

BRITISH POST OFFICE STRIKES

By A.E.TEIDEMAN from information supplied by Ivan Trinder and extract from LINN'S

Over a period of 8 years since the 1988 strike, the threat of privatisation of the British P.O has been forever present. This threat was first suggested by Sir Keith Joseph in the early 1980's, but was not proceeded with. The P.O. settled for allowing carriers to deliver mail but the minimum charge had to be one Pound per item. This ruled out ordinary letter delivery, on cost alone, but as inflation ate into the value of the Pound, this charge by 1996 seemed not to be out of the question.

THE COLCHESTER & DISTRICT MESSENGER SERVICE

In order to be prepared for action should the occasion arise, the C & DMS envisaged that deliveries could be operated as in the 1971 strike. The Stamps printed were in the 'No Value Indicated' category, as charges could not be decided until the stamps were needed.

THE 1996 SERIES OF P.O. STRIKES

In 'The Times' of Friday June 14th, Phillip Bassett reported that a one-day strike would be called for Friday June 21st. This was duly called and mail boxes were sealed for that day. This was followed by another strike when work ceased on Thursday June 27th at 12 noon, the boxes were reopened at 1 noon on Friday June 28th.

'The Times' on Saturday July 18th reported that Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade had given notice that he would suspend the P.O.'s monopoly and allow carriers to carry and deliver letters for less than the one Pound previously stipulated. The next strike took place on July 18th and 19th. On the 19th the Prime Minister Issued an ultimatum to the P.O. workers, that if another 36hr strike took place as was planned, he would waive the P.O.'s monopoly for an experimental period of one month. This at first did not seem necessary as a settlement was agreed on, but it did not last long!!

Linn's August 10th issue stated:

British monopoly ends

Royal Mail (the British Post Office) will suspend its monopoly on delivering letters for one month in response to four recent postal workers' strikes, according to a report from Reuters, a British news agency.

One report began: "The government said on Monday (Aug. 5), it would suspend at midnight the letter monopoly enjoyed by Britain's Royal Mail since it issued the world's first postage stamp in 1840, after a postal union called five new strikes."

Ian Lang, Great Britain's Trade and Industry secretary, reported that private companies will be able to compete with Royal Mail for mail deliveries costing less than 1 pound (US\$1.54).

If the strikes by the Communication Workers Union continue, the suspension may be extended for an additional three months.

According to Reuters, Royal Mail previously suspended its postal monopoly in 1971, also because of strikes.

Colchester, Britain's
 Oldest Recorded Town
 COLCHESTER FOR CULTURE

ROYAL MAIL

24 HOURS

36 HOURS

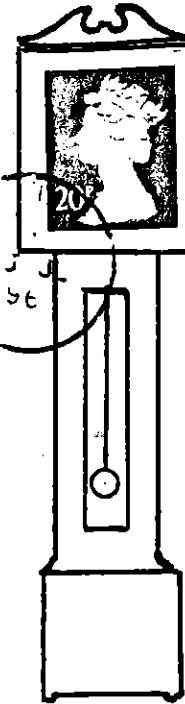
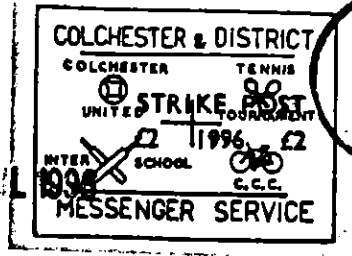
48 HOURS

1 MONTH

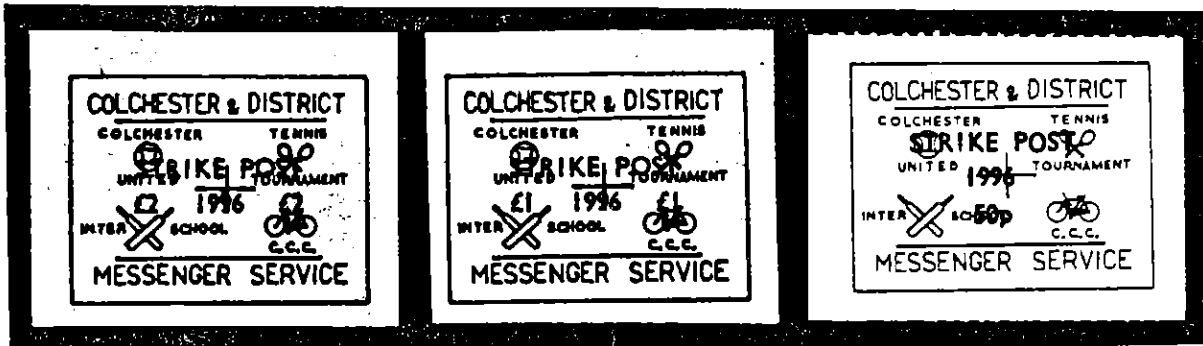
STRIKES

WE MUST HAVE JAW JAW
 AND NOT WAR WAR

ENOUGH TO MAKE SIR ROWLAND WEEP



THE CLOCK HAS STOPPED
 & SO HAS ROYAL MAIL



The C & DMS stamps and envelopes were surcharged as follows:

1. (50p) - Gold, overprinted STRIKE POST 50p in violet. (320)
2. (PS1) - Red on yellow paper, overprinted STRIKE POST PS1 in dark blue. (280)
3. (PS2) - Black on green paper, overprinted STRIKE POST PS2 in orange. (360)
4. (PS1) - Postal stationery envelope, Red, overprinted STRIKE POST PS1 in dark blue. (50)

Illustrated envelopes (example above, postmarked 19 Jul 1996) were produced on a strike theme (50), bearing a PS2 strike stamp and the new 20p second class stamp in addition. These covers were posted at various MLO's. In addition, 150 were stamped with strike stamps only.