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Dear Reader,

NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

NEW ZEALAND SHOWS COURAGE IN FACE OF TRAGEDY

On March 15th, the peaceful nation of New Zealand fell victim to a terror attack, the worst mass shooting in the country's modern history.

We salute the brave efforts of union police officers and first responders who acted quickly to prevent further tragedy, and the healthcare workers and others who continued the fight in the aftermath of the tragedy ([see more](#))

BAD ATTITUDE BY LATITUDE

Sixty call centre workers at Latitude Finance took to the streets of Auckland City March 25th, hanging up their phones in protest of unfair pay and work conditions.



The workers, who are members of **FIRST Union**, initiated its second strike action of the month following Latitude's refusal to meet with workers after publicly agreeing to negotiate.

The action drew additional attention after the strikers' use of cut-outs of actor Alec Baldwin, the spokesperson for Latitude's GEM Visa credit card, in its picketing. The company's tagline used in the advertising was "You can do better."

FIRST Union Organiser Kate Davis said it became evident after the first strike that the company is more concerned over picketers' use of Baldwin's image than the way staff are being treated.

The current offer from Latitude is a 3% pay raise, equating to roughly \$20 a week, which Davies says is "not enough for a day's parking, let alone living costs in Auckland city."

"We think the brand may want to reconsider investing millions of dollars in Alec Baldwin as a spokesperson and consider distributing it to the hard-working front line workers of the company." *Latitude can do better.*

TRADE UNIONS SALUTE STUDENT'S SCHOOL STRIKE 4 CLIMATE

Students across New Zealand joined the worldwide school walkout on March 15th to call for climate justice.

Stand Up, New Zealand's youth union movement, helped lead more than 40 demonstrations in protest against the impending climate catastrophe, while demanding urgent action from the government to curb carbon emissions.

School Strikes for Climate is a movement inspired by 16-year-old Greta Thunberg in Sweden, who was recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In New Zealand the focus of the campaign is to, 'Move New Zealand beyond fossil fuels and get the job done of moving us to 100% renewable energy for all!' Over 100 countries participated in the strikes.

"Teachers already took strike action to save the education system, so why shouldn't students go on strike to save our planet for future generations?" says *Stand Up* co-convenor Caitlin Wilson.

"Young people are used to our perspective not always being taken seriously by those at the top, so we empathise with workers who worry that protecting the environment could lead to their losing their jobs and incomes ... The trade union movement is united in pushing for the creation of Green Jobs that pay well and offer a secure future for working families."

Echoing calls made by its affiliate organisation, the **Council of Trade Unions**, *Stand Up* is stressing the importance of a *Just Transition*, one that ensures workers in those industries are not treated as disposable along the way.

FIRST Union [Just Transition](#) Spokesperson Justin Wallace said, "We are working in collaboration with various sectors to make sure workers aren't left in the lurch ... this will open up whole new sectors but we need to ensure the training is in place to transfer skills to the right areas ... Climate Change is no longer deniable: without a healthy planet there will be no jobs."



PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION ORGANISES OUTSOURCED IRD WORKERS

Inland Revenue (IRD) is the public service department of New Zealand, charged with advising the government on tax policy, collecting and disbursing payments for social support programmes, and collecting taxes.

Last November Inland Revenue outsourced 325 call centre workers from private-sector company Madison Recruitment to help handle the overflow of taxpayer inquiries anticipated following the next stage of IRD's \$1.6 billion Business Transformation project.

The contractors, hired for up to a year, should have been employed as IRD staff on fixed-term contracts, according to the **Public Service Association (PSA)**, New Zealand's largest union.

The PSA, which represents more than 67,000 workers in central government, state-owned enterprises, local councils, health boards and community groups, has launched a recruitment drive with the goal of having the workers covered by a collective agreement.

The Madison contractors work alongside the department's 900 call centres full-time employees.

"We believe if they are doing the same work, they should be getting the same pay, and given the same protections," said PSA National secretary Kerry Davies, adding that about 160 of the workers had joined the union "and that is growing every day."



Inland Revenue claimed the workers were not doing the "full range" of work carried out by its permanent staff and that it was comfortable with the arrangement it had with Madison.

Following a rule change in September, the PSA is now recruiting independent contractors, explaining it was concerned that its members' working conditions were not undermined by inferior terms offered to contractors driving down working conditions and pay.

