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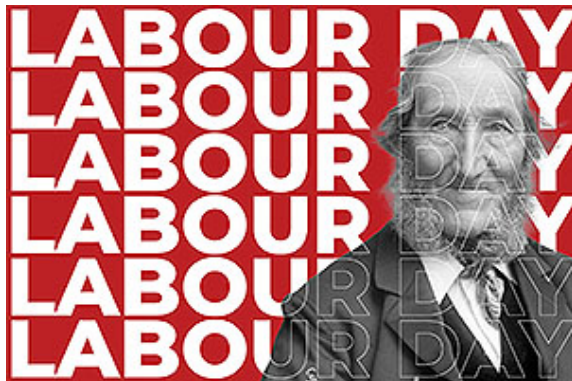
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Dear Member,

## NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS



(NZCTU)

### Dark Cloud Hangs Over Labour Day As National And ACT Poised To Attack Workers' Rights

As working people across Aotearoa New Zealand relaxed on Labour Day, 23 October, the incoming government was busy drawing up plans to overturn recent advances for workers' rights, warns the **New Zealand Council of Trade Unions**.

"This day of celebration for working people is tinged with sadness as the next government plots a return to employment relations of the past," said Council of Trade Unions President Richard Wagstaff.

National has made clear its intention to pass legislation within the first 100 days in government to overturn progress made by the Labour government in strengthening protections for workers.

It plans to scrap Fair Pay Agreements that set minimum pay, leave and other conditions for workers in an industry or occupation, and reinstate 90-day fire at will employment trial periods for all businesses regardless of size.

"We don't understand what National, ACT, and employer groups fear from agreements which support good employers by ensuring that they can't be undercut by those looking to exploit low paid workers," said Wagstaff.

"National says it wants a high wage economy -- we agree, so let's keep Fair Pay Agreements because they are all about boosting the wages of Kiwis and keeping good workers here.

"Similar industry wide bargaining agreements overseas support that. Australia's modern awards system has helped wages there continue to outstrip what Kiwi workers are earning.

"The reinstatement of the 90-day fire at will law is also a step backwards. Treasury has stated that the 90-day provision does not lead to increased hiring of workers which employers so often claim is the case.

"The fact that this is all happening while we mark the introduction of the eight-hour working day 124 years ago says a lot about the priorities of the incoming government.

"The good news is that the union movement is in strong heart, we are well organised and will be campaigning strongly for what working people need -- decent wages and job security," said Richard Wagstaff.

### **Withdrawal Of Proposed Service Threatens Coastal Shipping Progress**

**Maritime Union of New Zealand** National Secretary Craig Harrison says the cancellation of a proposed MOVE Logistics roll-on-roll-off (RoRo) ship due to technical issues was a step backward for New Zealand coastal shipping.

MOVE Logistics had planned to use a \$10 million co-investment from Waka Kotahi to build a new methanol-capable vessel which could service regional New Zealand ports in both islands.

Harrison says New Zealand desperately needs to develop coastal shipping capacity in the regional supply chain. "New Zealand coastal shipping provides redundancy and resilience in our supply chain in a volatile global environment."



(NZCTU)



(MUNZ)

He said there have been hard lessons about the vulnerability of our transport system in recent years and the importance of the "blue highway" of coastal shipping -- citing the international shipping disruption during COVID which "put our entire supply chain in jeopardy. This could easily happen again with another pandemic or war."

Another threat was the disruption of road and rail transport links by climate change weather events, such as Cyclone Gabrielle and earthquakes. In such cases, New Zealand coastal shipping offered redundancy in the system and provided an essential role.

Under the previous Government, former Minister of Transport Michael Wood had announced \$30 million in funding between four New Zealand operators to help each company bring at least one extra coastal vessel into service.

As a result, said Harrison, several new coastal shipping services were up and running or in the process of coming online. Other services, however, had been lost -- like the short-lived New Zealand "Coastal Connect" domestic service which was pulled by Maersk in March 2023 after less than a year.

