



Press Release

22 December 2004

Father Christmas has the right to strike!

Have you paid your visit to Santa's Grotto this year? Sat on his knee and told him what you want for Christmas? How sad Yuletide would be - how empty the stockings - if Father Christmas got fed up and decided to go on strike!

A file "unwrapped" as part of Archive Awareness Campaign contains the 1969 application for trade union status by the Brotherhood of Father Christmas and Santa Claus Union.

The set of union rules submitted as part of an informal application to the Registry of Friendly Societies includes a clause on the "Spirit" of Santa Claus which states that: "All members of the union must endeavour to bring the spirit of fantasy to bear on each child's visit." A section on "Promise" rules that: "No promises must be made by Father Christmas, unless he intends to keep them himself in reality."

The file, held at The National Archives in Kew, West London, contains correspondence between the Registry, a government organisation and a firm of solicitors acting on behalf of the Brotherhood, also known as the "Claus Union". The application was initially rejected on the grounds that it failed to identify specific benefits available to Father Christmases, elves, gnomes and fairies. The rules also contained repeated use of the word "blah" about which an official wrote, "The expression 'blah', if it exists at all as a word, is completely meaningless". Following amendments however, the application was viewed more favourably and was officially submitted.

In typical trade union tradition the rules go on to say, "No member of this Union may claim to be the sole Father Christmas or Santa Claus. Each must proclaim the Brotherhood of all givers, young and old alike, whether costumed or not, and impress upon his clients that work creates joy." Despite this egalitarian attitude however, a hierarchy is planned within the Brotherhood. The Artistic/ Executive Director of the Brotherhood, to be elected by a majority at an annual meeting, was to be known as "Super-Santa", while the Treasurer's official title was to be "Sterling Santa".

Katie Norgrove, Policy and Development Officer at the National Council on Archives, said "Who would have guessed that hidden in a government file are the rules for a proposed trade union for Father Christmases? The document is a treat to read - especially at this time of year - and demonstrates the many treasures anyone can find in the archives."

This is just one of thousands of documents highlighted for Archive Awareness Campaign which sees 500 events taking place this autumn. To find an Archive Awareness Campaign event near you or to discover more about the UK's archives visit www.archiveawareness.com

Notes to Editors

* For more information about any of the above please contact Lucy Fulton - 020 8392 5237.

* 500 events are taking place across the UK this autumn for Archive Awareness Campaign, which aims to reveal the treasures of the archives. The campaign, run by partners the National Council on Archives, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and The National Archives, is now in its second year.

* For more information about Archive Awareness Campaign please visit www.archiveawareness.com or contact Lucy Fulton, Archive Awareness Campaign Officer at The National Archives Tel: 020 8392 5237 Email: lucy.fulton@nationalarchives.gov.uk

* The National Archives, Kew, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk has one of the largest archival collections in the world, spanning 1000 years of British history, from Domesday Book to newly released government papers. The free museum and research rooms in Kew, west London, are open to the public 6 days a week.