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**Working Report on Job Satisfaction Survey of  
Manual and Clerical Workers in  
Parks and Recreation Department**

**SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL  
PROVIDES**

**SERVICES WORTH  
SAVING AND JOBS**

**Fight Rate Capping  
Privatisation & Cuts**

**PROJECT TO DEFEND AND IMPROVE  
LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES AND JOBS  
IN SHEFFIELD**

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**Sheffield  
Parks and Recreation**

**IMPROVE  
JOB SATISFACTION  
TO  
FIGHT CUTS,  
PRIVATISATION  
AND RATE CAPPING**

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# Improving job satisfaction to fight cuts, rate capping and privatisation

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Since the start of the project the contradictions confronting local authority manual and clerical workers have been a major focus in our discussions and work. There are clear calls by all sections of the labour movement for a united fight against further spending cuts, rate capping and privatisation. Many councillors, who are employers as well as policy-makers, are urging local authority trade unions to take appropriate action and play a central role in the campaign. Trade unionists are, in turn, urging councillors to defy the government and to refuse to implement savage cuts and privatisation of services.

But many workers are low paid, get little job satisfaction and are told little of the department's policies and future plans. We also believe that management, councillors and the public do not fully respect or value our work.

As workers and users of services we are concerned that Sheffield City Council not only provides 'Services Worth Saving' but also Jobs Worth Saving.

The reluctance to simply accept that the status quo must be defended without question is done in the knowledge that cuts and privatisation will lead to redundancies, wage cuts and even worse working conditions and less job satisfaction. But without a commitment to improve working relationships, workers' control and involvement in our work in addition to better wages and conditions we believe that it will be very difficult to convince the workforce to support and take effective action against rate capping and privatisation. The commitment to public service and providing good quality services must be won not only through exhortation but also by practical improvements. We must be involved in this process. Public services must be improved and expanded — but not on the backs of the workers.

This is not simply a management issue but brings into sharp focus important political questions about how public services should be run and how workers and users can gain more control. There are many fundamental problems which cannot easily be resolved. But we believe that important changes can and must be made within the current structure of local government and prevailing economic conditions.

We carried out the survey to bring these issues onto the political agenda and to identify specific areas for further discussion and negotiation between the trade unions, management and councillors.

The survey reveals a level of dissatisfaction and frustration which implies that workers can hardly be expected to fight rate capping and privatisation — even if they had all the facts of what these could mean for jobs and services.

We want to make several additional points.