UNEMIG AND IWA CALL FOR MORE OPEN VISAS

The **Union Network of Migrants (UNEMIG)** and the **Indian Workers Association (IWA)** are calling for an increase in open work visas in order to reduce the exploitation of migrant workers in New Zealand and to lift wages for all.

Through the Official Information Act (OIA), UNEMIG and the IWA have obtained information showing that, over a three-month period, over 5,000 applicants applied to have their Employer Assisted visas made open.

The **Official Information Act** allows New Zealand citizens, permanent residents, and anyone who is in New Zealand to request any official information held by government agencies - including the Ministry of Justice.

UNEMIG and the IWA are calling for newly proposed immigration changes to include removal of a visa attachment to a particular employer at that location of work.

UNEMIG and IWA also conducted a **survey** that found 650 out of 1000 respondents felt they had been exploited due to the inability to exercise their rights because their visa was attached to a single employer.

"Migrants run the risk of losing their employment and visa to live and work in New Zealand if they try to exercise their rights or speak out about the exploitation they are experiencing. Such employers also often commit immigration and tax fraud," said Coordinator Mandeep Bela.

The unions propose addressing the skill and labour shortage by attaching migrant visas to a particular region or to a particular skill *rather than* to an employer at a specific location.

"Many migrant workers feel free and safe when they receive a work visa that frees them up to work with other employers who recognise their skills and pay them fairly. This needs to be further extended to other types of temporary work visas so migrants have a freedom to work with dignity and to be able to exercise their employment rights.

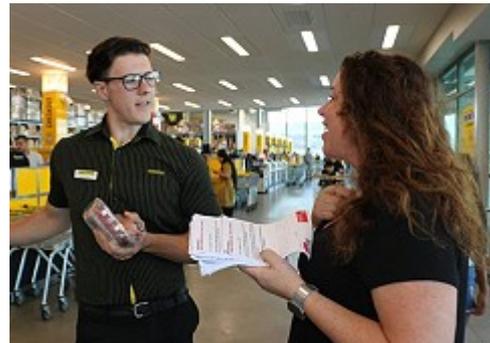
FOODSTUFFS SUPERMARKET WORKERS PICKET FOR A LIVING WAGE

Workers at two Foodstuffs supermarkets in Auckland have been picketing for fair pay.

Wages at the New World Albany and Pal N' Save supermarkets are among the lowest of all unionised Foodstuffs supermarkets, a high-end food chain.

Organisers say the employer is favouring non-union members and undermining bargaining in an attempt to break union members.

Negotiations broke down in February when the company refused to increase its first and only offer.



Organiser Kate Davis hands over customer letters requesting Pak N Save Glen Innes lifts wages and improves conditions

RECOGNIZING RETAIL

Work in retail is often considered a stepping-stone to other careers, but official figures from *Statistics New Zealand* show a thriving industry of 17,900 people working in retail on the minimum wage (June 2018 quarter figures).

In a survey conducted by **FIRST Union** member's *Worth It Campaign*, a majority of respondents who work in retail consider it a career (67.59%) and a majority of respondents (58.04%) had been in the industry for more than seven years.

"The reality is that retail is a skilled career ... and often a job held by those with very high customer service skills and product knowledge. It's also often a job that is one of the major sources of incomes for many households," said **FIRST Union** Organiser Robin Wilson.

Statistics New Zealand data show retail is one of the lowest paid industries and has one of the largest workforces on the minimum wage.

Through the [Worth It Campaign](#), members from across different retail brands are joining together to lift retail rates to living wage minimums. Wins thus far include Bunnings, Huckleberry, Westpac, Smith City and L'Oréal.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

INTERNATIONAL DOCKERS' COUNCIL UNITE IN SPAIN

International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) President Harold J. Daggett traveled to Barcelona, Spain to participate in an International Dockers' Council (IDC) Conference where they were joined by Dockworker Leaders from Sweden, France and Spain, all who reaffirmed solidarity with each other and examined how they can protect and expand Dockworkers jobs into the future.

President Daggett credited the success his union had fighting off automation to unity by his entire membership throughout negotiations; convincing employers that ILA longshore workers could out-produce any automated equipment; and knowing the ILA had the backing and support of the world-wide International Dockers' Council.

