



TERRY O'SULLIVAN President, Laborers International Union of North America; Chairman, ALL Labour Advisory Board
LORI PELLETIER Vice President, American Income Life Insurance Company; Executive Director, ALL Labour Advisory Board
ROGER SMITH Chairman Emeritus, American Income Life Insurance Company; President, ALL Labour Advisory Board
STEVE GREER Chief Executive Officer, American Income Life Agency Division
DENISE BOWYER Vice President, American Income Life Insurance Company; Secretary, ALL Labour Advisory Board
STEVE FRIEDLANDER State General Agent, American Income Life Insurance Company

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Dear Reader,

NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS



NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Steve Friedlander, Managing Director, American Income Life of NZ

NZ LABOUR PARTY'S FLAVOURS AND FUNDRAISER

The **New Zealand Labour Party** hosted their mid-Winter dinner and auction in Auckland June 8th with special guest New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

The event, hosted by Labour Party President Nigel Haworth, included flavours of the Phillipines and Aoetearoa by internationally award-winning Chef William Mordido of Buko Pop-Up Restaurant.

The auction included works of art by some of New Zealand's finest artists.

KMART WORKERS "WORTH IT"

Approximately 500 **First Union** members who work at retail giant Kmart are being offered the living wage.

"Kmart is an example of a retail employer who has agreed to offer living wages, proving that it can be done and it's the right thing to do," said Union Secretary Tali William, who is leading the union's *Worth It*

campaign to achieve a living wage for retail workers.

The offer means all workers with 12 months experience or more would be paid at least \$20.55 per hour, which will increase with the nationwide rise in the living wage to \$21.15 in September.

The living wage is calculated by *Living Wage Movement Aotearoa* and covers a family's basic costs like food, transport, housing and childcare.

The deal also means greater job security, including the conversion of labour-hire staff to permanent positions after a maximum period of six months.

WAIKATO HOSPITAL ATTENDANTS PICKET FOR LIVING WAGE

Unite Union members at Waikato hospital went on a 24-hour strike June 6th, calling for a living wage for attendants.

One hundred Unite Union members who work as attendants at the Hamilton-based regional hospital have been in negotiations with the District Hospital Board since November of 2018.

The attendants, who are responsible for transporting patients around the hospital, delivering patient records, medications and equipment, and managing mail, medical waste and recycling, say they feel underpaid and underappreciated.

They are seeking an increase in starting pay rates from a minimum wage of \$17.70 per hour, to the living wage, currently at \$20.55 per hour.

"The DHB has offered a living wage but it will take two or three years to come into effect for starting workers," Ross Crook, a 20-year attendant, told *Stuff*. "People are struggling now, not in two years time."

"These are hardworking union members who walk kilometers per day and keep this hospital going, and they deserve to have a decent wage without having to work endless hours and nights and weekends to make extra money ... or overtime." - *Unite National Secretary Gerard Hehir*

The DHB has purportedly tabled one offer and repeatedly declined to amend it, most recently at a mediation.



Pic: Unite Union

A union press release said "all the other union claims were either dropped or reduced significantly during bargaining" in order to push for the wage increase, but the hospital refused to move. The DHB says the same offer made to Unite was accepted last year by the E Tu union, which covers other workers at the hospital.

NEW ZEALAND RAILWAY WORKERS GAIN BIG CONCESSIONS

Members of the **Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU)** in Auckland, New Zealand secured a provisional agreement May 22nd with multinational employer Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles (CAF).

It brings to an end weeks of intense bargaining and escalating industrial conflict between the Spanish-owned company and RMTU, whose members work in all aspects of the transport industry including rail, road and ports.

"By standing strong together with their mates, these brave workers have proved once again the truth in that old union motto - dare to struggle, dare to win." -- *RMTU organiser Rudd Hughes*

The RMTU workers had planned partial strike action that intended to avoid causing massive disruption to commuters but there is no question that it would have effected day-to-day operations.

The largely migrant workforce are paid 13% less than those doing the same or similar work for other companies, such as KiwiRail, and the provisional settlement makes major progress toward pay parity between CAF employees and other employers.



Image: First Union

JUNIOR LAWYERS UNION LAUNCHED

The Aotearoa Legal Workers' Union (ALWU), a new lawyers union launched May 20th, to represent junior lawyers in the legal industry.



Formation of the group was spurred by the aftermath of a sexual harassment scandal involving the firm of Russell McVeagh and a subsequent report by the Report of the Law Society Working Group suggesting changes in the industry.

