

The bad days have begun: Job cuts and a partial wage freeze

Continued from page 1...

ridiculous salaries, and get their kicks out of subjecting workers to stupid, irrelevant and plain crazy management philosophies. The time when government work was cruisy and well-paid was long ago. Sure, it's better paid and less menial work than flipping burgers, but you're still exploited – even if you wear a white collar.

Partnership with bosses does not work. Struggle against them does. And heaps of government workers agree, and dislike the PSA for not doing much at all. Some are, rumour has it, starting to take direct action on the job, without official blessing from the PSA. We hear that workers are going home once their 40 hours are up regardless of whether they have met their targets and workloads, leaving managers fuming. Also, in protest against the wage freeze, they are creating work for managers through putting in silly requests. There are rumours that some are working to rule. Given this anger from below, it will be interesting to see how the PSA attempts to avoid going on strike this year. Let's hope the workers can outmanoeuvre 'their' union.

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.



Subscriptions

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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.

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The 'deep recession' (depression) is starting to bite, and it will get much worse. Unemployment is forecast to rise to 8% next year (or 180,000 people). Because the dole is set so pitifully low, heaps of people are going onto benefits that pay a wee bit more. Now there are almost as many sickness beneficiaries as there are people on the dole. All in all, there are now 310,000 beneficiaries, up from 258,000 last year.

The people who seem to be disproportionately hit with unemployment are low-paid workers, such as Maori and Pacific people. But another section of the working class that's getting thwacked is government workers. Government razor gangs have been going through departmental budgets cutting jobs all over the show. As a result, over 2000 government workers up and down the country have lost their jobs this year. It's not just Wellington that is getting hit. For example, the entire offices of the Tertiary Education Commission in Christchurch and Rotorua have been shut. These cuts are just a beginning: the chief Treasury ideologue has

announced they are going for a much leaner, meaner state (again), with large scale privatisation (again) and contracting out. Anyone up for

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revisiting the cruel savageries of the 1980s and early 1990s again? Benefit cuts perhaps?

The government has also begun to enforce its promised wage freeze on government workers. It appears that government workers will get no cost-of-living increase. This is effectively a wage cut given inflation. It looks like that the only government workers getting a wage increase this year are those who have it in their contracts, such as those who negotiated a wage increase last year. So it's a partial wage freeze, with the threat of a full wage

freeze later on.

So what is the response of the Public Service Association (PSA), the biggest union in New Zealand with about 57,000 members, to the wage freeze and cuts? All they seem to do is write a few letters to the government complaining about it, and sign hollow agreements to re-deploy workers (the vast majority haven't so far, unsurprisingly). The PSA are victims of their 'Partnership for Quality' ideology. It's really a partnership for inequality: meaning letting the government screw government workers over, under the disguise of a 'partnership'. The government is a tough and aggressive employer. As a result, most government workers are underpaid, overworked and over-managed. In contrast, managers sit on their arses and live it up on...



Continued on back page...

IN THIS ISSUE



Kanak Struggle



McJobs & WINZ



Dairy Lockout

Trade Unionists sentenced to jail in Kanaky

Six trade unionists in Kanaky (New Caledonia) have been sentenced to jail and a further 18 union activists received suspended sentences! Gerard Jodar, leader of the Union of Kanaky and Exploited Workers (USTKE), was sentenced to one year prison. Mr Safoka, who works closely with Mr Jodar, has also been condemned to one year in jail. Two other union activists were given ten months of jail, another one six months, another one four months.

The convictions stem from a industrial dispute with Air Caledonie in May, when hundreds of people stormed Magenta airport.

Speaking to reporters, the USTKE founder and

leader of the Labour Party, Louis Kotra Uregei, questions the type of justice that send unionists to prison. "I strongly condemn this type of decision and I'm calling on those who have trusted us and trust us to fight alongside us so that this country



one day frees itself of this colonial justice."

Large marches were held in Nouméa on Saturday 4th July to demand the freedom of all the political prisoners.

Links

USTKE (In French)
<http://www.ustke.org/>

LabourStart New Caledonia
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=New+Caledonia

100 Waikato dairy workers locked out

100 dairy workers at Open Country Cheese have been issued with a 6 week lockout notice from their jobs, in response to their attempts to seek a collective agreement with their employer than ensures their hours cannot be changed on a whim, that they are entitled to redundancy payments and other improvements to their working conditions.

