

# Jobs middle men move in

by Steve Addison

THE number of industrial problems referred from Sussex to the Government's employment troubleshooter, ACAS, rose by about a third in 1979.

Increased acceptance of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, rather than growing industrial unrest is the reason for the increase.

Advisory cases rose from 129 to 180 over the year; individual conciliation cases from 515 to 638; and collective conciliation from 17 to 26.

The figures are published in the annual report of ACAS.

## Building up

"Sussex has a lot of small employers who make frequent inquiries which we can usually settle quite quickly," said a spokesman.

"The fact that they come to us more shows we are building up a good relationship with them.

"We were determined in 1979 to make our advisory service a priority to try and improve relations between workers and management, even when there was no dispute.

Advisory work sometimes followed ACAS's involvement in conciliation where a failing was recognised in the disputes procedure.

## In depth

In other cases it resulted in routine visits to companies by industrial relations officers.

Almost all the service's in-depth advisory work had been in firms where there were worker representatives.

Its other main areas of work involved collective conciliation between groups of workers and their employers and individual conciliation.

In individual cases ACAS tries to settle matters before they reach the stage of an industrial tribunal hearing.

"In the Surrey, Kent and Sussex region as a whole collective conciliation has been dropping off," said regional director, Jack Butler.

"This is possibly because pay restraints have been removed but the indications are, with unemployment generally rising in the South East, workers are tending to keep their heads down."

## A top Tory pulls out

Mr Ronald Fletcher, a leading member of the controlling Conservative group on Mid Sussex District Council, has resigned.

He says this is because of increasing personal commitments and his work on West Sussex County Council on which he is one of the Haywards Heath representatives.

A by-election will be held in Heath ward of Mid Sussex.

Mr Fletcher has been a district councillor for nine years, having previously served on the former Cuckfield Urban Council.

## Farm fine

Farmer Jeremy Courtney of Crouch's Farm, East Hoathly, was fined £50 at Uckfield Court for selling milk containing penicillin to the Milk Marketing Board.

# A TV fade-out

THE SEASIDE town that was the birthplace of television will see the death of a factory which has helped turn us into a nation of viewers. Next month the doors

of the Hastings ITT factory will shut — the final closedown for the town's biggest industrial employer. It will be the end of an era and all that will be left in the wake of

tearful farewell parties on the shop floor will be a huge empty shell of a building and 570 redundancies. Jeannine Hitchings reports.

## It's the end of ITT Hastings

THE SHOCK decision to close TV assembly makers ITT Consumer Products (UK) Ltd. due to vast technological progress within the in-

dustry, came last September.

Since then the three-storey building in the heart of the Ponswood In-

dustrial Estate at Hastings has slowly been dying.

The 650 workers have been drifting away to transfer to other ITT jobs, start new work altogether or join the

dole queue. Only a handful are left.

The vast assembly workshop, once full of lively chatter and pop music coming over the loudspeakers, is now stark and silent. Benches are empty and machines lie idle.

In the cloakroom only a few overalls hang on the array of once crowded pegs.

Over the past weeks there have been emotional scenes at a string of farewell parties organised in the different departments.

Close workmates have had to say goodbye to their friends and the promise of security to go out into strange new jobs or even face a future filled with uncertainty.

The factory, which occupies 174,000 sq. ft., opened 20 years ago when the TV industry was booming. At one time the number of employees swelled to 1,100, a boon for Hastings which had a bad unemployment problem.

## Capacity

But then technological advances took over and in a few short years the manpower needed to produce exactly the same output was cut by one third.

Over the past year the Hastings ITT branch and two other British production units have been operating well below capacity and a solution had to be found.

Now the Hastings plant and the ITT Kearsley factory, near Bolton, have been given the chop. ITT plans to concentrate the production of colour televisions at its Basildon plant.

At Hastings 570 of the 650-strong workforce, many of them women who worked on the assembly line, have been made redundant. Over 100 have found other jobs and 120 have been offered transfers to Basildon.

The factory management did everything possible to ease the blow.

## Machinery

Special redundancy talks were organised and a fully-staffed Job Centre set up in the factory.

Each day suitable jobs were sent in from the Hastings Job Centre and interviews were arranged for the job hunters. Many workers have managed to find jobs through their exclusive centre.

And now it's just a question of waiting for the winding-up process to be completed.

In a few weeks time the TV industry will fade out in Hastings — the town where inventor John Logie Baird first demonstrated TV following his experiments in 1924.



● HARRY BARFOOT: "It is very sad."

## Problems left on the shop floor

THE CLOSURE of the Hastings factory solved a problem for ITT, but it left the workforce with a host of personal problems.

For them the last few months have been a time of sadness, worry and heart searching.

Some are having to leave the comradeship of the close factory community to start afresh. Others have to decide if they can pull up their Sussex roots and find a new life with ITT in Basildon. Some have no alternative but to sit back and let events run their natural course.

Technical cost estimator Harry Barfoot has been offered a post at Basildon but he is full of indecision.

The change would mean the 51-year-old family man spending four nights a week away from his home in Beaconsfield Road, Hastings, and he says: "I have not decided what to do for the best."

Harry, who represents the

white-collar section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, is critical of the whole affair.

## Quality

"I am very upset and bitter at the thought of so many people virtually being put out on the street because of a management decision.

"The workforce here is wonderful and they have kept up a very good standard of quality right to the end.

"Although there has been a good redundancy package it is very sad to see the place close."

Maintenance worker Alf Carpenter has little choice about his future. He is already 64 and due to retire next year, so his chances of new employment are slight.

"Nobody would employ me now, and even if they did I would not take the job as it would be unfair on the youngsters out of work", says Alf, who lives in Grand Parade.



## We've started ends'

ER John has seen a community break of him.

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ho is 40, will be the Basildon plant responsible for the of materials and control.



● Betty Clark — she runs the factory's Job Centre, but for some the future looks bleak.

## On the market

The factory has been on the market since November and is proving difficult to sell. It has been advertised all over the United Kingdom and abroad by the London-based estate agents Douglas Young & Co. A spokesman explained: "It is a large area and there is not a great demand in Hastings for a building of this size. So far there is no firm offer for a sale." He declined to disclose the asking price.