

## Upcoming public discussion evenings

The Wellington and Christchurch branches of AWSM are organising monthly discussion evenings on the first Wednesday of every month. The next meeting in Christchurch will be on June 2nd, while in Wellington, there will instead be a screening of the film **Living Utopia about the Spanish revolution** on June 5th.

The details of the topics to be discussed, time and location of the discussion groups can be found on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>.

In Wellington, the May 5th meeting discussed the Government's proposal for mining in national parks from an anarchist-communist perspective. Questions were raised around the role of mining workers in this decision making process, the impact on mining communities and more.

In Christchurch, the May 5th meeting, co-organised with Beyond Resistance (<http://beyondresistance.wordpress.com>), discussed anarcho-syndicalism, industrial networks and new forms of workplace/community organising. The May meeting will look at **women and work: anarchist-communism and feminism**.

## 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 members in the cities of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and in a few smaller centres in between.

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

If you want to make sure you don't miss an issue of Solidarity, you can subscribe to either the print or electronic version.

To subscribe to the AWSM announcements list, put your email address in the form on the top right of each page on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>.

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.

## CONTACT INFO

PO Box 6387, Wellington 6141

[info@awsm.org.nz](mailto:info@awsm.org.nz) / [www.awsm.org.nz](http://www.awsm.org.nz)



# SOLIDARITY

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Newsheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement



## Workers thaw pay freeze

Across the world, government workers are often bearing the brunt of the recession with massive layoffs and pay cuts. Here health and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) workers have hearteningly thawed the Government's attempt to impose a pay freeze on them recently. After some industrial action, including a work-to-rule, 43,000 health workers from various unions received a 2% pay increase, with some in the South Island gaining much more. And after five months of bitter strikes and a work-to-rule, 1700 MoJ workers across the country have broken their current partial pay freeze. Yet it has come at a cost (see interview below).

All of this shows that taking direct action works.

Here we talk to an MoJ worker who took part in the strikes.

*What have you gained?*

Well, we've dumped this year's freeze on performance pay. From mid-2011 we'll get a small 1.5% pay increase. And we've sort of half dumped their crappy performance pay system from 2011, which is used as a tool to keep our wages down, and instead we get a mixed stepped and performance pay system. It's not much, and the new pay system is open to manipulation by MoJ, but it's waaay better than what

we were originally offered. About 80% of members agreed to the deal.

*I hear your union has agreed to redundancies in return for more pay. Is that true?*

Yeah, it sucks. We took 5 months of tough industrial action against an aggressive Ministry. And what do we get? The union bureaucrats [from the Public Service Association] have estimated that 70 redundancies will occur because of

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*We don't want to work any faster! If I worked any faster I might spontaneously combust.*

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the cost of our tiny pay increase. I didn't strike to get my fellow workers laid off! We are overworked enough as it is, most of us have to work overtime to meet our crippling workloads. Cutting jobs back just means more work for us. The PSA is not really opposing layoffs. While they haven't formally agreed to these redundancies, they've agreed to 'redeployment'. They have also agreed to us working harder for MOJ in return for more pay. But we don't want to work any faster! If I worked any faster I might spontaneously combust.

*Were the strikes driven by rank and file workers from below?*

It was a mixed bag. The courts and call centres were really good, really militant. Heaps of court workers, who are about the lowest paid in the MoJ, were taking semi-wildcat local action. They organised their own random strikes at their workplace. They were causing all sort of court shutdowns and backlogs. Overall, we pushed the PSA into action from below because so many of us were pissed off with our shitty pay increases over the years that meant we got further and further behind other civil servants, and our worsening work conditions.

But the PSA manipulated the strikes from above. They were too timid. They made sure at the beginning the strikes were of short duration, like only 6 hours of strikes a fortnight. We should have been going out for a day or more. They tried to stamp out some local actions, like the court workers who organised their own protest against the opening of the new Supreme Court building (the PSA only wanted a protest near the back, not up front near Prince William). Also a lot didn't strike cos they found it manipulative of the PSA to ask them to suddenly strike under a National Govt. and in a recession, when for years the PSA had told them not to strike under a Labour Govt. that they perceived as



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more receptive and in a period economic growth. I heard many branches really wanted to strike back then, and voted for it, but the PSA ignored them. So a big hassle was the PSA's machinations.