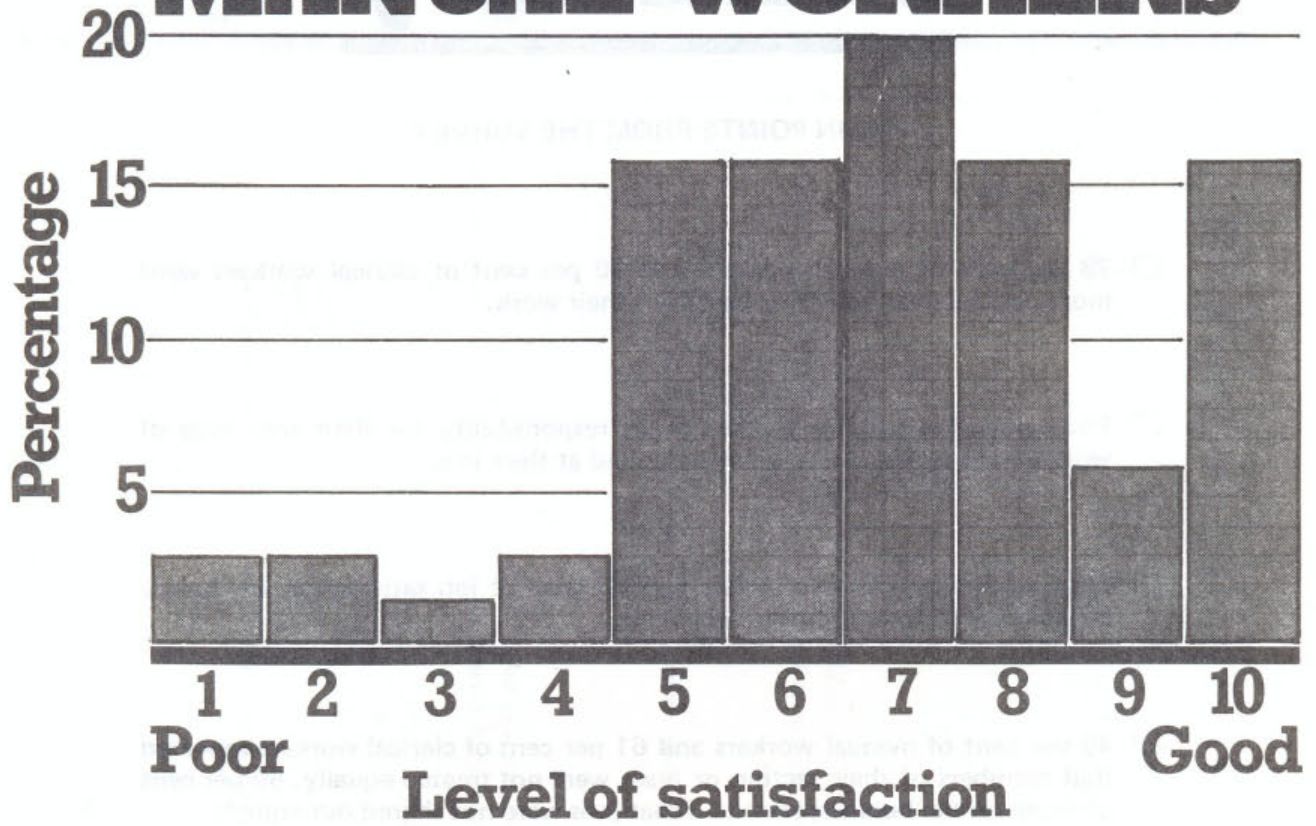
- The findings of this survey should be considered positively. A large majority of the workforce want more control over their work, more training and more responsibility both in the traditional sense of better paid jobs but also within their present work.
- We are concerned that the planned reorganisation of Parks and Recreation will be used to defer discussions on these important issues. Whilst reorganisation may lead to some improvements we do not believe it will affect our evidence or conclusions.
- Our survey reveals that some workers already have a high level of job satisfaction, a good relationship with supervisors and are involved in decisions concerning their work. This proves that it can be done.
- Workers in Parks and Recreation have many ideas for improving and expanding services. Alternative ways of carrying out work can often lead to more effective and efficient services. But developing these ideas will need workers' cooperation and involvement.
- The survey also reveals the problems of maintaining strong trade union organisation in a department with 280 worksites. We will be discussing ways of strengthening our organisation and getting more workers to take an active role in their unions.
- The major problem of low pay can only be eliminated with more resources. But higher wages will not automatically solve many of the problems we have identified. However, some of the problems can be resolved without a specific increase in costs.
- The government has announced that it will introduce legislation later this year to force all local authorities to put a number of services out to tender. These include some parks and gardens work and vehicle maintenance. In fact statutory tendering may be a bigger immediate threat to some departments than rate capping. Clearly both are a major threat in Parks and Recreation and both must be the focus of the campaign.
- Finally, the Audit Commission has started a series of studies into local government services — they have already covered refuse collection and transport. Their emphasis on productivity and cost using computers and spending league tables and the absence of any analysis or concern for the quality of service, social needs, and wages and conditions is intended to put additional pressure to cut and reorganise council services. This will lead to further deterioration in standards, quality of service and job satisfaction.

