

March 2019, Vol. 10 No. 1

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NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

MOOD OF THE WORKFORCE

New Zealand's workforce is not happy about their level of income, cost of living, and workplace conditions.

In a January 2-5, 2019 (1195 respondents) survey by **CTU Together**, the New Zealand Council of Trade Union's online arm, more than 70 per cent of respondents reported their incomes are not keeping up with the cost of living despite more than 55 per cent reporting their workload has got worse.

"We've known for a long time that work in New Zealand and our employment law aren't up to scratch but on every single metric we surveyed on we've found that many more people think it's getting worse than better," said CTU President **Richard Wagstaff**.

"While Kiwis' low incomes and their high cost of living are standout issues, people are also reporting concerning levels of workload increase, loss of work/life balance and low job satisfaction."



"Last year's employment law changes will have made a small difference to working people, but we need much larger systemic change to fix this problem ... This needs to be a top priority for Government in 2019." -- *CTU President Richard Wagstaff*

STRIKING DRIVERS WIN OVERTIME CONCESSIONS

Striking truck drivers across New Zealand have won a significant victory for overtime rates, overting a strike that would have further affected companies across New Zealand -- in construction sites, golf clubs, bus companies, agriculture, horticulture, manufacturing and truck hires.



(pic: Workers First)

SouthFuels, which also trades as Northfuels, is a bulk fuel & lubricant distributor, specialising in servicing the Primary Sector.

Following a five day strike in December, drivers at SouthFuels had threatened further partial strike action after failed negotiations, but a last minute agreement settled the dispute.

Drivers at Southfuels have accepted an offer from the company that will see the introduction of overtime rates when working long hours, a wage increase by a minimum of 3 per cent, and a new rate of \$35 per hour for cover drivers. The drivers will also have their paid sick leave entitlements doubled.

These drivers will enjoy pay rates aligned with the top of the industry. The increased sick leave will allow drivers on the collective to find a safer work-life balance; something that we all know is very important to our mental wellbeing." - *Justin Wallace, spokesperson for the drivers*

AMBOS AMPLIFY INDUSTRIAL ACTION AGAINST ST. JOHN

St. John, a medical service provider that operates ambulance services throughout New Zealand, is facing mounting partial strike actions as they refuse to recognized ambulance officers' call for an increase in wages.

At issue is the lack of extra pay for workers who are rostered on for weekends and nights, which St. John has claimed is factored into their hourly rate.

According to **FIRST Union**, which represents the Ambos, "The starting rate is below \$20 an hour, if recognition payments for night and weekend work are factored into this, many ambulance professionals would have to be on below the minimum wage." First union represents Finance, Industrial (Textile and Wood) Retail, Stores (Warehousing) and Transport.

The Ambos, which have been implementing partial strike actions since November 14th, received a boost for their industrial action with the recent removal of a media gag order. In a January 24th expose on *The Project*, Ambos spoke out.

In addition to partial strikes including uniform bans and non-invoicing of patients, new partial strikes starting February 9th will include: graffiti Issue messages on vans, a total event ban, refusal of non-urgent patient transfers, and refusal of multiple-loading of passengers into vehicles.

The Union pointed out that the partial strike actions will not impact patient safety and have been designed to cause disruption to St John processes while keeping patient safety paramount.



"It's a bit strange that we work for this emergency service that's part of the health system and everything that's run by a charity. Half of our ambulances are paid for by members of the community"

"Ambulance professionals love what they do ... but they just cannot continue with these rates, they are highly skilled and educated people yet their rates remain well below the rest of the health sector." -- *FIRST Union National Organiser Sarah Stone*

St. John, which employs over 1000 ambulance officers throughout Wellington, National Headquarters and Northern Region, Central Region and South Island Region, provides emergency ambulance services to nearly 90 per cent of New Zealanders.

JUNIOR DOCTORS WALK OUT IN WAKE OF BREAKDOWN

Nearly 80 per cent of junior doctors across New Zealand walked off the job at public hospitals February 5th, after a breakdown in union talks with the government over working conditions and wages.

More than 3,300 government-employed junior doctors, of a national tally of 3,700, are staying away from hospitals and clinics after the talks broke down last week.



(pic: Hamish McNeilly/Stuff)

At Issue: The Resident Doctor's Association (RDA), a junior doctors union, is fighting to retain a safer working roster, amidst the threat of clawbacks from District Health Boards (DHBs).