### What tactics worked?

Well, we used heaps of different tactics. We did local and national strikes. All these strikes were lightning strikes, announced only 10-15 mins beforehand by text or email, so they would cause maximum disruption. The strikes were more effective in the courts. We took common lunch breaks. The work-to-rule was really good cos we couldn't get our pay cut, and yet at the same time we reduced our work stress and work load. It was really good feeling knowing you could knock off at 5 o'clock and not have to work overtime to meet your deadlines. In some workplaces productivity went down 40-50% cos of it! And we did lots of pickets outside our workplaces, many of which were so noisy they disrupted court proceedings inside. We only had about, I think, 50-60% membership in

the courts, so some stayed open. One Judge said the strikers were in contempt of court for being noisy! That was dumb, contempt only can happen inside court. Once we protested outside the MoJ HQ, and then walked into their building, storming the Bastille type stuff. Or that is what it felt like for a few minutes anyway. About 100-150 of us, I can't remember the numbers, sort of occupied the bottom floor of our HQ very briefly, chanting in their atrium. I think I heard they were frantically calling noise control or security or something! But instead of staying longer we just walked out the other side of the building.

Overall the PSA actually used some innovative tactics, like sort of flash strike mob texts. Amazing for such an old style union temporarily creaking out of a long slumber under the thumb of bosses - they call it 'partnership for quality'. It's more like partnership for inequality. What

was great was that were very open to suggestions from us lot below as to what tactics worked. Perhaps this was because they hadn't organised a big national strike campaign for so long that they had forgotten how to do it. They seemed a bit unprepared. They didn't even have a strike fund and only got one tiny one together near the end. We needed to go on much longer strikes instead of all these little timid 2 hour strikes we went on. It wasn't till the end we actually went out on a one-day strike! The ineffectiveness of the 2 hour strikes at the beginning put some people off striking.



## Oppose the surveillance state

Members of AWSM along with hundreds of others, from members of various political parties to civil libertarians took part in demonstrations against the current search and surveillance bill in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in late April.

The bill before parliament, giving the armed wing of the state greater powers, is part of the government's aggressive class war agenda being waged against our class and the most disadvantaged in our society.

As a leaflet produced by the October Solidarity group correctly points out, "The bill is one component of the government's grasp for more power over our lives. It is part of a large agenda of social control that is called the 'war on terrorism'...which has nothing to with terrorism; it is about criminalizing people on the margins of our society like those who dare to speak out about injustice here in Aotearoa and around the world."

From an anarchist perspective, the state is the greatest practitioner of violence and terrorism from the October 'terror' raids in 2007 to Iraq and Afghanistan to name a few. The present agenda security agenda being pursued should be considered nothing new. The gradual erosion of our current civil liberties is a state pattern during periods on perceived unrest and 'threats to security' from the passing of the sedition laws during World War One and Two to beyond, . The state conceded these rights and reforms through mass militant direct action and solidarity rather than simply appealing to our politicians, which is the only way we will defeat this bill.

The bill doesn't only threaten political activists however, as it also gives powers in areas such surveillance to a wide range of other institutions including WINZ. It is not unthinkable that WINZ might use these powers to further target those trying to live on already meager benefits offered. The bill is so wide

ranging (and weighs in at a massive 197 pages) that it is difficult to imagine the vast variety of ways in which it could be used by the over 70 agencies to which it grants new and/or enhanced powers.

Beyond fighting this bill, we need to work towards abolishing the root cause of the problem which is the state and capital. Only a libertarian communist society offers lasting security and freedom, from the constant fear and insecurity created by the status-quo.

For more information on the bill and why you should oppose it check out: <http://october15thsolidarity.info/surveillance>

Reports and pictures from demos against the bill in Auckland at <http://indymedia.org.nz/article/78501/300-people-march-against-search-and-surv> and Wellington at <http://indymedia.org.nz/article/78499/wellington-protests-search-and-surveilla>

## Don't be bullied by the boss

A recent multi-university report highlighting bullying in the workplace should come as no surprise. The study of "1728 education, health, hospitality and travel sector workers found nearly one in five had been bullied at work. A further 75 per cent of employees said they had suffered workplace stress at some point."