# Summary

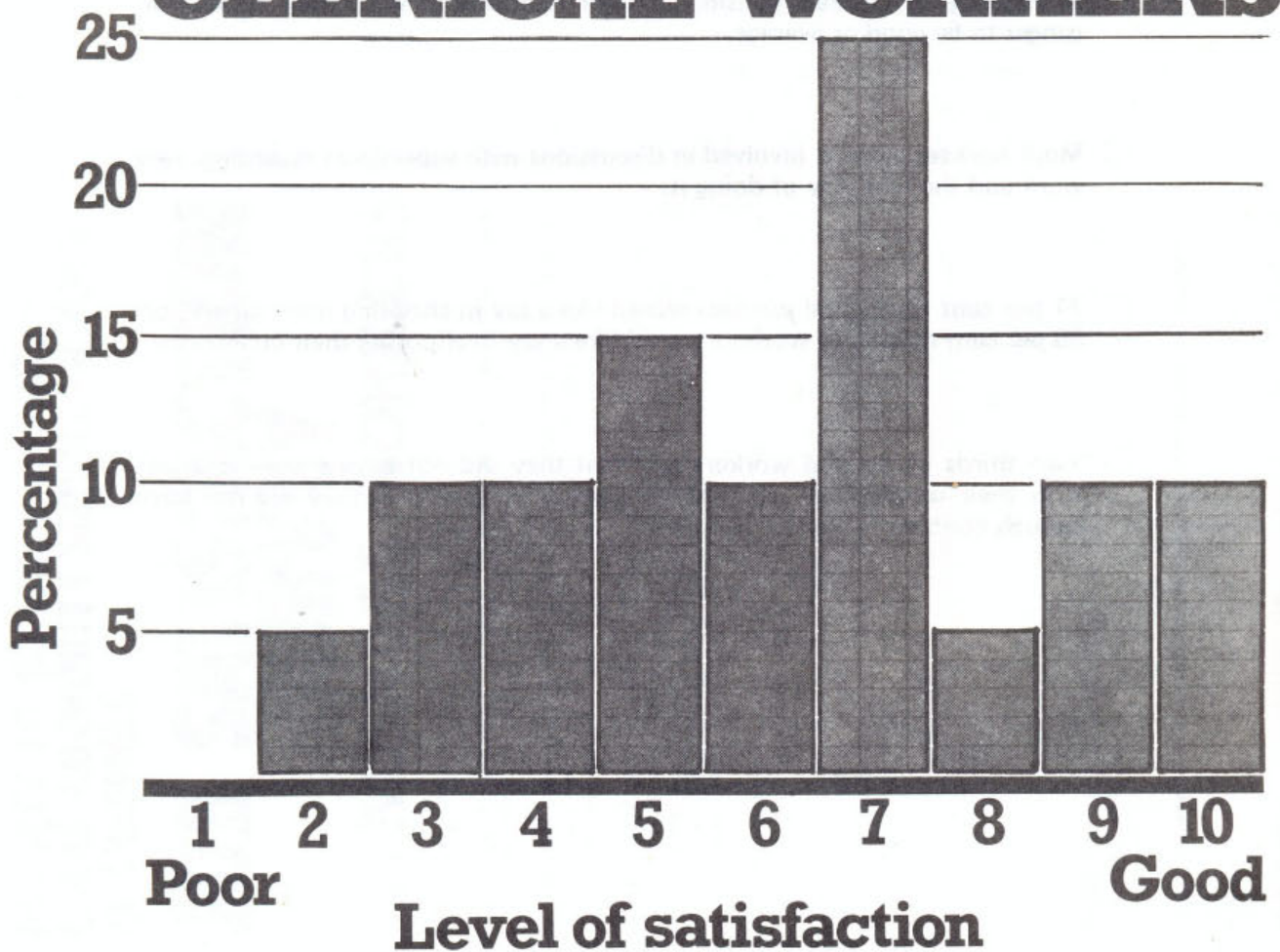
## MAIN POINTS FROM THE SURVEY

- 73 per cent of manual workers and 80 per cent of clerical workers want more control over how they carry out their work.
- Four out of every five workers want responsibility for their own area of work and to be trained to be more skilled at their job.
- Workers presently have a widely varying level of job satisfaction and have a dismal view of their promotion chances.
- 45 per cent of manual workers and 61 per cent of clerical workers reported that members of their section or team were not treated equally. 60 per cent of those on the bonus system said that jobs were not shared out equally.
- A majority of workers considered their relationship with their supervisor-ganger to be good or average.
- Most workers are not involved in discussions with supervisors regarding their work and the best way of doing it.
- 71 per cent of manual workers would like a say in choosing their supervisor. 85 per cent of clerical workers would like a say in choosing their colleagues.
- Two thirds of manual workers said that they did not have enough contact with their union. Only a quarter of clerical workers said they did not have enough contact.

# MANUAL WORKERS



# CLERICAL WORKERS



# Results of the survey

## Job Satisfaction Survey

We decided to do a one in six survey of manual and clerical workers in the Parks and Recreation Department. A complete survey would not have been possible given the time and resources committed to the project. The Parks and Recreation Department kindly co-operated by supplying us with a computer print-out of 148 randomly selected manual workers' names and addresses.

We discussed the various questions in detail in drawing up the survey.

