

Women workers push for pay equity

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The path out of inequality for women, (not just on the issue of pay equity), lies not in investing their hopes in tired schemes of voting for one government or another. A better option in the longer term lies in empowering themselves by working with each other and other sections of the working class in their communities and workplaces, to change the entire system that creates structural, systemic economic inequality in the first place. This will not solve all their problems, but it has to be a key component in any struggle for women to be truly free.

For more info:

Council of Trade Unions Pay Equity Campaign
<http://union.org.nz/payequity>

The Hand Mirror Blog
<http://thehandmirror.blogspot.com/search/label/Pay%20equity>

What is AWSM?

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism.

We are made up of revolutionary class-struggle anarchists from across Aotearoa / New Zealand. For now, we are a small organisation with local branches in Auckland and Wellington and members in a few other centres.

As class struggle anarchists our priority is active involvement in workplace struggles and industrial action as well as community based campaigns in our neighbourhoods. We are currently involved in the struggles against residential water metering in Wellington, the 90 Day "Hire & Fire" Act nationally, strike support and more.

We publish a monthly newsheet (which you're reading right now!) and a less frequent but more in-depth theoretical magazine as well.

To be a member of AWSM, you must agree with our Aims & Principles (available on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>), and be involved in the life and activity of the group. If you're interested in joining or just finding out a bit more about us, email or write to us via the contact details at the bottom of this page.



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Subscribers will be sent .pdf copies of Solidarity each month, along with other publications produced by AWSM and occasional information - we promise we won't spam you with a ton of useless stuff though! The electronic copy is identical to the print version.

Or, you can subscribe to the print edition to receive a copy of Solidarity in the post. \$8 for 12 issues. Mail a cheque to our PO Box listed below, or contact us to organise an alternative method of payment.

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Women workers push for pay equity

On June 30th over 300 unionists and supporters braved cold conditions to rally outside parliament in Wellington, in support of pay equity for women. Their banners and placards showed representation at the protest by Nurses, Railways workers, teaching support staff, fast food workers, public sector employees and others.

Despite being the first country to give women the vote and decades of subsequent legislation, women here as elsewhere around the world, continue to find themselves behind men in their socio-economic conditions. One sign of this, is official statistics showing that on average women in this country earn 12% less than men. Many women work in sectors characterised by precarious

employment conditions, move in and out of the workforce to a greater degree than men and perform a lot of valuable unpaid work such as raising children. The raw figures therefore understate the extent to which their labour is undervalued both in real terms and pure capitalistic economic measurements.

The centre-right National Party government has shown itself at a loss in dealing with the current economic recession. It has done little beyond a 'jobs summit' stunt to share ideas amongst employers and has recently expressed the intention of forcing unemployed beneficiaries into training with McDonalds fast foods stores. It has also announced the abolition of the pay equity unit of the Ministry of Labour and the loss of jobs in the Ministry for Social Development. These combined measures strongly indicate that women can expect no improvement in conditions any time soon either in

terms of economic change or the nature of governmental frameworks.



While attendees at the rally listened to parliamentarians from the now opposition Greens and Labour Party, there is scant reason to put their hopes in these parties as saviours. During 9 years in office during the 1990s-2000's Labour did nothing beyond modifying the worst excesses of previous neo-liberal governments (including Labour administrations in the 1980's which put into place vicious privatisation measures that established the present elite economic consensus) while continuing to push similar overall policies itself.

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Rob Fyfe

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Cleaners & Swine Flu



Hikoi

Workers on the flu front line: Fight for respect!

As swine flu is moving through the country's workplaces, a timely reminder is coming from those who are expected to clean up the mess. The Wellington Police College has already had a significant outbreak. Phyllis Puia a supervisor at the Police College says she and her fellow cleaners despite being given safety equipment all "have butterflies in our stomachs when we are told to go in and clean affected areas."

But the problem cuts deeper as she adds "Cleaning is a hard job with demands to do more work in shorter and shorter times. We hope as cleaners this time people realise cleaning is about quality. Doing a

good job, a quality job, not just about making a place 'look' clean."