In a society underpinned by wage slavery, divided between the robbers, the capitalist class and the robbed, the vast majority of us in the working-class, bullying is not just the case of 'incompetent managers' but is institutionalised in the system. The drive for profit will always undermine workers health and safety. While bullying does occur between fellow workers, anyone with some workplace experience knows that it's the boss who inflicts most of the harassment and intimidation.

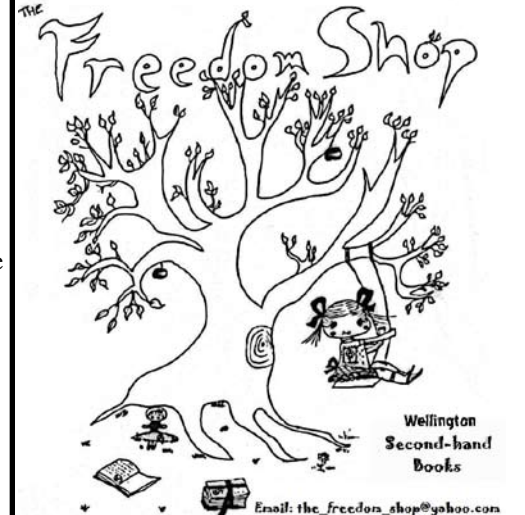
If we are to seriously confront bullying we need to build a society which places the needs and priorities of workers

first. We need to tackle the root cause of the problem which is the state and capitalism.

In the meantime, we need to build a workplace culture built on solidarity and self-organisation from below that challenges every form of prejudice and discrimination. A culture which takes no shit from the bosses, whether in the home, school or work.

Solidarity is Strength!

For more practical advice on confronting bullying see LibCom's *Dealing with bullying at work guide* at <http://libcom.org/organise/dealing-with-bullying-at-work-guide>



### FREEDOM SHOP SECOND-HAND BOOKS

The Freedom Shop Collective (Wellington) has decided to trade second-hand books.

These can be books previously bought from The Freedom Shop, good New Zealand published books, or other left-wing radical political books.

We will pay a standard price dependant on the size of the book and whether hard or soft cover. We will apply the same mark-up as for the new books we sell. This will mean that second-hand books will be substantially cheaper than in other bookshops.

## Eating disorders – a social disease

There is a disease which has for long while been taking root in this country, as it has in many other countries. That disease is eating disorders and it has become our dirty little secret in this modern, 'liberal' age. Especially vulnerable are thousands of young women who face relentless pressure to ensure their figures fit the ever shrinking mould desired by the bosses. We need to confront this problem and see it for what it is; the continuation of a social order where men call the shots and where even a person's body is not out of reach for the capitalist class.



Roughly one in four teenage girls suffer from an eating disorder in this country, 52% of girls have tried dieting before the age of 14. The statistics are shocking. If you're a male (like the author of this article) that means your sister, your girlfriend or just one of your friends may well be putting herself through hell just to satisfy the insane demands she is being bombarded with on a daily basis.

And it is no conspiracy to suggest that the women being paraded by the media are getting thinner and thinner; thirty years ago the average model was 8% skinnier than the average woman, now the average model is 23% skinnier than the average woman! The capitalists have reached a point where they are competing over who can find the skinniest woman, leading toward a constant drive which pushes the waste lines of all women downwards. It's also a perfect metaphor for the rotten system we live under, if we scratch beneath the glamour and the success we find sickness and coercion.

Inherently tied to media compulsion is the very real fact that a woman's economic prospects are affected by her ability to fit the accepted model. For anyone with experience working in the service industry it should be of little shock to suggest that bosses discriminate according to looks – they do. To a lesser extent this is true of many different industries, and it reflects the power of the bosses when it comes to dishing out jobs.

Just as we need to stop letting the bosses dictate our wages and our working conditions, so we need to stop letting them dictate our standards for health and beauty. Countless women in this country are suffering trying to comply with their impossible standards. We need to start supporting each other, and we need to start giving greater support to young women, because until we do we'll never be able to take control over our workplaces, our communities and ultimately our own bodies.