A survey form together with a short description about the project and SCAT's work was sent to 148 manual workers together with a stamped addressed envelope to return the completed survey. 66 forms were returned representing a 46 per cent response after taking into account four survey forms returned because of changed addresses. Thirty survey forms were distributed to clerical workers by their shop steward. We received 20 returned forms representing a 66 per cent response rate.

We gave an undertaking that the questionnaires would be strictly confidential and would be destroyed once they were analysed. We also promised to produce a leaflet summarising the results. A copy of both questionnaires are reproduced at the end of this report.

## Job Satisfaction

Three quarters of clerical and manual workers want to have more control over how they carry out their work. The actual percentages were 73 per cent of manual workers and 80 per cent of clerical workers. A slightly larger percentage (76 per cent) of manual workers want to have their own area of work for which they would be responsible if they were given the right training and encouragement. Four out of five manual workers would like the opportunity to go on more courses to be more skilled at their work. Eighty-five per cent of clerical workers would like to take on more responsible work.

There were certain similarities in the level of job satisfaction. Workers were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (very good) how much satisfaction they get from their job. The chart shows that the level of job satisfaction peaks at level 7 for

clerical and manual workers. In fact 58 per cent of manual workers indicated a level of job satisfaction between 7-10 inclusive. However, two out of five clerical workers clearly got a low level of job satisfaction ie. between levels 1-5. The comparative figure for manual workers was 26 per cent. Workers had a dismal view of their chances for promotion. 42 per cent of manual workers and 50 per cent of clerical workers thought their chances were bad. Only 8 per cent of manuals and not one clerical worker considered their chances were good.

## Reasons for lack of job satisfaction

'Lack of involvement in planning future work (never asked opinion) because sometimes the workforce has a better insight into some of the jobs we undertake.'

'Being constantly taken off one job to do other minor jobs thus breaking concentration and method of working.'

'Bonus scheme leads to many jobs being rushed in order to earn a high bonus. Consequently the quality of the work is never what it should be.'

'No consistency by management, no involvement in general overall plans and decisions (what, why, when). No continuity — jobs changed at no notice.'

'Poor bonus system and antiquated work methods, also lack of proper materials and tools eg. aged and worn-out mowing machines and machines which are not repaired from one mowing season to the next.'

'Management should come out and look at the standard of work instead of looking at good bonuses on work sheets.'

'Top management do not have the interest or sometimes the practical know-how.'

'Low basic wage, poor bonus in winter when the conditions are bad, and we do the worst kind of jobs (eg. drainage).'

'The job is boring and run by idiots.'

'Doing tedious jobs like channelling for long periods of time, and just being on the same job too long. Also long periods of working on your own, it can get depressing.'

'Boredom.'

'Management not good enough.'

'Not enough complex work to do.'

'Lack of variation and challenge.'

'No involvement — just told what to do.'



These are just a few of the comments given in response to a question in the survey in which workers were asked to give the reason for the lack of job satisfaction. In addition, there were many criticisms of management for being inadequate, lacking interest in the quality of work, and for not involving the workforce in discussing how work should be carried out. Poor wages, the bonus system and having to rush or leave jobs unfinished were also cited several times as causes of job dissatisfaction. A few said that the destruction of their work by vandals contributed to the lack of satisfaction. Three workers cited the attitude of other workers as having a negative effect on their job.



#### Improving the relationship between workers, supervisors and management

We asked workers 'how do you think the relationship between the workers, supervisors and management could be improved' and gave them space to write their comments. 53 per cent of both manual and clerical workers responded. Here are some of the responses:

'If managers treated people under them with more respect it would help enormously.'

'More apparent appreciation of the work people do. More resources as a whole to get away from the way that everything is done on a panic basis.'

'By actual discussion with the workforce itself not only through union reps because we get information second hand. Why can't a group of ordinary union members go to meetings with management at Meersbrook?'

'By the management having closer liaison with all the workers. Management should keep all the workforce more informed in all aspects that could affect them (cutbacks, bonus, health and safety etc.).'

'4 meetings per year to talk of changes in practice.'

'More contact between management and workers — more discussion between supervisors and workers. Workers in the team ought to be treated equally — each worker feeling he (she) has something to contribute. Each worker could be given his (her)

own area of work for which he (she) was responsible or the various tasks could be carried out on a strict rota basis. This would stimulate greater interest in the job, give the worker a greater sense of personal commitment and allow the team to operate in a more effective and efficient manner.'