New Zealand commercial cleaners in the Service and Food Workers Union are currently in



negotiations to push their wages up from close to the minimum wage to

\$14.62 an hour. This figure has already been fought and won by their fellow union members in public hospitals.

Their struggle is not just for better wages, but for genuine respect for the work they do. They are caught between contractors who strangle pay rates in order to compete for cleaning contracts, building managers who wash their hands of it, and tenants who are often unaware of the situation.

If you work in a building which is cleaned, ask the building manager how much the cleaners are paid, and make it clear that you expect the people responsible for hygiene in your office to be paid a decent living wage.

Meet the greedy: Rob Fyfe, Air NZ CEO

If you worked at the same job as your colleagues but found yourself being paid 26% less than other workers doing exactly the same job, would you be hacked off and ready to take industrial action to remedy this?

That scenario is exactly the position Zeal 320 flight attendants find themselves in. The Zeal crew, who work mainly on Air NZ Trans-Tasman and Pacific flights, are trying to gain pay parity with their colleagues who do exactly the same job but are employed directly by Air NZ. Yet Air NZ continue to stall and deny Zeal 320 workers pay parity and natural justice while their boss Rob Fyfe just gets richer.

Fyfe, Chief Executive of Air NZ has awarded himself a staggering pay rise of over \$1.5 Million dollars a year. That's a 93% pay rise from \$1.61

million to \$3.1 Million per year, which works out at an amazing \$30,000 a week increase!

Recently, Fyfe announced a pay freeze for Air NZ staff earning over \$80,000 a year. Staff earning less



than this will have any pay increases capped at below inflation.

Fyfe is hardly doing it tough. I cannot imagine he worries about whether he can afford an extra 2 litre

container of milk and an extra loaf of bread when he does the weekly shopping. Mind you, on his present salary, I can not quite imagine Rob at Pak n Save saving a few dollars packing his own groceries anyway, can you?

Now Fyfe was obviously not exactly struggling week to week. Making \$1,610,000 prior to his pay rise, yet with a recession well on its way he grants himself a pay rise of over 93%, freezes salaries and minimizes pay increases for his staff and denies the Zeal 320 staff pay parity.

For more information about the Zeal 320 staff's campaign, see

<http://epmu.org.nz/what-it-s-about/> or watch a video interview with two Zeal staff members at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wZd-cPwFKI>

Super city hikoi in Auckland

On 25th May over 7,000 predominantly Maori marchers took part in a well organised and boisterous hikoi on the streets of Auckland. The protest opposed government plans to amalgamate existing multiple local councils into a single 'Super-City' administration without allocated representation for Tangata Whenua.

The hikoi saw four separate streams of people converge and march along Queen Street in a single torrent behind a lead banner saying 'No Super City Without Us'. This slogan and subsequent speeches at the end of the march from the likes of Minister of Maori Affairs Pita Sharples gave the impression that since the Super City is a done deal, Maori should try to get what they can from it and that this will amount to something. While Sharples received audible support for his hope that he could influence the



government, it seemed he was lamely trying to justify the compromises the Maori Party have already made. In addition his speech unintentionally underlined the fact that while the tail is wagging the dog, that tail is white, not brown.

The real authority lies with Rodney Hide and his business friendly cronies, who have made it clear they see Maori representation as the unjustified 'special pleading' of a minority, rather than recognition of mana whenua status for Maori. Even if some tagged representation was forthcoming, it is by no means obvious that flaxroots, working class Maori would see any great benefits from it. While the Maori elite might manage a few scraps for themselves in such a situation, the imposition

of a business model and greater unelected influence on the council by businesses means the structure of things would rule out real gains at the bottom anyway.

Fortunately despite the lead banner, there was a cross section of people on the hikoi with contrary views. These included working-class Maori, members of

the Pasifika communities, pakeha and others opposed to the Super City in itself. It is through the building of such cross-community coalitions and actions that any genuine improvements will be found in the future. In the meantime, the struggle for real democracy continues.

Photos courtesy of Resistance Photography
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/12492550@N03/sets/>