The workers, members of the Dairy Workers Union (DWU), are employed at Open Country's factory in Waharoa, near Matamata in the Waikato. In an attempt to get the workers to abandon collective action, Open Country are willing to lift the lockout notice for any worker who leaves the DWU.

James Ritchie, the National Secretary of the DWU, has detailed the demands of the workers:

There is no wage increase on the table. Workers are seeking a collective agreement which protects them from being made



temporary or casual at any time. They want a say on how their rosters and hours of work can be changed so their family lives are not disrupted without notice and consultation. They want temp workers to be paid the same rate for the job after 3 months. They want temp workers to be made permanent after 11 months service. They want redundancy compensation if made redundant and they want to be paid for a meal break if they can't leave the plant. - Most of all they want to

be treated as human beings- not a commodity to be tossed aside when no longer required. They want decent jobs.

Open Country was founded by former National Party cabinet minister Wyatt Creech, and shareholders include Prime Minister John Key and the Talleys Group. In a further quirk to this particular industrial dispute, dairy is legally classified as an 'essential industry', meaning that longer than normal periods of notice for industrial action must be given.

The 100 workers at Open Country need support and solidarity from across the country during their lockout period. Lasting 6 weeks without pay is not easy under any circumstances, let alone one in a period of recession.

Burgers and Circuses

(Note: This is the script of a movie due to be played in your town in the near future.)

Scene: Clown in a loud suit stands outside a windswept and much repaired tent. The tent has a broken sign on it labelled Job Circus'.

Promoter: "Roll up folks, roll up! Are you young and unemployed?"

Unemployed Youth: "Um yeah, I guess that would be me"

Promoter: "Looking for an exciting career with a stable and dynamic employer? Need some help getting started?"

Unemployed Youth: "Stable and dynamic eh? That sounds good. The help thing would be great too."

Promoter: "Step this way. Enter the tent and wonders await you"

Scene: The unemployed youth enters the tent. The promoter smiles as a government car pulls up.

Promoter: [laughing]: "Pulled in another sucker"

Government Minister: "Great! Here's your \$16,000. You're doing a great job there Ronald...keep it up mate"

Scene: Inside the tent. The youth is given a uniform, name badge and mop.

Promoter: "OK kid, get pushing on the mop, it's your new friend so use it well. Anybody out front sees you, don't forget to smile, this is show business remember! If you do well, we'll have you out on the counter

selling cheap nutritious circus food in colourful packages in no time."

Scene: Next day at a Parliamentary media conference.

Government Minister: "In these difficult times the government appreciates the need to maintain productivity and has a commitment



to investing in the future. We want a well trained and highly skilled workforce that can compete with the rest of the world. We have therefore entered into a partnership with a great circus promoter. We will give them money, they will employ new staff and the economy will get a boost. Everybody wins!"

Skeptical Voice: "But do we really need more circuses? Wouldn't we be better off with new schools, hospitals, roads and stuff? Why does the circus need our money to do it anyway? They aren't exactly poor!"

Minister: "We're all in this together and you can't get circus monkeys without paying for peanuts you know! Anyway, moving on..."

Scene: 89 days later inside the tent.

Promoter: "What do you mean you want a living wage, the work is repetitive and unrewarding, you are rostered to work at odd times and the food is crap anyway? You're not a team player are you? How can we keep this place stable and dynamic with your negative attitude?!"

Youth: "Well, um, this circus stuff isn't exactly what you made out it would be"

Promoter: "Yeah, unhappy eh? Hit the road. You're outta here! And don't steal the mop or touch the cycling monkeys on the way out!"

Scene: Outside the tent it's cold and windy. A governmental car speeds by with its occupants in good spirits.

Government Minister: "Nice one Ronald. Would you like to upsize your champagne? Need more money? Need more suckers?"

Promoter: "Don't mind if I do. Anything to help the economy you know!"

Window winds down as the car speeds past newly unemployed youth. Minister pulls out megaphone.

Minister: "Hi! Don't forget, we're working for you, so remember to vote next election!"

Mud splashes upwards into youths face. Screen fades to black.