'The relationship between workers could be improved by telling the workforce what is going to happen in the future and what is going to happen at that time.'

'More contact and discussion with higher management to involve the workforce more in planning.'

'More open information from and access to management. More active and involved union/worker committees.'

'By judging the workers individually and not as group. Management should always consider the job by the means of tools, time, and conditions in which the job was carried out, eg inadequate tools, making do, therefore not a perfect job.'

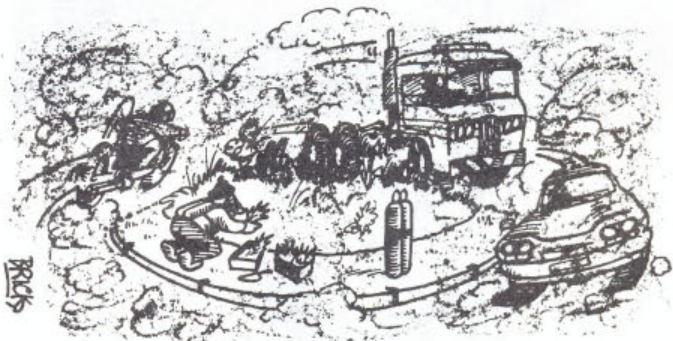
'Unless management start to pick men (women) for gangers who know what they are doing instead of moronic idiots there will be no change.'

#### Relationship with supervisors

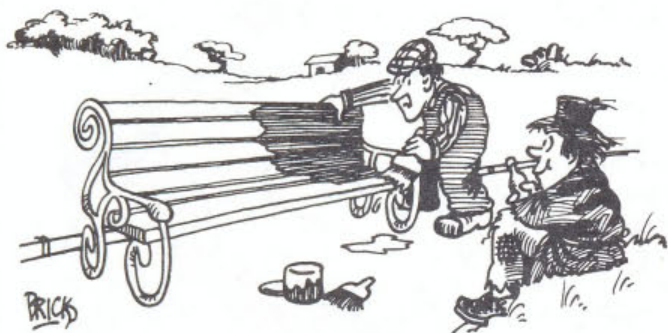
Nearly half of the manual workers consider they have a good working relationship with their supervisor/ganger. 36 per cent consider their working relationship is average. 17 per cent thought it was poor. Only a third of clerical workers have a good relationship but all but 5 per cent of the remainder classify the relationship as average.

Forty five per cent of manual workers and 61 per cent of clerical workers report that all members of their section or gang are not treated equally.

The level of job satisfaction and the relationship with management also depends on whether supervisors discuss with workers the work required to be done and the best ways of achieving this. A minority of workers said this happened regularly — 34 per cent of manual workers and 20 per cent of clerical workers. One in five manual workers and two out of five clerical workers had no such discussions with supervisors. The remainder said that supervisors sometimes discussed with them the work tasks. We also asked clerical workers whether their section head listened to any of their ideas about how the work should be carried out — 35 per cent said yes,







35 per cent said sometimes, and 30 per cent said they did not. 71 per cent of manual workers would like a say in choosing their supervisor and 85 per cent of clerical workers would like a say in choosing their colleagues.

**The bonus system**

For those manual workers on the bonus system 60 per cent said that jobs were not shared out fairly to give every member of their section or gang an equal chance to earn good bonus. Only 36 per cent of manual workers considered that supervisors dealt with bonus complaints satisfactorily. 28 per cent were clearly dissatisfied and the remainder said that complaints were sometimes dealt with adequately. One in five workers said that their supervisor had altered their bonus sheet without their permission. 27 per cent of workers said that their supervisor had prevented them from booking a job they were entitled to book.

**Safety**

Thirty eight per cent of manual workers said that if they refused to do an unsafe job or use unsafe machinery, they thought they would be victimised eg. given a bad job. A large majority (86 per cent) said they received all the necessary protective clothing and special gear when requested. 74 per cent of clerical workers are happy with safety rules and regulations in the office. However 47 per cent said they did not know enough about the safety rules covering VDUs and word processors. Just under half the manual workers said that all staff do not get a copy of the relevant Code of Practice (the agreed safe method of working) relating to their workplace.