New Zealand fuel tankers that connected the Marsden Point refinery with fuel depots in New Zealand ports were taken off the coast in 2022 following the closure of the refinery by its owner.

"It is essential the current modest growth we have seen in New Zealand coastal shipping does not stall."

Strengthen Our Shores: [Sign The Petition Here](#)

### **Removing Stigma, Empowering Kids: Hopes For The New Equity Index**

A new Equity Index (EQI) for calculating funding for schools is replacing the decades-old socioeconomic decile system which is being phased out over 2023.

"Everyone would hope that we had a more equitable society where we didn't need to have these funding programmes in place," said Daryl Aim, the tumuaki at Natone Park School in Waitangirua in east Porirua.

"But the reality is that we are seeing more and more groups of people being drawn into the lower socioeconomic brackets.

"They're hugely resilient and resourceful and I take my hat off to them as to how they navigate some of the toughest economic times I've seen for families in my educational career."

Waitangirua is a poor suburb. According to the 2018 census (the latest available), the median personal income was \$19,400, almost \$13,000 lower than the national median. Just 3.6 per cent of residents had incomes exceeding \$70,000 and unemployment for people aged over 15 was touching 10 per cent, and more than 30 per cent of the population over 15 have no formal education qualifications.



(NZEI Te Riu Roa)

However, "Poverty," said Aim, "does not equate to poor teaching or education, nor poor outcomes."

Natone Park School's roll is 60 per cent Māori and 35 per cent Pasifika, one of the reasons the sense of community is so strong and an overwhelming source of pride, he said. "We operate as one big whanau... They're genuine, real people... There is a lot of positivity and all of our parents are really supportive of the kura."

It's that feeling of community and sense of purpose of the school staff and parents that Aim said was often neglected in the discussion of the decile system. It was used by the wider public as a blunt tool to determine whether the school was "good," not the socioeconomic characteristics of the school roll.

"The decile system developed a stigma... They'd look at a decile one school and say it's a poor school, and the perception would be that it's delivering poorer education for kids. But that wasn't the reality," said Aim, saying that he hopes that stigma now disappears with the introduction of the Equity Index.



(NZEI Te Riu Roa)

The index is drawn from 39 data points extracted from the Integrated Data Infrastructure – a massive government research database that is fed into from government agencies, Stats NZ surveys and non-governmental organisations.

It provides a very detailed picture of the socioeconomic equity challenge each school faces, down to the level of the individual, but anonymous, student. The higher the rating number assigned to the school indicates the higher representation of disadvantage. Natone Park is at the upper end of the scale. And why it receives funding for the breakfast, fruit and lunch in schools programmes.

Aim says it's why part of the school's kaupapa is to ensure their students are not restricted from experiences they otherwise might not receive. "The most important skill we can give kids is the power to know who they are, what they're good at, what they're not so good at. But they also should know that's okay, we're all human and have our strengths and weaknesses."

### **First International Day For Care And Support: Let's Make Pay Equity Happen**

On 28 October, on the historic first ever International Day for Care and Support, the **Public Service Association** Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (PSA), **E tū**, and the **New Zealand Nurses Organisation** Tōpūtanga Tapuhi Kaitiaki o Aotearoa (NZNO) are calling for the incoming government to prioritise pay equity.

"International Day for Care and Support is about valuing and recognising people who deliver essential healthcare in our communities," said PSA Assistant Secretary Melissa Woolley.



"It is particularly important for Aotearoa's 65,000 care and support workers. As the new Government takes shape, they're anticipating the outcome of their pay equity claim."

The three unions filed a pay equity claim in July of 2022. The claim has been halted by Te Whatu Ora in its final stages as they seek a review of milestone reports that had already been completed and signed off.

"It has been established that they're being paid less than what they're worth because their industry has been dominated by women and undervalued by funders and employers," said Woolley.

"These workers care for people day-in and day-out. They shower people, make sure their medication is right, operate hoists to lift them from bed, and perform a huge range of other tasks that are essential to vulnerable people being able to live with dignity," said E tū Assistant National Secretary Rachel Mackintosh.

