

Bitter war of words over the United cash crisis

By ROLF NIVEN

EX-CHESHAM United chairman Les Mangan bitterly lashed out at the Isthmian League this weekend, accusing them of accelerating the club's present desperate cash crisis.

The Division I outfit will fold unless at least £20,000 is found before March 2 — a situation caused primarily by the disastrous blaze in May, 1983, which gutted The Meadow's stand.

Other factors have pushed Chesham deeper into trouble, not least, according to Mangan, the awkwardness shown by the Isthmian League hierarchy when approached for help.

"We had absolutely no aid from them whatever," blazed Mangan, who stepped down as chairman 12 days ago.

"They stuck rigidly to the rules when other Leagues would have helped

their struggling members.

"Because of the fire and the predicament at the club we approached the Isthmian League to try and get as many away games at the start of last season as possible."

"Instead, in their wisdom, they gave us 10 home fixtures in our opening 13 matches.

"And, as we were unable to play home games on our own pitch, we lost vital revenue because of it.

"There was no reason why they couldn't have helped us out," added Mangan who stressed that he was now talking as a supporter and not an official.

"I don't want to jeopardise the club's possible future in the League," he added hastily.

"The Isthmian committee have in the past taken exception to fair criticism levelled at them by Ches-



A flashback to the Meadow fire which started Chesham's nightmare.

ham."

Isthmian League secretary Nick Robinson commented: "I don't think that is fair criticism. We have 84 clubs in membership and we try to treat everyone the same.

"Yes we stuck to the rules but that is what they are there for.

"There were a lot of unpleasant telephone calls between us and the club when they were struggling to play matches.

"The relationship between us has been rather strained in the past.

"But it would be a great pity if Chesham was to close because we are still happy to have them as members."

But the reality is that United are in dire danger of collapsing, ending a proud 67 year history.

The fire which destroyed the main stand, boardroom and changing facilities sparked off a chain of problems for the committee.

Work started on rebuilding the stand at a cost of £100,000.

"Unfortunately the insurance money was very slow in reaching us while at the same time interest was building up on the bank loan needed to fund the new stand," pointed out Mangan.

"Because we were forced to hire other grounds for our home matches there was no gate or bar revenue coming in at all. The lottery scheme had also been lost."

The United committee realised back in September 1984 that the club was facing a possible

catastrophe, but only revealed their predicament to the public last Tuesday — five days after Mangan's resignation.

"It looks as though the club and I fell out, but I can assure you that was not the case," the ex-chairman said firmly.

It is ironic that Chesham face closure during one of its most successful seasons ever.

Under the guidance of player-manager Pat Morrissey, United are in contention for the Division I championship.

Morrissey and his men have agreed unanimously to carry on playing and training without wages until the end of the month.

"We will stick by Chesham until this is sorted out," commented the Chesham boss.