**Contact with trade unions**

Two thirds of manual workers said that they did not have enough contact with their union. In contrast only 25 per cent of clerical workers said they did not have enough contact. We then asked whether they had ever considered electing a shop steward or safety rep in their section. 58 per cent of manual workers and 53 per cent of clerical workers said that they had not.

**Other issues for clerical workers**

Just over a third (39 per cent) of clerical workers said that there were unnecessary restrictions on time off. Only two out of five clerical workers have the opportunity to do overtime. Most were paid for overtime rather than having time off in lieu.

There was strong dissatisfaction in dealing with grievances. 62 per cent said that grievances were not dealt with quickly and 64 per cent said they were not sorted out satisfactorily.

**Other issues**

Whilst half of manual and clerical workers said that all departmental circulars were brought to their attention, many workers consider that they do not get what information is circulated. 17 per cent of manual workers and 30 per cent of clerical workers said that they didn't see all the circulars. The remainder said they saw circulars occasionally. One in ten manual workers reported that supervisors did sometimes prevent them from leaving their place of work during breakfast/lunch breaks.



**More meaningful discussion**

More than half the responses called for more meaningful discussions between workers and management on both the general policy level and in the actual planning and implementation of specific work. Some believed that changes would only come about as a result of a big shake-up in management. Others called for more equal treatment, more trust and respect from management which would improve the overall effectiveness of the service as well as job satisfaction.

We also asked for any further comments. These are representative examples from some of the responses.

'It took me five years to get a union card despite asking repeatedly. Some of our workers still have no card. Morale is very poor in winter when we are all forced to share the same mobile cabin in freezing conditions, often not helped by the calor gas bottle running out and having to wait hours for another. It is only because we have a good crew that a lot of us still work for recreation, there is a good community spirit amongst us probably because we are all in the same boat together.

The job can only be improved by a better communication between management and workers.

We must see circulars and all relevant communications. Better training and promotion opportunity are needed, but above all a fair wage for a fair week's work.'

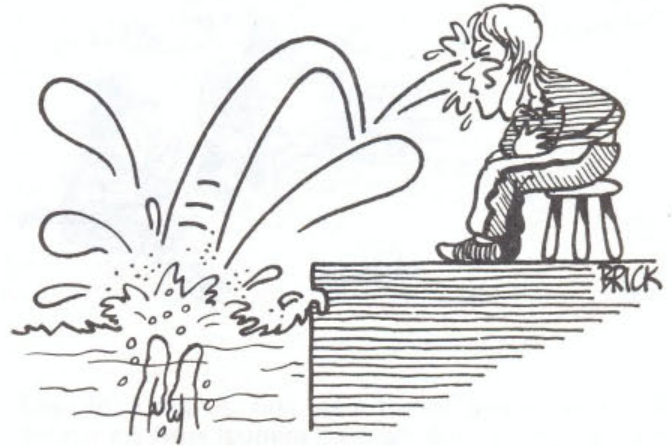
'I think bonus should be stopped and a higher wage paid instead. Then more time could be spent on jobs. It would also cause less argument amongst workers.'

'I believe the supervision of staff would be greatly improved if the supervisors and management knew what they were doing and talking about. They know nothing about gardening. They are the ones who need the training, not us.'

'I feel local authority services in Sheffield could be greatly improved by doing away with the present bonus system, and replacing it with either a fixed bonus rate or an appropriate rise in wage levels (preferable).

Bonus rates are widely variable in SCRD. I myself can expect an average bonus of £25 in summer only, while others in the same department but doing different jobs can earn £50 per week. Obviously such scrambling around for extra money to make a decent wage has a detrimental effect on job quality, but with the bonus being so variable — with some workers standing to lose high bonuses if the system is changed — I can see little hope of agreement between workforce and shop stewards.'

'More contact between management and workers — more discussion between supervisors and workers. Workers in the team ought to be treated equally — each worker feeling he has something to contribute.



Each worker could be given his own area of work for which he was responsible, or the various tasks could be carried out on a strict rota basis. This would stimulate greater interest in the job, give the worker a greater sense of personal commitment and allow the team to operate in a more effective and efficient manner.'

'I have this affliction which they don't like, it's called caring, caring for my machinery, for my workmates, for safety. I once had a bit of a problem to discuss with the Manager. I told him about it, he turned to me and said "I don't give a damn about anything or anybody". He never said a truer word.'