"It is ironic that these problems occur within the profession tasked with upholding justice." --ALWU interim President Hayley Coles

Junior lawyers are particularly vulnerable to issues of bullying, burnout, and sexual harassment in law firms, in addition to working long hours with no overtime pay. Hence, after graduating from four years of law school, many are effectively paid below the minimum wage.

The union will collect and publish data to promote transparency about pay and working conditions in legal workplaces, pursue collectively bargain with employers, and connect members to support where needed.

ALWU launched with close to 200 members in its first week.



Pic: Unite Union

FAST FOOD WORKERS STRIKE

Around 1500 union members employed by Restaurant Brands (RBL) at KFC, Pizza Hut and Carl's Jr. disrupted the fast food empire in Auckland the weekend of May 17th to protest wage cuts to their skilled and trained employees.

Around 1500 employees, members of **Unite Union**, took strike action over the weekend, following six days of negotiations with RBL, seeking an increase of over 7% on all existing wage rates.

For the first time Salaried Assistant and Store Managers, who are targeted for deeper cuts, are also standing alongside their waged colleagues in the action.

The last pay increase offer for salaried members was less than 3%, meaning their compensation is at a lower hourly rate than many of the waged staff they manage.

"I'm a senior member at my store and I'm getting the same as a cook that I train. If the cooks can get trained and get the same pay as me, why would I be responsible for a store?" one manager told *Te Ao Mōri* news.

RBL also wants to limit overtime to those who work more than 50 hours a week or more than 10 hours a day, which would eliminate most time and a half pay for waged workers.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION CELEBRATES ITS 108TH CONVENTION

The 108th session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) will take place at the UN's Palais des Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) headquarters in Geneva June 10th-21st.

More than 5,700 worker, employer and government delegates from the ILO's 187 member States will address a wide range of issues at the ILC, which is the ILO's highest decision-making body.

To mark the ILO's Centenary year, the meeting's Plenary will hold a number of high-level sessions throughout the conference, to accommodate the visits of a large number of heads of State and Government.

The Conference will elect its President and Vice-Presidents, to be followed by the opening address of ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, the spokespersons of the Employers' and Workers' groups, and the Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body.

This year's report of the Director-General, which will be discussed in the Plenary, will be the Report of the Global Commission on the *Future of Work, Work for a Brighter Future*, which examines how to achieve a

better future of work for all at a time of unprecedented change and exceptional challenges in the world of work.

ARGENTINA TRADE UNIONS STANDING UP TO AUSTERITY

Argentina's trade unions have joined forces in their opposition to the Macri government. The International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) three affiliates in the country, the CGT, CTA-T and CTA-A, called a general strike on 29 May.

The trade union movement is calling for an end to the austerity policies imposed as part of the government's loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

According to official figures, 14 million Argentinians are living in poverty, the highest level seen since the economic crisis in 2001. The budget cuts required by the IMF have exacerbated the already dismal economic situation, hitting workers and their families the hardest, and poverty is estimated to have increased by over six per cent since the start of the IMF programme.

"Macri was elected, in 2015, on the promise of lowering inflation and bringing an end to poverty and corruption, but since reaching power he has done precisely the opposite, having chosen to govern for a powerful minority," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

"We, the international trade union movement, fully support the demands of our trade union colleagues in Argentina, calling on the government to take action to support the real economy rather than limiting itself to following the mandates of the IMF and the financial markets," commented Burrow.

US LABOR NEWS

AFSCME Council 28, the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE), last month welcomed some of the newest behavioral health providers to their ranks.

A dozen mental health practitioner leads and mental health practitioner clinical specialists at Seattle's Harborview Medical Center joined AFSCME to tackle the issues of discrimination, safety and fair pay.

They join the rising tide of AFSCME's *United We Heal* campaign, elevating the voices and needs of the workers who are striving to modernize a behavioral health system that has not kept up with today's needs.

"I joined the union because behavioral health employees carry the incredible physical and emotional burdens of people suffering in our society," said *Garrett Hebel*. "We deserve a say (in making) our work lives better, so we can show up for our clients."

Hebel and his co-workers support some of the most vulnerable members of our communities, and they say the union will give them a chance to do their jobs to the best of their abilities.

"I am joining the union to advocate for wages that can provide a good standard of living, quality health care and safe working conditions so we can do our jobs," he explained.

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