

# Jobs warning plea from telecoms staff

AN APPEAL for help has been issued to IPMS branches by a group of Home Office telecommunications members who face relocation and privatisation or closure.

DTels – as the former Directorate of Telecommunications is now known – is due to move headquarters from Horseferry House in London to Ruddington near Nottingham in October this year.

The IPMS section is asking for news of PTO, stores or TTO vacancies in other departments, agencies or fringe bodies to which members could transfer.

At the same time the section is warning other technical grades in the Home Office and elsewhere to beware accepting job offers at the new Nottingham site.

DTels is in the throes of a major staff reduction programme that has already seen numbers slashed from 1,241 in 1988 to 711 last December.

Worst of all, it has been given an ultimatum by the Home Office that it must halve its trading losses to £2.2 million by March 1994, and eventually recover all its costs or close down.

“If we do cover our costs management has made clear we will then be privatised,” said John Stokes, section secretary.

“It is a Catch 22 that has left members bitter and demoralised. People who have given all their working lives to the department feel they are being tossed onto the scrapheap.”

In fact staff numbers are still running down and a ceiling of 600 has been set for March 1994. Cuts will therefore continue after the move to Nottingham.

These reductions were only necessary because of the haste with which DTels is being pushed into the marketplace, said Stokes.

DTels has an impressive record of service to police, prisons and fire brigades all over the country but is now losing contracts to large private firms undercutting its prices. Out-stations have started to close and valuable equipment is going to waste.

The privatisation target has been confirmed by ministers' refusal to set up DTels as an agency even though it already operates as a trading fund. Agency status is only intended for bodies deemed unsuitable for privatisation.

The move to Ruddington has been rejected by the great majority of IPMS members who have made their feelings clear by a vote of more than two to one.

Anyone who knows of suitable vacancies in other areas should contact John Stokes at Room 622, Home Office, Horseferry House, Dean Ryle Street, London SW1P 2AW (071 217 8689).