# Recommendations

The issues highlighted in this report require further discussion within the workplace and trade unions. We are close to the end of the second phase of the project and we do not have the time available to discuss proposals in detail. We are therefore recommending a third phase of the project — see recommendation No 1.

1. A trade union rate capping/privatisation campaign or working party should be set up in the department as a matter of urgency. The current group of workers involved in the project should form the basis of this committee. It should be representative of all sections and all unions and should be responsible for:

- \* ensuring that detailed proposals are drawn up and implemented concerning the findings of this report.
- \* discuss the most effective tactics to resist rate capping and statutory tendering.
- \* keep the workforce fully informed of developments and implications by producing and distributing leaflets, posters and meetings.
- \* try to involve as many workers as possible who are not already active in these campaigns.

2. All supervisors to be given full training in industrial relations and motivation. They should be trained to give and share information and to discuss individual pieces of work and their relationship in wider plans. This means that supervisors/gangers should take time to discuss and explain and ask for suggestions and ideas. The work is likely to be completed more effectively with workers achieving a higher level of job satisfaction.

3. Whilst we recognise that the training programme has been greatly improved recently we recommend that it is further reviewed and expanded given the very high level of demand for more training expressed in the survey. We also recommend that courses should encourage interest in horticulture. Many of us work in a job which is Britain's biggest hobby — yet training courses have little content on the subject.

4. Workers should be given much more information about the policies and future plans of the department. This could be through regular leaflets/newsletter and meetings at the workplace (at least quarterly). These should be in addition to existing arrangements. Trade union representatives should be present at all meetings.

5. The trade unions should organise a recruitment drive to ensure that all workers are union members, encourage more shop stewards and safety reps, and

set up a system of information reps to receive and distribute information to the workforce. This is particularly important in sections where there are relatively few stewards. This is increasingly vital in a period when trade union organisation needs to be strengthened and rapidly changing information on cuts, rate capping and privatisation relayed to the workforce as quickly as possible.

6. The proposed re-organisation of Parks and Recreation includes splitting the department into quadrants. Each quadrant will have 'Community Officers' working with local communities in assessing and developing the provision of recreation. We propose that the trade unions are an integral part of this important initiative in order to establish communications with the users of our services, to develop two-way cooperation in the expansion of services and to be more able to defend these services.

7. Under the reorganisation proposals management will be committed to delegating decision-making to a lower level. Sectional budgets will be introduced with local supervisors deciding on spending. We demand shopfloor involvement in decision making



and to have an input into financial decisions taken within the quadrant because they will ultimately affect all the workforce.

8. Given the general level of complaints about the effect of the bonus system on the quality of work and its allocation, we strongly recommend that the consolidation of bonus be implemented as soon as possible. Job satisfaction will be greatly improved when the bonus system is scrapped and replaced with a genuine improvement in wages.

# Copy of questionnaires

## PROJECT TO DEFEND & IMPROVE LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES & JOBS IN SHEFFIELD

# JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY

## IMPORTANT MANUAL WORKERS

Please read these notes

1. This questionnaire is CONFIDENTIAL. Only add your name and workplace if you wish.
2. Your name was obtained from the Parks and Recreation Dept's listing of all personnel in the department by the computer taking every 6th name to give us a 1 in 6 sample.
3. The survey is being carried out by a group of Parks and Recreation shop stewards and workers involved in the Project to Improve and Defend Local Authority Services and Jobs in Sheffield. The group is advised and supported by Services to Community Action and Trade Unions (SCAT).
4. Questionnaires will not be seen by anyone else than this group. No managers or supervisors are involved.
5. After the questionnaires have been analysed they will be destroyed. We intend to produce a leaflet and report summarising the results and draw up a list of demands and resolutions for further action.
6. You don't have to answer all the questions - if there are some you don't want to fill in or if some are not relevant, just leave them blank.

PLEASE FILL IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE using the stamped addressed envelope.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT SURVEY: It will greatly assist us to counter any threats to jobs and services from spending cuts, rate capping and privatisation. Your co-operation will be very much appreciated.

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1. Is your working relationship with your supervisor/ganger
 

<input type="checkbox"/>	good
<input type="checkbox"/>	average
<input type="checkbox"/>	poor
2. Are all members of your section/team or gang treated equally?
 