The junior doctors, or resident medical officers, object to new employment contract proposals by the government that, they say, would mean longer shifts and allow doctors to be moved to other hospitals without notice.

Thousands of surgeries, non-essential appointments, and other services have been cancelled, although emergency and life-saving services will continue.

FAIR PAY WORKING GROUP RELEASES REPORT

Recent documents leaked from the **Fair Pay Agreement Working Group** shows dirty politics may be undermining what is supposed to be a collaborative effort between business and working people.

The Fair Pay Working Group reported its recommendations January 31st, following a collaborate effort that has drawn recent controversy following leaked documents on one of the key recommendations.

The panel's report had yet to be made public, but the National Party claimed it advocated, per negotiations, that they be triggered with the support of just 10 per cent of any given workforce or 1000 workers in a sector, whichever was lower.

Railing it as an attack on business, National MP **Scott Simpson** said, "This is just another strand along the government's intention to empower trade unions and to make it more difficult for employers to run flexible workplaces that are profitable and competitive."

Union leaders countered that it is a ploy of interest groups that want to trick New Zealand workers into believing they'll be worse off under a Fair Pay Agreement.

The Labour Party has championed Fair Pay Agreements to stop a slide in workers' pay across an industry.



Former prime minister Jim Bolger and Minister of Workplace Relations Iain Lees-Galloway (Pic: RNZ/YouTube)

The **Fair Pay Agreement Working Group** was established in June of 2018 to make recommendations on the design of a sector-level bargaining system, in order to establish minimum terms and conditions for all workers in an industry or occupation. The Group, chaired by former Prime Minister Rt Honorable Jim Bolger, comprises experts in economics, collective bargaining and employment law, along with representatives of workers and business.

The Report Recommendations can be found [Here](#)

Workplace Relations and Safety Minister **Iain Lees-Galloway** said "The next phase of work will require detailed policy consideration and consultation and we'll take the time to get it right."

"We now encourage the Government to convert the working group's recommendations into detailed policy and to follow it through with empowering legislation" -- *Glenn Barclay*, National Secretary, **Public Service Association (PSA)**, New Zealand's largest trade union, representing 70,000+ members.



UNION CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO STOP EXPLOITATION UNDER RSE SCHEME

The union representing seasonal NZ workers has called on the Coalition Government to reassess its Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, which govern employment standards.

The concerns come after a number of companies in horticulture have continued to claim a worker shortage and have requested to bring in more workers under the RSA

scheme.

FIRST Union says working people are not attracted to jobs in horticulture because the seasonal work lacks job security and the industry is rife with employers who breach basic employment standards. Pointing to the history of exploitation and human trafficking in horticulture specifically, the Union says companies are exploiting migrant workers undermining working people in New Zealand.

"There's not a shortage of workers, there's a pay crisis. In other industries with insecure work, employees are paid more in recognition of this. It's also hard, labour-intensive work so the pay needs to match this. It's a very successful export industry; give workers a bigger share of the pie and make it worth their time away from family and friends. Then there won't be a shortage."

-- Former Green MP and FIRST Union Transport, Logistics and Manufacturing Organiser
Denise Roche

The Larger Picture

Claims of worker shortage are not exclusive to the horticulture industry, including a number that are breaking the law through exploitation and human trafficking of migrant workers.

"It's important that we red-flag companies that claim to have a worker shortage to ensure they're not exploiting migrants due to their low pay not attracting workers who already live here. In past audits of different sectors we've seen horrific levels of exploitation. We know it is a problem in horticulture, retail, hospitality, transport, construction, and silviculture." -- FIRST Union General Secretary Dennis Maga

E tū TAKES STRIKE ACTION AGAINST FUJI XEROX

E tū members at Fuji Xerox offices around the country took a strike action February 25th, following the company's failure to resolve pay issues, including discriminatory treatment against union members.

The strike, which went to a second day, affects the company's four sites in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, where members walked off the job from 8.30am until 4.30pm.

A separate strike scheduled for February 26th by E tu members employed by hospital contractor OCS was cancelled after an agreement was reached.



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

670,000 Strike in TUNISIA

According to the AFLCIO's Solidarity Center, 670,000 workers in Tunisia waged a nationwide one-day strike in January to protest the government's refusal to increase wages for civil servant workers. The strike follows months of intense negotiations between the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and the government, which refused to increase wages in 2019 because of its commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to freeze public-sector wages and spending and balance the budget.