"They are currently receiving low wages and have no certainty of when they can expect wages that reflect the true value of their mahi. The day recognises the requirement to resource the care economy so that we have disability-inclusive and age-sensitive care and support systems ready to meet the needs of our aging population," said Mackintosh.

"Pay equity will strengthen the quality, access, and reliability of services for disabled people, older people, and those experiencing illness, injury, addiction, or mental health needs," said NZNO delegate Trish McKillop.

The unions launched an open letter this month calling for funders of care and support work, including Te Whatu Ora, to stop unjust delays. The letter has been signed by more than 5000 people including Kristine Bartlett, Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner Saunoamaali'I Karanina Sumeo, and groups like Auckland Women's Centre, Grey Power, and Alzheimer's New Zealand.

### Unions Welcome A New Model For Employing Staff In The Water Sector

Members of **AWUNZ**, **E tū**, and the **PSA** have endorsed a multi-union, multi-employer collective agreement that will help improve water services, overcome critical staff shortages, and ensure decent workplaces for everyone working in the industry.



(AWUNZ)

"This is a historic opportunity to work collaboratively with the incoming government to build a workforce that will improve public health," said Blake Monkley, AWUNZ lead organiser. "This collective agreement provides career pathways that can attract people to an industry that desperately needs to attract and develop a skilled workforce."

"Events including widespread flooding, the recent cryptosporidiosis outbreak in Queenstown and sink holes in Auckland show an industry in crisis," said PSA National Sector Lead Ian Gordon. "This agreement is a huge victory for workers and Aotearoa."

The benefits for workers are clear. "A national employment framework will create clear career paths that will draw people to the industry and keep them there. It will allow the industry to focus on training and developing staff across the industry instead of in isolated pockets," said Amy Hansen from E tū. "The incoming government needs to recognise how essential the provisions of this agreement are, and it needs to treat workers justly as well, no matter what happens with the water reforms."



The Amalgamated Workers Union NZ (AWUNZ), E tū, and the Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (PSA) represent workers across water management, including technicians, engineers, electricians, administrators, fitters, reticulation workers water, and wastewater treatment operators, local and central government officials, and more.

For two years, the unions worked with members and non-members in the workforce, and the Department of Internal Affairs, to find the best path forward. The membership of all three unions have now endorsed the proposed agreement.

Some useful numbers

- \* There is currently a shortage of skilled staff with vacancy rates sitting at approximately 15 per cent across the industry
- \* Economic analysis projects that the industry will need 6,000 to 9,000 jobs over the next 30 years.
- \* Unions in the sector represent approximately 1850 employees across a wide range of occupations.
- \* There are currently 87 collective agreements covering impacted workers with a wide range of conditions.

## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

### New Offer Doesn't Satisfy Quebec Public Sector Unions Planning To Strike

Canada, Quebec. As reported by Canada's National Observer.

Three union federations representing more than 400,000 public sector workers announced October 29 that they intend to move forward with strike plans after rejecting a new contract offer from the Quebec government.

The federations -- which describe themselves as the common front and are negotiating together -- say the new offer falls far short of what they were looking for. "We had hope," Magali Picard, the president of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, told reporters in Quebec City. Instead, the government has continued with "the same tone of arrogance and insults towards the 420,000 workers we represent."



(The Canadian Press)

The unions, which have all secured strike mandates from their members, say they're sticking to a plan to walk out for one day on November 6, which could be followed by further action -- including a full strike. "If we have to go there, I can tell you that our members, more than ever, are going to do whatever it takes," said Picard. "Why? Because we can't go back any further."

Sonia LeBel, the chair of Quebec's Treasury Board, issued a news release saying the government is offering salary increases of 10.3 per cent over five years, as well as other measures, including a one-time payment of \$1,000 to each worker in the first year of the contract.

Also included in the offer are further increases for nurses working nights, evenings and weekends, for example, as well as teachers' aides in secondary schools. LeBel said those increases -- along with the \$1,000 payment -- brings the actual value of the offer to 14.8 per cent. Workers who earn less than \$52,000 a year would also receive an additional one per cent increase, the government said.

