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Dear Member,

## NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS



(PSA)

**Actress and Workers Advocate Named New Zealander of the Year**  
**Jennifer Ward-Lealand**, an acclaimed NZ actress, director and President of Equity NZ, was awarded the 2020 Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year.

Ward-Lealand, a Maori advocate and actor of 40 years, is the 11th recipient of the award and received it from Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on February 20th.

"Her positive influence for change extends far beyond performing arts. (She) has profoundly shaped the industry to better look after its people

and represent New Zealand more authentically," said award Patron Jim Bolger. "Jennifer exemplifies what it means to be a New Zealander. She is truly an inspiration to us all."

### **Maga Calls Out National Party on Minimum Wage**

**FIRST Union** General Secretary Dennis Maga issued a strong warning about the National Party, saying they do not have working peoples' interests at heart and would seek to make New Zealand a more unequal society, taking us backwards.

The comments were in response to comments made by National finance spokesperson Paul Goldsmith February 18th on Radio New Zealand's Morning Report.

When asked if a Government led by his party would commit to stopping the minimum wage increasing to \$20 per hour, Goldsmith said while he wouldn't commit to it, it was "certainly something we're thinking about."

The minimum wage is set to rise to \$18.90 in April this year, up from

\$17.70, in what will be the second \$1.20 increase in a row under the current Coalition Government. If the current pattern continues, it will reach \$20 an hour by 2021.

"Just as we are making positive steps towards reducing income inequality in New Zealand and climbing up the OECD rankings, the conservative Opposition is apparently keen to abandon ship and continue punishing the lowest-paid workers in the country," said Mr Maga.



(First Union)

"Dangling tax cuts just like in every other election in recent memory is not a remedy to reduce income inequality, which they already know...(Goldsmith's) comments suggest election posturing rather than any real concern for the books. This election campaign, it would be a great privilege for our political parties to debate the issues with evidence and compassion rather than flippancy and shock tactics - New Zealanders are sick of the spin."

### PSA Calls on HealthCare NZ to Stop The Cuts

Health Care New Zealand, the country's largest provider of home care, has announced a restructuring that will put at risk over 200 jobs in the health care sector.

On February 18th, the subsidiary of NZ Health Group released a statement saying, "The proposed new structure, including the creation of a national Service Centre, and better technological systems and processes, would help us deliver better customer-directed care and pursue growth opportunities arising from anticipated social and demographic change."



(PSA)

In response, workers are taking to the streets to protest the restructure by the privately-owned company, which they say will have a huge effect on careers and patients nationwide.

Regional coordinators will be replaced by an Auckland-based call centre to provide patients with the care they require. **PSA Union** organizer Grace Newton said, "On the ground, this means fewer people in the community, fewer people working with people."

"Coordinators in the community can really build those relationships with people and find out what they need and without those relationships, that level of care drops away," Newton says.

PSA has called on "the company leadership, funding providers and all other parties to sit around a table and cooperatively figure out a path towards HealthCare NZ being the best it can be. We can do this without slashing and burning local jobs."

On February 25th, the Grey Power New Zealand Federation Board came out against the proposed restructuring by HealthCare NZ, citing "grave concerns" about the harmful effect the cuts would have on vulnerable older people in Otago, some of them living in isolated rural areas. HealthCare NZ provides home care and support to similar clientele for many DHBs.

### NorthTec Tutors Take It to the Next Level

About 125 NorthTec tutors initiated a two-week administrative strike on February 17th, when courses started, in the hope of gaining a 3 per cent pay rise.

The action comes in advance of a planned merger with 15 other institutions in June to form the new New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, which will be headed by former Auckland Council chief

executive Stephen Town.

The merger comes as the majority of New Zealand polytechnics produced deficits and falling student numbers. In 2018, NorthTec ran at a \$3.77m loss and had a 26 per cent drop in international students.

**Tertiary Education Union (TEU)** advocate Jill Jones said the NorthTec tutors were among the lowest-paid tertiary academic staff in the country, and that for years they have suggested parity with other similar institutions with no success.



(TEU)

Jones said the tutors also lived in constant fear of redundancy. "Staff semester-by-semester face job insecurity. If the course doesn't meet pre-required numbers, the course is cut."

On February 29th TEU member tutors, who have strong support from students and the community, held a public rally, and announced they would strike two days the following week.

### **E tu Members Evacuate New Zealanders from Wuhan**

On February 5th, Air New Zealand flight #1942 landed in Wuhan, the Chinese city that has become the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic.

