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Wilford Village
Nottingham NG11 7ER

Internet Complaints
NTL
Matrix Court
Swansea Enterprise Park
Swansea SA7 9BB

6 December 2004

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have recently been in correspondence with NTL broadband technical support over the refusal of NTL mail servers to receive email from a mail server of my local church's ISP. After two fruitless calls to the normal technical support line (and long waits on hold), I was finally informed that the reason is that NTL have recently started using the SORBS email blacklist, and that the server trying to send the email is listed on this blacklist. The server is `astatine.webfusion.co.uk`, which has the IP address 212.67.202.168. (I am not the administrator of this server, so there is nothing that I can do to get this server de-listed.)

The reference of the complaint that finally elicited this vital piece of information was ON121182. I spoke to Scott, who insisted that he was unable to take this matter any further and referred me to yourself.

I am the editor of my church's web site, and I am reliant on receiving email sent out by `astatine.webfusion.co.uk`. This denial of service by NTL effectively means that I cannot administer the web site from my NTL account. It furthermore means that other members of the church who obtain their internet access through NTL are blocked from receiving news and other updates from the church by email.

I consider this to be wholly unacceptable. I am paying NTL for a service, and part of that service involves delivering email to my account. For NTL to refuse to deliver such email is to wilfully fail to provide the service that I have paid for. I must emphasize that the email being refused is legitimate – it is not unsolicited.

It seems clear to me that the SORBS blacklist is unsuitable for NTL's use in blocking unsolicited emails. The administrators of SORBS state on their own website (I quote)

By far the most complaints we see occur when people choose to use SORBS databases inappropriately. We endeavour to ensure all information provided is accurate and correct. However the Internet consists of a possible 4,294,967,296 addresses, and it is inevitable that from time to time mistakes will happen. If you cannot afford any mistakes, please do not use this service for blocking. Nevertheless, it can be very effective in a scoring system. (<http://www.dnsbl.au.sorbs.net/>)

Note that SORBS recommend use of their blacklist as part of a *scoring system*. The fact that the NTL servers refuse even to receive incoming mail from SORBS blacklisted addresses shows that NTL are using the SORBS list for a blanket ban, which is not its intended use. Furthermore, NTL appear to be content to tolerate mistaken refusal of emails. I am not.

In view of this, I want you to take immediate action to remove the ban on accepting emails from SORBS blacklisted addresses.

I await your urgent response to this matter. Please write back to me to let me know what you intend to do about this and how long it will take.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Goldby