how many writers want to be typesetters or sub-editors?"

"Someone must have taken too many happy pills when this whole scheme was envisaged."

An NUJ official said: "Management's plans for the future and the introduction of a completely new system are ill thought out and foggy to say the least. They have forgotten that the dedication and hard work already put in by the staff will be needed in future."

The next NUJ-management meeting is planned for Monday 3 November.

### *Pensions*

A consultation meeting has been arranged for 7 November, following the company's announcement that it wants to "freeze" the 1988 Express Newspapers pension fund by the end of the year. NUJ expert David Ayrton will join NUJ representatives at the meeting which will also involve the Unite union. NUJ reps from Glasgow and Broughton have also been invited.