But the unions say the 14.8 per cent figure is misleading and the 10.3 per cent salary increase -- up from nine per cent in the previous offer -- is the one most workers will actually see on their pay cheques. "I know that Minister LeBel will talk to you about 14.8 per cent. Let's be clear: what a government worker will receive on their pay if they had to accept this is 10.3 per cent over five years," Picard said, adding the higher figure includes payments to workers who haven't been hired yet.

But LeBel maintained in an interview that the offer has to be looked at in its entirety, adding that the

\$1,000 payments will cost a billion dollars. "I'm extremely surprised at the speed with which they took their position. The offer had just been put on the table when they rejected it out of hand with a vigour that is surprising for such a serious offer," she said Sunday.

LeBel said the offer is "certainly not insulting," and that she's now waiting for the unions to present a counter-offer, adding that they haven't responded to previous government offers with a counter-proposal. "I'm expecting them to take a small step back from what happened this morning, to take the time to analyze the offer properly and in detail -- because there are a lot of details in a government offer -- and for them to come back to me, not in statements to the media, but at the bargaining table with a serious counter-offer," she said.

The negotiations began around a year ago, when the unions submitted their demands. The first government offer came last December and LeBel reiterated Sunday that she hopes a deal will be reached before the end of the year.

The unions want a three-year contract with an increase tied to the consumer price index plus two per cent during the first year, or \$100 a week, whichever is higher, and increases tied to the CPI plus three per cent in the second year and four per cent in the third.

François Enault, first vice-president of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux labour federation, said the size of the province's offer is particularly glaring when compared to other pay increases recently offered by the government.

The increases in the current offer are 11 per cent less than those in a proposed contract that was rejected by provincial police officers in September and significantly less than the 30 per cent increase members of the province's legislature voted themselves earlier this year -- while negotiations with public sector unions were ongoing.

The Fédération Interprofessionnelle de la Santé, which represents around 80,000 nurses and other health-care professionals, said in social media posts Sunday that it is "disappointed and angry" with the new offer. The union, which is negotiating separately, plans to strike November 8 and 9.

A teachers union that is negotiating independently, the Fédération Autonome de L'enseignement, has also received a strike mandate from its 65,000 members but has not yet scheduled any strike days.

LeBel said temporary bonuses being paid to workers, including nurses and workers at long-term care centres, will continue until the new contract is signed. There had been concerns that the government would stop the payments in order to put pressure on the unions.



(ETUC)

### **EU Finance Ministers Delay Decision on Austerity Rules After Labour Protest**

*Europe, France. As reported by ETUC.*

According to an ETUC press release, EU finance ministers have... delayed a decision on new budget rules which would require at least 45 billion Euro in cuts next year.

The Economic and Financial Affairs Council was expected to conclude a deal that would require 14 member states with a deficit above 3 per cent of GDP to reduce their deficit by a minimum of 0.5 per cent of GDP every year. However, ministers have instead decided to remain at the negotiating table.

The decision follows the recent 20,000-strong trade union demonstration against new austerity rules in Paris. The ETUC also wrote to ministers ahead of the meeting to call on them to rethink the proposal.



European Trade Union Confederation General Secretary Esther Lynch said: "Ministers need to rethink rules that would require 45 billion in cuts next year alone, and make much-needed investments for the green and digital transitions a mirage.

"That would kill jobs and lower wages, push the economy towards another recession and ensure Europe can't meet its own targets for investment in a green economy. Leaders must listen to the growing concern about a return to austerity that was clear for all to see on the streets of Paris on Friday.

"Any reform of Europe's economic rules must ensure that they are based on the needs of people and the future of the planet rather than arbitrary targets based on thinking from the 1980s.

"The suspension of the Stability and Growth Pact should be extended by an additional year in order to give proper time for the consideration of the consequences of and alternatives to a return to austerity."

### **UAW reaches deal with GM, ending strike against Detroit automakers**

*United States.* As reported by Reuters.

