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Dear Member,

NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

Strengthen Our Shores, Rebuild Our Coastal Shipping

The **Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ)** and the **New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU)** is calling on government leaders to return control of coastal shipping to New Zealand flagged vessels.

In 1994, the government removed cabotage -- the restricting of coastal shipping to New Zealand vessels -- making Kiwis reliant on multinational shipping companies to carry goods between their cities and beyond.



(NZCTU/Together)

The decision has since cost local jobs and valuable skills, has harmed the climate by pushing more freight onto New Zealand's roads, and now endangers the safety of its citizens during the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to Prime Minister Lucinda Ardern, Rt. Honorable Winston Peters, Honorable James Shaw and Marama Davidson, the union said:

"Protecting and growing our domestic shipping would mean more jobs, secure regional ports, less congestion on our roads, and greater national economic resilience.

We are an island nation solely dependent on international shipping to trade. Controlling our shipping industry helps us control our destiny as a nation rather than leaving us reliant on international companies with no stake in New Zealand's success.

We should control our own shipping industry again. It's a simple change. Just remove one short clause - s198(1)(c) - from the Maritime Transport Act and leave the carriage of domestic cargo to New Zealand flagged ships.

Please, do the right thing, change the law to ensure New Zealand flagged ships have a place in our waters again. Back good jobs, build our resilience, strengthen our shores."

Sign the Petition! https://www.together.org.nz/strong_shores

Canterbury Health Staff Call for Healing

In the last month, the Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB) has imploded, with seven of the 11-member leadership team, including Chief Executive David Meates, having resigned over the handling of a proposed \$56.9 million in cuts over the next year.

Tensions have been high since board chairman Sir John Hansen and Crown Monitor Lester Levy were appointed to the board late last year.

On August 20th, about 200 Christchurch Hospital staff protested, for the second time, outside the CDHB corporate offices to make it known they blame the board for the resignations. The protest came one day after the DHB board members, led by Hansen, met to discuss how to slash the organisation's massive deficit.

Those who protested included admin workers, technical health professionals, nurses and dental assistants represented by the **Public Service Association (PSA)** and **New Zealand Nurses Organisation** members. PSA national secretary Kerry Davies earlier said the proposed budget cuts - which included \$16.5 million in nursing staff - were "irresponsible and dangerous...The world is gripped by a deadly pandemic, and our public health systems must be fully staffed and fully resourced to keep our communities safe."



Protestors outside Canterbury District Health Board (Alden Williams)

Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield, who has been heading New Zealand's COVID-19 response efforts, was dispatched by Health Minister Chris Hipkins to meet with the staff and resolve issues with the region's fractured health board.

Bloomfield told the protestors at Christchurch that he was there "to listen" and wanted to focus on the future "to make sure the organisation is nice and stable."

CDHB member Jo Kane said she told Bloomfield to sack the board and Crown monitor Lester Levy if he "really wanted to get back the trust and confidence of our staff and our community."

The chair of the clinical leaders group, Rob Ojala, said it was clear a change in governance was needed - one that was "prepared to work respectfully and collaboratively and not in the toxic fashion that has brought us to this point."

PM Ardern, in a press conference the following day, said, "We are working very hard to play a constructive role, and, "We do know we need to move quickly."



Government to Hire at Living Wage

On August 19th, Prime Minister Lucinda Ardern announced that the Government is looking to directly employ any new security guards needed at managed isolation and quarantine facilities, and guards will be paid at least the Living Wage.

"So many guards are doing really hard mahi through the COVID-19 crisis, and we need to be paid a wage that reflects that," said Security guard Rosey Ngakopu.

Government announces hire of MIQ guards at Living Wage (E tu)

E tu Assistant National Secretary Annie Newman says it shows the Government is finally honouring the Living Wage promise that all three Government parties made in the 2017 election campaign, and that "We now need to see the Living Wage in all government contracts."

"Throughout the crisis, we've been constantly reminded just how important and often difficult these jobs are. Higher wages lead to healthier and more vibrant communities. It makes perfect sense for the Living Wage to be an important factor in the COVID-19 response and rebuild."

