

WATER STRIKE - REGIONAL PRESENTATION

Today's report suggests a greater return to work by watermen than has been noted in the national press - see East and Bristol.

But there is also evidence of hardening in other parts of the country, though tempered by action to restore supplies where hardship is serious.

More evidence of the water authority's use of contractors.

Details are as follows:

North East

Late edition of the Journal (Newcastle) carries as its main front page story today (Tuesday) the news that a basis has been agreed for a committee of inquiry.

The Sunderland Echo reports on its front page (14.2.83) that the NWA's injunction to have the men removed from the Admin block of Howden Plant is due to be heard by a High Court Judge at Leeds on Friday.

The only other newspaper to feature the strike on its front page is Shields Gazette which gives prominence to Lord Denning's comments. Lord Denning's advice has been described as "probably illegal" by an NWA spokesman.

Yorkshire & Humberside

Mixed news this morning. Welcome development of talks progressing at ACAS on the terms of an inquiry is somewhat tempered by yesterday's decision by union leaders in the YWA area to withdraw all emergency cover from today. Local negotiator was interviewed by local radio and emphasised that the strikers will refuse to deal with management from now on. Negotiations about water supplies to hospitals and kidney patients will only be conducted through the Regional Health Authority.

Elsewhere the main news is reaction to Lord Denning's advice. YWA have warned against the course of action he advocated.

Sheffield Star says that the River Don has now become an open sewer.



Leader comments in the Yorkshire Post, the Halifax Courier and the Sheffield Star - all pleading for a binding inquiry to settle the dispute.

#### East

East Anglian Daily Times carries an editorial which comments on the new public inquiry move. Two possible outcomes, one is that a new inquiry could put the existing offer in a more attractive manner: the National Water Council has shown almost a genius for making offers in such a way as to irritate rather than conciliate. The other possibility is that a new inquiry might shame the workers into acceptance, or at least dissuade other workers from offering support. At the worst, should the inquiry prove fruitless, the unions would find it very hard indeed to produce further excuses for not going to binding arbitration.

Elsewhere in the paper is a report that Suffolk has been better off than other areas because much of its water comes from bore holes in chalk.

Strikers in Newmarket left the picket lines to reconnect the supply to the house of a kidney dialysis patient.

Eastern Daily Press (Norwich) reports that only 25% of the 200 manual workers in Lincolnshire are still on strike at a time when the national stoppage is said to be 95%. It quotes a senior shop steward: "I realise that I am a condemned man ... but people are drifting back to work because their heart is not in the strike."

#### South East

A Reading Evening Post editorial ahead of the Commons Debate on the water strike, comments: "These services are so vital that the House of Commons should consider whether in future agreements made between workers and employers should, by law, embody the submission of disputes to arbitration."

According to the Argus, a predicted mass return to work by striking Sussex waterworkers on Monday had failed to materialise.



## Bristol

A quarter of the water workforce in Somerset have returned to work, reports the Western Daily Press under the heading "Strike starts to ebb". All but two of the 14 workers at the Ham, Nr Taunton, treatment works are working normally.

On the letters page, a resident of Newent, Glos., argues that the employers must not give in to the water strikers. Other letters urge immediate arbitration to settle the dispute.

Wessex has been identified as the most trouble free water authority in the country, according to the Dorset Evening Echo. West Hants Water Co. reporting "full co-operation" from union men in cases of emergency.

## Midlands

Sir William Dugdale as chairman of STWA commented in last night's Nottingham Evening Post on strikers' "inhumane abandonment". The story covered ST's authorisation to re-connect supplies to two old people's homes in the county. Private contractors have been called in to do the jobs.

Furious union officials warned that the action has inflamed the dispute and have vowed to discover the contractor and black him for good.

Strikers in Northamptonshire thought that undue hardship was being caused in Rothersthorpe and Farthingstone, and restored supplies to the village. They have been without water for nearly the whole of the dispute. Union leader said it was not a precedent but a gesture of compassion.

Private enterprise is beginning to show in Leicester, where, the Mercury reported last night, a small band of youngsters have started a water fetching team.

## North West

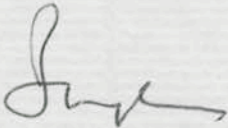
Regional evening newspapers last night (Monday) concentrated on various aspects of the water story from purely local to reports of condemnation of the Denning do-it-yourself proposal and the Commons emergency debate.

Cumberland and Evening Star reports that the effects of the strike are now beginning to bite. Bolton Evening News reports hardening



attitude among town's strikers. Blackpool Evening Gazette reports distinct lack of enthusiasm among North West waterworkers for an independent inquiry.

I am copying to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment.



B. INGHAM

15 February 1983



# NEWS FROM

# Thames Water

Thames Water Authority, Head Office, New River Head, Rosebery Avenue,  
London EC1R 4TP. Telephone: 01-837 3300.

## SITUATION REPORT NO:17 AT 16.30 HOURS TUESDAY 15TH FEBRUARY 1983

The increased incidence of leaking mains and properties without mains water has not abated.

Today's totals are :-

Mains failures remaining unrepaired	703
Properties without mains water - Authority areas	7,855
Company areas	7,997
	<u>15,852</u>

The change of policy relating to mains previously left running has had some effect, and the situation has now stabilised. Nevertheless, further efforts on the part of the public are required and advertisements asking people to save water are being run in the London "Standard".

Water quality remains satisfactory.

The performance of sewage treatment works is gradually deteriorating; no fish kills have been reported yet.

Next report Wednesday 16th February.

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REPORT ISSUED BY PUBLIC RELATIONS