General Motors and the United Auto Workers (UAW) struck a tentative deal... ending the union's unprecedented six-week campaign of coordinated strikes that won record pay increases for workers at the Detroit Three automakers.

The accord follows deals the union reached in recent days with Ford Motor and Chrysler-owner Stellantis in Michigan -- significant victories for auto workers after years of stagnant wages and painful concessions following the 2008 financial crisis.

"We wholeheartedly believe our strike squeezed every last dime out of General Motors," UAW President Shawn Fain said in a video address. "They underestimated us. They underestimated you."

The union officially suspended its strike against the Detroit Three. UAW local leaders will come to Detroit... to consider the deal with GM, before taking terms to all union workers for ratification.

"We are looking forward to having everyone back to work across all of our operations," said GM CEO Mary Barra.

The new contracts will significantly raise costs for the automakers. The companies and some analysts have said the deals will make it harder for the Detroit Three to compete with electric-vehicle leader Tesla (TSLA.O) and nonunion foreign brands such as Toyota Motor (7203.T).

The UAW won from GM roughly the same package of wage increases agreed with the other two automakers. Pay for veteran workers will rise by 33 per cent and GM will give \$2,500 in five payments to retirees through 2028.

Sources have said pension benefits were a sticking point in the UAW's negotiations with GM, which has more retirees than Ford or Stellantis.

Fain said the union's move on Saturday to strike a key GM engine factory in Spring Hill, Tennessee, "landed the knockout blow" that got the deal.

The contract reverses years of efforts by GM to create lower-paid groups of UAW workers at units such as component plants, parts warehouses and electric vehicle battery operations. It puts workers at GM's battery joint-venture with South Korea's LG Energy under the national agreement.



(flickr)

Fain stated some workers at GM's component operations will get pay increases of as much as 89 per cent.

The contract also restricts use of lower paid temporary workers. "We have slammed the door on having a permanent underclass of temporary workers at GM," Fain said.

The UAW also gained more sway over the companies' investment decisions by securing the right to strike over future plant closures.

All three companies have said they do not plan to close existing factories as they shift to EVs. Yet the contract could force them to keep unprofitable plants open during a recession or period of slow sales for new models.

A series of walkouts began on September 15, and nearly 50,000 workers out of nearly 150,000 UAW members at the Detroit automakers eventually joined. The strategy of escalating strikes cost the Detroit Three and suppliers billions of dollars.

UAW leaders called their contract fight part of a larger movement to reverse decades of economic setbacks for working-class Americans. Some analysts agreed.

"This is more than an auto industry story; it is a signal to the entire country that unionised workers can demand and get big wage increases," said Patrick Anderson of the Anderson Economic Group.

The new contract will cost GM \$7 billion over 4.5 years in higher labour costs, two sources told Reuters. Ford said last week it would add \$850 to \$900 per vehicle in labor costs.

"Consumers will bear some of the cost burden over time... automakers will not have an easy time passing along all of the costs.. and will have to seek efficiencies in other ways, or further limit production to more expensive vehicles that can absorb higher labor costs," Cox Automotive's chief economist, Jonathan Smoke, said.

U.S. President Joe Biden and politicians from both parties weighed in to support the UAW as the union's fight gained popularity with voters. Michigan will again be a crucial swing state in the 2024 presidential election, and Fain made support for the union's fight a condition of winning his endorsement. The UAW still has not formally endorsed Biden's re-election.

"This historic contract is a testament to the power of unions and collective bargaining to build strong middle-class jobs while helping our most iconic American companies thrive," Biden said in a statement. His aides had worried that a prolonged strike would damage the U.S. economy and the Democratic president's chances of re-election in 2024.

The UAW has said it is committed to organising workforces at other carmakers, making negotiations in 2028 between the union and the "Big Five or Big Six."

Momentum toward deals accelerated over the past two weeks after UAW workers walked out at three of the most profitable factories in the world. The UAW eventually struck against nine plants. "We have shown the companies, the American public and the whole world that the working class is not done fighting" Fain said. "In fact, we're just getting started."

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