Jordi Aragunde, General Coordinator of the IDC, welcomed IDC members to his hometown port city of Barcelona. Aragunde noted the strength in the room where leaders from Dockers organizations from the U.S., France, Sweden and Spain.



SRI LANKA WORKERS STRIKES

Some 400 workers at a factory in Sri Lanka have been on strike for more than two months, and two workers are waging a hunger strike to protest the firing of five union leaders.

Workers say women have been subject to sexual abuse and other forms of gender-based violence at work, yet management is protecting the perpetrators, who continue to be employed.

"We've tolerated this for long enough," says union member Layangani Rukmali. "We are demanding the employer give us justice!"

US LABOR NEWS

THE DREAM & PROMISE ACT

The American Dream and Promise Act was introduced March 12th, championing the cause of hundreds of thousands of workers under threat of deportation. H.R. 6 combines the longstanding DREAM Act, a legalization bill for unauthorized immigrants who came to the US as children, with a proposal to allow some immigrants with temporary humanitarian protections to apply for permanent legal status.

Terry O'Sullivan, General President of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) commended Representatives Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), and Yvette Clarke (D-NY) for introducing the Act.

For the construction industry, including thousands of LIUNA members who work in the industry, the deportation of tens of thousands of skilled workers will only further exacerbate the skilled worker shortages reported by contractors and construction industry associations.

AFL-CIO EMBRACES GAMING INDUSTRY WORKERS

Days after massive layoffs last month at Activision Blizzard, the AFL-CIO issued a powerful public statement of support to game developers in the United States.

In an open letter to workers of the video gaming industry AFLCIO Secretary Treasurer Liz Shuler began an important conversation on the future of work for these "craft" employees of today.

Shuler reminded them that "growing by double digits, U.S. video game sales reached \$43 billion in 2018, some 3.6 times greater than the film industry's record-breaking box office. It's a stunning accomplishment-one built by legions of tireless game developers. There's nothing more powerful than throwing yourself into your craft, putting in day after day of passionate, hard work."

Video gaming may be a sophisticated, cerebral industry on the outside but the details of how these workers are treated is sadly similar to many industries. "They get rich. They get notoriety. They get to be crowned visionaries and regarded as pioneers. What do you get?" wrote Schuler.

"This is a moment for change. It won't come from CEOs. It won't come from corporate boards. And it won't come from any one person. Change ... will happen when you use your collective voice to bargain for a fair share of the wealth you create every day... Your fight is our fight, and we look forward to welcoming you into our union family."



UFCW ON WHOLE FOODS EMPLOYEES LOSING HOURS

In response to news that Whole Foods cut worker hours after its parent company, Amazon, enacted a wage increase for employees, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) President Marc Perrone released the following statement:

"The reports of Amazon's Whole Foods cutting worker hours is the worst case of bait and switch I've ever seen. Just months ago, they told the American people and their workers that they were raising their minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour. But now it appears that this was all a public relations stunt as they are now cutting worker hours - which is a cruel pay cut, plain and simple.

"More than ever, it is clear Jeff Bezos's retail vision is focused on driving up profits at any cost by cutting hours and replacing good jobs and skilled hard-working employees with automation. It is time for the American people to wake up to the fact that Amazon's vision, left unchecked, will cost us millions of good retail jobs.

The men and women of Whole Foods have earned the right to a better life, and they deserve so much better than the treatment they are receiving from Amazon."

NABTU CONTINUES TO GROW

Growth in union construction membership continues to be an underreported story.

The North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) is a labor federation of 14 North American unions in the building trades, founded by the American Federation of Labor in 1907.

Last year, NABTU unions gained over 70,000 active new members, continuing a growth trend with a net gain of active membership reaching approximately 375,000 since the last recession. In fact, some affiliates have surpassed their all-time active membership highs. Just as important, union construction work hours for all members from apprentice to journey-level continue to grow.

"Our members are building and maintaining all manner of our nation's infrastructure including America's energy sector which has seen positive growth for our members." Additionally, our unparalleled apprenticeship training and education model to increase safety, skill and productivity has exceeded the highest level of new registered apprentices in 10 years, and we have further committed to train over 250,000 new apprentices in the next five years.

"Growth in union membership in the construction trades means hundreds of thousands of families securely in the middle class. What is good news for the building trades is good news for the entire labor movement and for the prospects and prosperity of America's middle class.

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