The flight was operated by a 20-person team of five pilots, 11 cabin crew and medical and engineering staff, who had volunteered for the special mission. Their task was to evacuate New Zealanders from Wuhan and return them home safely.



*Passengers from the Air NZ flight from Wuhan on their way to quarantine in Whangaparaoa (STUFF)*

Late that night they successfully landed in Auckland with a manifest of 198 passengers, including some Australian and Pacific Island citizens invited to board the flight,

Among the brave crew were members of **E tu union**, which has the largest aviation division in New Zealand, with over 7,000 members.

Union officials, who went to great lengths to ensure that all safety protocols were in place, and "that all the crew and passengers on board (got) back to New Zealand safe and sound," will continue to closely monitor the safety of all crew involved in the Wuhan repatriation flight. All evacuees were quarantined for 14 days at a military facility on

the Whangaparaoa Peninsula in North Auckland.

The "COVID-19" coronavirus first surfaced in Wuhan in December of last year and has since claimed the lives of over 3,000 and infected more than 88,000 in what the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared a global health emergency.

There has been one reported coronavirus victim in New Zealand, who is said to be recovering.

## **INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS**

### **Corrections Workers Care About Their Community**

For a third straight year, Ontario's correctional staff members hosted Corrections Cares About Community Safety events across the province February 17-22 to collect goods and funds for local causes that support and improve the life of the community.

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The 2020 edition raised more than ever before, according to Chris Jackel, a correctional officer and chair of the **Ontario Public Service Employees Union's** (OPSEU) Corrections Division.



"Over \$28,000 was collected - more than twice as much as last year. In addition, we amassed 815 pounds of non-perishable food items and many litres of donated blood were collected. To all members who participated in Corrections Cares, I say, 'Well done!'.

Jackel noted that correctional staff members spend their lives in the most dangerous workplaces in Ontario. "They're the target of threats, assaults and other violence as they ensure our communities are kept from harm," he said. "But then they take their service even further through local fundraising. I'm extremely proud to work with people who care so deeply about the communities they live and work in."

Ontario employs some 9,000 correctional workers in jails and probation and parole offices. Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President of OPSEU, saluted the hard work they do day-in, day-out, as well as their efforts to give back to the community.

### **PRO Act Passage, a Giant Step Toward Leveling Playing Field for Working People**

On February 6, 2020, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2474, the **Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2019** (PRO Act). The PRO Act, which has been sent to the US Senate for consideration, amends the National Labor Relations Act and related labor laws to extend protections to union workers.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, in a statement on passage of the Act, said, "I applaud the U.S. House for passing the PRO Act. Make no mistake, this is the most significant step Congress has taken to strengthen labor laws in the United States in 85 years and a win for workers everywhere.



**AFLCIO President Richard Trumka**  
(AFLCIO)

America's labor laws are no longer an effective means for working people to have our voices heard. The long overdue PRO Act will provide significant protections for workers exercising our legal right to form a union, a right that's been trampled on for decades by union-busting consultants and anti-worker politicians.

The PRO Act is the labor movement's number one legislative priority this year for a reason. Working people are hungry for a bill that will ensure a process for reaching a first contract once a union is recognized, prevent the misclassification of employees, protect the right to strike and so much else. America is ready for more unions; and

a happier, healthier and upwardly mobile workforce will help reverse the inequality of income, opportunity and power that is threatening our families, our communities and our democracy.

This bill is for working people-and President Trump's veto threat, though replete with inaccuracies and distortions, speaks volumes about who he is really fighting for. But our movement is bigger than any party or politician, and we will not rest until the PRO Act is the law of the land and the rights of workers are restored!"

### **Kickstarter United Wins NLRB Election, Becoming One of First Tech Unions in U.S.**

On February 18, 2020, the **Office and Professional Employees International Union** (OPEIU), AFL-CIO, announced that 85 engineers, directors, analysts, designers, coordinators, customer-support

specialists and others at Kickstarter have voted to affiliate with OPEIU Local 153 in New York, becoming one of the first unions for tech workers in U.S. history.

The new union's organizing committee, known as Kickstarter United (KSRU), chose to partner with OPEIU Local 153 because of the New York-based local union's long history of representing a diverse array of professionals across industry lines, and its commitment to bringing economic justice to the workplace and social justice to communities.

"The tech sector represents a new frontier for union organizing, and OPEIU is excited to represent one of the first tech groups to successfully win collective bargaining rights and to be part of the labor movement's efforts to improve the livelihoods of tech employees everywhere," said Richard Lanigan, OPEIU President and OPEIU Local 153 Business Manager.



**Members of Kickstarter United  
(KSRU/OPEIU)**

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