HONDURAS

Fyffes faced claims of poor working conditions and had been locked in a dispute over alleged abuses at the farm, but the new deal says that Fyffes will recognize STAS as a "legitimate representative of the affiliated workers".



Hundreds of thousands Tunisian workers pack the streets for a one-day strike. (pic: UGTT)

STAS, a union which represents workers employed at Suragroh, a melon plantation in Honduras. The union put pressure on Fyffes by pressing an influential ethical trading body and working towards Fyffes possible expulsion forcing Fyffes to reach a last-minute deal with workers' groups in Honduras.

CANADA

For more than a year the **Canadian Union of Postal Workers** (CUPW) have been in good faith negotiations with Canada Post to reach collective agreements by addressing major concerns plaguing workers for years: skyrocketing injury rates, inequality, overburdening and overwork, and a reliance on precarious employment to name a few. Canada Post left the workers with no choice but to strike on a rotating basis.

A landmark report by the **International Labour Organization's** (ILO's) [Global Commission on the Future of Work](#) calls for giving full rights and protections, including collective bargaining rights, to digital platform workers. The ILO, the United Nations agency charged with promoting decent work and global labor standards, further called for "reinvigorating the social contract that gives working people a just share of economic progress."

US LABOR NEWS

After a campaign by the **Independent Drivers Guild** (an affiliate of the **Machinists**) that involved rallying 16,000 drivers to events, lobbying days and thousands of calls and letters, drivers for rideshare apps in **New York** have won a minimum pay rate that is equivalent to the city's \$15 per hour minimum wage.

"Today we brought desperately needed relief to 80,000 working families. All workers deserve the protection of a fair, livable wage and we are proud to be setting the new bar for contractor workers' rights in America." -- *Jim Conigliaro Jr.*, founder of the Independent Drivers Guild.



In the Public Sector

Props to **AFSCME, AFT, NEA and SEIU** for bringing needed attention to the fact that the data released from the Bureau of Labour Statistics demonstrates that "the vicious anti-worker assault on American public sector unions- epitomized by the *Janus Supreme Court* case has failed to gain traction!"

Since *Janus* was decided last June, its funders have poured millions of dollars into deceptive campaigns encouraging public service workers to quit their unions. But, as noted by AFSCME President **Lee Saunders**, "Momentum is on our side. Public support for unions is at its highest level in 15 years."



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January 18, 2019

Members of the Labor Advisory Board,

I am writing to you today to express our deepest support for the federal employees who are needlessly suffering due to the government Shutdown. As the Chief Executive Officer of American Income Life Insurance Company and National Income Life Insurance Company Agency Divisions, I take great pride in the fact that our hearts and souls are invested in helping working families obtain the security they need in the worst of times. As I am certain is true for you, we are greatly concerned for the many federal employees and their families who have not been paid during this senseless Shutdown.

As these employees face yet another pay cycle of uncertainty, the last thing they need to worry about is their life insurance premium. So, to that end, we are extending our lay-off waiver of premium feature to all of our policyholders who are not receiving a paycheck due to the Shutdown. We believe that an exceptional situation such as this Shutdown calls for exceptional action, and we are proud to be able to offer comfort to these hard-working Americans and their families.

Additionally, we will be asking our 7,000 union agents and employees to reach out to their federal elected officials to express their support for ending the Shutdown and getting people back to work.

For any federal employee who has insurance coverage with American Income Life or National Income Life and is not being paid due to the Shutdown, please pass along the following link that they may utilize in pursuing a premium waiver for up to 90 days. A 1-800 number is also included should they need to call for assistance. Please consider posting this information on your website and/or social media.

American Income: https://www.aillife.com/Pdfs/Lay-Off_Waiver_AG2147_R0806_EF.pdf
1-800-433-3405

National Income: <https://www.nilife.com/assets/Pdfs/AG-2147NY.pdf>
1-800-516-4466

As always, we stand in strong solidarity with working families and we are ready, willing and able to partner with all of you during these difficult times.

In Solidarity,

Steve Greer, CEO
AIL/NILICO Agency Divisions

• Office: 202.833.2030 • fax: 202.833.2286/701 K Street NW, Suite 300 • Washington, DC 20006

American Income Life Supports US Union Employees During Shutdown

CEO of AIL/NILICO Agency Divisions, Steve Greer, reiterated AIL's unwavering commitment to union employees by waiving their insurance premium payments during the shutdown period.

[Learn about AIL's union policy](#)

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