On September 1st, the mandated **new Living Wage rate** of \$22.10 for accredited Living Wage Employers came into effect, but since it is voluntary for employers, not all workers in Aotearoa will benefit.

As an accredited Living Wage Employer, **ALL of New Zealand** is proud to join more than 200 organisations in a statement of a commitment to a Living Wage.

"ALL workers in Aotearoa deserve wages they can live on and thrive on.

A living wage is the income necessary to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life. A living wage will enable workers to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society. We call upon the Government, employers and society as a whole to strive for a living wage for all households as a necessary and important step in the reduction of poverty in New Zealand."

Learn More about [The Living Wage Campaign](#)

Pak'nSave: The Struggle Continues

After working throughout lockdown as essential workers, Pak'nSave workers are fighting for essential pay and a living wage.

FIRST Union organiser Ross Lampert said workers from the Richmond Supermarket are unhappy with the lack of bargaining by Pak'nSave Richmond owner Andrew Howard, and that the offers they are getting from the company are 'unrealistic' compared to the industry.



[Learn More](#)

"Their offer is below what is really going on out there, with Countdown going up to a living wage - their offer is significantly below that."

Former FIRST Union organiser and Labour Candidate for Nelson Rachel Boyack was the organiser for Pak'nSave Richmond when bargaining began in 2015. "An employer dragging their heels for five years is unusual," said Boyack, adding, "During the COVID-19 lockdown the public recognised the essential role of supermarket workers...who are putting themselves on the front line. These are skilled workers."

When asked if workers should be getting a wage that reflects that value, Howard said, "We are engaged in a good faith bargaining with FIRST Union and have met with them with the goal to conclude a collective agreement."

While acknowledging that the company did request mediation earlier in the year, First Union's Ross said, "We thought we could achieve a collective agreement. There was every indication that they were interested in settling, but then COVID hit. When we finally were able to meet again, they hadn't made movement on their offer."

Dollarama Is Our Amazon

Quebec, Canada: Warehouse workers organise against unsafe conditions, 'misery wages'

"I get up at 4 o'clock every morning, make a tea, and rush to Dollarama," says Gaurav Sharma, a worker at the company's warehouse and distribution centre in northwest Montreal. "I've worked at Dollarama for one year, as a pallet builder. It's a hard job."

"If I make one pallet, it takes 45 minutes. How can I make 15 pallets in 8 hours? We just have to work, work, work, and for nothing. What, \$400 or \$500 a week? It's nothing. There are injuries all the time, and we don't have first aid," Sharma says. "A few months ago, I hurt my back, and they just said to go to emergency."

Sharma is an organiser with the **Immigrant Workers Centre**, an advocacy organisation in Montreal that has spent much of the last year attempting to bring public awareness to the conditions of warehouse workers, with a particular focus on Dollarama. On August 20th, the IWC organised a rally at a metro station a few blocks away from the Dollarama warehouse.

The rally, which included speakers from unions, community groups, elected politicians, and Dollarama workers, was timed to take place during a shift change at the warehouse, according to Mostafa Henaway, another organiser with the IWC. As the morning workers left and the evening workers arrived, nearly all of them passed through the rally. Organisers handed out masks, juice, and flyers informing workers of their rights.

Founded in Matane, Quebec, in 1992, Dollarama now has over 1,000 locations across Canada and employs over 20,000 retail employees. Its head office, distribution centre, and warehouses are all located in the Montreal area. The retail chain saw sales rise and reported profits of \$86.1 million in the first quarter of 2020, a period when many stores had to shut down due to COVID-19, beating analysts' expectations and representing just a 15 per cent drop from the same period last year.



(Flickr)

Back in March, Dollarama instituted a bonus for employees at stores that remained open, as a form of hazard pay for working during the peak of the pandemic. Store workers were given 10 per cent wage increases, and warehouse workers had their wages increased by up to \$3 per hour. Now, with a second wave of COVID-19 looming in the fall, the company has announced it is cutting the bonus pay at the end of August.