<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	no

### JOB SATISFACTION

3. Does your supervisor discuss the work required to be done and the best ways of achieving this with you?
 

<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	no
<input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes

5. Would you like more control over how you carry out your work?
 

<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	no

6. How much satisfaction do you get from your job? Please indicate on a scale 1 to 10 by circling the appropriate number

- |    |             |
|----|-------------|
| 1  | (poor)      |
| 2  |             |
| 3  |             |
| 4  |             |
| 5  |             |
| 6  |             |
| 7  |             |
| 8  |             |
| 9  |             |
| 10 | (very good) |

7. What in your view is the reason for any lack of job satisfaction?
 

.....

.....

.....

8. If you had the right training and encouragement would you like to have your own area of work for which you were responsible?

yes  
 no

9. Would you like the opportunity to go on more courses to be more skilled at your work?

yes  
 no

BONUS

10. Are jobs shared our fairly to give every member of your section, team or gang equal chance to earn good bonus?

yes  
 no

11. Does your supervisor deal satisfactorily with any bonus complaints, for example does he/she contact work study when you request a job to be timed/retimed?

yes  
 no  
 sometimes

12. Has your supervisor ever altered your bonus sheet without your permission?

yes  
 no

13. Has your supervisor ever prevented you from booking a job you were entitled to book?

yes  
 no

SAFETY/TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

14. If you refuse to do an unsafe job or use unsafe machinery, do you think you would be victimised; ie. given a bad job?

yes  
 no

15. Does your supervisor provide you with all the protective clothing necessary and when you ask for it, ie. boots, goggles, gloves, visors, masks, spraying suits, ear protectors?

yes  
 no

16. Do you think you have enough contact with your union?

yes  
 no

17. Have you ever considered electing a shop steward or safety rep at your workplace?

yes  
 no

18. Do all staff get a copy of the relevant Code of Practice (the agreed safe method of working) relating to your workplace?

yes  
 no

GENERAL

19. Are all departmental circulars brought to your attention?

yes  
 no  
 sometimes

20. Does your supervisor ever prevent you leaving your place of work during breakfast/lunch breaks?

yes  
 no

21. Would you like a say in choosing your supervisor?

yes  
 no

22. What do you feel your chances of promotion are?

<input type="checkbox"/>	good
<input type="checkbox"/>	bad
<input type="checkbox"/>	fair

23. How do you think the relationship between the workers, supervisors and management could be improved?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Please add any further comments if you wish.

# PROJECT TO DEFEND & IMPROVE LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES & JOBS IN SHEFFIELD

# JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY

## IMPORTANT CLERICAL WORKERS

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THIS IS AN IMPORTANT SURVEY; It will greatly assist us to counter any threats to jobs and services from spending cuts, rate capping and privatisation. Your co-operation will be very much appreciated.

---

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1. Is your working relationship with your supervisor or next line management  
 good  
 average  
 poor
2. Are all members of your section/team treated equally?  
 yes  
 no
3. Do you have the opportunity to do overtime?  
 yes  
 no
4. Are you paid for this or do you have time off in lieu?  
 paid  
 time off

### JOB SATISFACTION

5. Does your section head discuss the work required to be done and the best ways of achieving this with you?  
 yes  
 no  
 sometimes
6. Does your section head listen to any of your ideas about how the work should be carried out?  
 yes  
 no  
 sometimes
7. Would you like more control over how you carry out your work?  
 yes  
 no

GENERAL

8. If you had the right training and encouragement would you like to take on more responsible work?

yes  
 no

9. How much satisfaction do you get from your job? Please indicate on a scale 1 to 10 by circling the appropriate number

- 1 (poor)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 (very good)

10. What in your view is the reason for any lack of job satisfaction?  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. Are you happy with safety rules and regulations in the office?

yes  
 no

12. Do you know enough about the safety rules covering VDUs and word processors?

yes  
 no

13. Do you think you have enough contact with your union?

yes  
 no

14. Have you ever considered electing a shop steward or safety rep in your section?

yes  
 no

15. Are all departmental circulars brought to your attention?

yes  
 no  
 sometimes

16. Do you think there are unnecessary restrictions on time off?

yes

17. Are grievances sorted out

a) satisfactorily  yes  no

b) quickly  yes  no

18. Would you like a say in choosing your colleagues?

yes  
 no

19. What do you feel your chances of promotion are?

good  
 bad  
 fair

20. How do you think the relationship between staff and management could be improved?

.....  
.....  
.....

Please add any further comments if you wish.