The main purpose of the rally, Henaway says, was to "demand that Dollarama reinstate immediately and permanently their COVID pandemic pay. In June, Henaway says that the company announced plans to cut pandemic pay, but backed down after the IWC organised a similar rally.

"Dollarama is not some mom and pop operation," Henaway said. "It's a multinational corporation. It has investments from Bain Capital, Mitt Romney's hedge fund, and it's expanding into Central America."

In the warehouse and logistics industry in Montreal, Dollarama sets the standards for what working conditions look like, says Henaway. With around 1,000 employees, representing 5 to 10 per cent of the city's warehouse workers, Dollarama is able to "be the model of how you make a profit in the industry."

"Dollarama needs to be a focus for us, in the same way that Amazon is a focus for the labour movement around the world. We're making the argument that Dollarama is our Amazon."

According to the Commission on Warehouse Work in Montreal, a research document released by the IWC in late 2019, nearly a quarter of warehouse workers have suffered injuries at work. The majority of workers are given zero sick days, and nearly 40 per cent received no health and safety training at work. A significant portion of the surveyed workers were employed by the Dollarama warehouse.

What's more, the majority of workers - and at Dollarama in particular, nearly all of the workers - are not employed directly through the company they work at, but rather through a temporary placement agency. Such an arrangement makes for extremely high turnover, and makes organising into unions nearly impossible from a legal standpoint.

"Fundamentally, the belief is that workers need to organise for anything to actually change," Henaways says. "But the problem is that when 90 per cent of people work through agencies, it's their first job in Quebec, they're refugee claimants or failed refugee claimants that could be deported, all of that stress makes it difficult to organize."

For Henaway, organising with migrant workers at the Dollarama warehouse means both organising on the job and applying political pressure. "What we're trying to do is to give them a voice to challenge both state policies and regulations, and at the same time challenge the employer," he says. "For us, that's the two critical wings of the campaign."

The IWC and the Association des Travailleurs et Travailleuses en Agence de Placement have been reaching out to workers and helping them organise. Throughout the pandemic, organisers have set up tables near the warehouse during shift changes to distribute information about how workers can assert their rights. They've also given out masks and personal protective equipment.

For Henaway, the context of the pandemic has added urgency to the campaign to organise Dollarama workers.

"This is a critical moment, where workers are willing to take risks that they weren't able to six months ago," he says. "Our role is to be able to support that."

Amazon's Business Model Meets Sweden's Labor Unions

Stockholm: Sweden wants Amazon's cutthroat efficiency to adapt to its labor and sustainability protections.

It's Sweden's storied worker protections and climate-conscious citizens welcoming Amazon's ruthless drive for low prices. What could go wrong?

Stockholm is preparing for a tug-of-war with one of the world's most powerful companies - which just announced its entry into the Swedish market - and hopes that its arrival will mean the country of 10 million will be able to change Amazon, instead of being changed by it.

Amazon's plans - dubbed "Project Dancing Queen," after the hit song by Swedish pop group Abba - don't have a lot of detail, but analysts believe its Swedish store will go live in the fall, in time for November's Black Friday online shopping bonanza.

"Amazon has been supporting Swedish customers and selling partners across our different European stores for many years, but the next step is to bring a full retail offering to Sweden and we are making those plans now," said Alex Ootes, Amazon's vice president for EU expansion, in a statement.

Amazon's turbo-capitalism corporate culture goes against the grain of Sweden and the rest of the Nordic countries, which pride themselves in

their strong labour unions and sustainability.

But the country also has an affluent, internet-savvy market ripe for Alexa, Kindles, Prime and the thousands of items on Amazon's online store, the company believes. Around 68 per cent of Swedes shopped online in 2018, and they spent an average of €200 per online transaction. In total, the Nordic countries spent over €22 billion online in 2018, according to a study by PostNord, the country's postal service.



(Flickr)

There's not a lot of competition in online marketplaces, and nobody can match Amazon's massive cornucopia of goods. "Swedish e-commerce is still like regular retail without shopping malls," said Jonas Arnberg, the CEO of HUI, a market research company.

Amazon will change that, and force local players to adopt e-commerce faster than they would have otherwise.

"It's a perfect storm in e-commerce now. The COVID-19 impact took us two to three years forward in digitalisation. With Amazon's entry it is going to go even further," said Kristoffer Väliharju, the CEO of CDON, a Nordic online marketplace. Väliharju is optimistic about CDON's chances of taking on the tech giant, but said companies without a strong e-commerce game will likely take a big hit.

Initially, Swedish and Nordic clients will be mainly served from German warehouses - known as fulfillment centers in Amazon-speak - with trucks driving up to Sweden through Denmark, and a fulfillment center operated by local partner Kuehne + Nagel in the Swedish town of Eskilstuna, near Stockholm.

Analysts believe local warehouses are inevitable if Amazon is to offer one of its most unique selling points: quick delivery.

When in Stockholm. Establishing a local operation will be a major challenge for the company. American Amazon's anti-union stance and working culture is the antithesis of pro-union Sweden (Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's political career is rooted in union activism dating from his time as a welder).

The Swedish labour market is regulated by collective agreements between companies and unions, giving workers plenty of power over corporate decisions. Approximately 70 per cent of Swedish workers belong to a union.

"If Amazon wants to succeed in Sweden, they need to work very closely with unions," said Arne Andersson, an e-commerce expert at PostNord.

Postal Service Day of Action

United States: American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Members Rallied With Community to Demand Congress Save the Post Office

As the U.S. continues to rise up in defense of the public Postal Service and against the new policies that have significantly delayed mail, thousands took to the streets under the banner "Save the Post Office."

An estimated 300 actions took place in almost every state. Postal workers; labour, civil and human rights activists; community allies; and lawmakers made clear demands for their members of Congress:

- * Pass \$25 billion in emergency COVID relief funding for the Postal Service.
- * Permanently reverse the policies Postmaster General DeJoy put into place that caused mail delays.

"The APWU National put out the call and our local leaders, members, and community allies answered in spectacular fashion," said APWU National President Mark Dimondstein. "This is the People's Post Office and the people have shown they're ready to fight for it."



(Tim O'Connor/AIL)

"The U.S. Postal Service is a bedrock institution for every American," said Becky Livingston, Saint Louis Gateway Area Local President to a crowd of dozens in St. Louis, Missouri. "Our elected leaders must support \$25 billion in funding to make sure the post office can run effectively, and Postmaster DeJoy must reverse his harmful slowdown policies immediately." Demonstrators held signs that read Save America's Post Office and Stop Delaying America's Mail. Proper Staffing. Faster Delivery.

"It's vital," said Ceece Nucker, one of five demonstrators in rural Severn, Maryland. "I'm not just here to support voting. I'm here to support the lifeblood of the country."

In Miami, Florida, Miami Area Local President Wanda Harris summed up the disturbing state of recent postal changes: "These changes are happening in the middle of a census, in the middle of an election year, in the middle of a pandemic," Harris said. "All of this is happening right when American people need us more than ever."

The sentiment was reflected in New York City. "What we're seeing is that there's a slowdown and a breakdown of the mail," said Glenda Morris, postal retiree, while standing in a crowd which lined the steps of the Manhattan Post Office. "A lot of people will not be able to get their medication on time. The service is getting lousy because [PMG DeJoy's policies are] delaying the mail...And that's not normal. That's not normal."

At the day of action in Dallas, Texas, Dallas Area Local President Yared Wonde stressed that the demand for \$25 billion in emergency relief should not be made into a political issue. "Most people [are] trying to make it political with the elections, we're not into that," Wonde said. "It is not about Republican or Democrat - we want to save the public Postal Service."

By the end of August 25, it was clear that from rural towns to major cities, people across the country are united in saving the public Postal Service. Demonstrations with one single person to those with over a hundred delivered a clear message: The USPS is an American treasure and the people will not sit idly by while our public Postal Service is under attack.

While the day of action was successful, the \$25 billion emergency appropriation for the Postal Service remains tied up in the U.S. Senate.

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