

November 2020, Vol. 11 No. 10

TERRY O'SULLIVAN President, Laborers' International Union of North America; Chairman, AIL Labour Advisory Board

LORI PELLETIER Division Vice President, Public Relations, American Income Life Division; Executive Director, AIL Labour Advisory Board

STEVE GREER Chief Executive Officer, American Income Life Division; President, AIL Labour Advisory Board

SUSAN FULDAUER Division Vice President, Public Relations, American Income Life Division; Secretary, AIL Labour Advisory Board

ROGER SMITH Chairman Emeritus, American Income Life Insurance Company

DENISE BOWYER Secretary Emeritus, AIL Labour Advisory Board

STEVE FRIEDLANDER State General Distributor, American Income Life Insurance Company

[Sign Up for AIL's New Zealand Labour News](#)



Dear Member,

NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

Ardern Wins Reelection in Landslide

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who has become an international superstar for her management of the coronavirus pandemic in New Zealand, won a landslide reelection to a second term on October 17th.

Ardern's left of centre Labour Party won 50%, and 65 seats in the 120-member Parliament, its best showing in at least 50 years. It's also the highest result for any party since the country switched to a proportional representation system in 1996.

The Labour Party won 65 seats of the 120-member Parliament, giving it the ability to govern without the coalition building that typically characterizes proportional representation.

In her victory speech, Ardern acknowledged that while her party has "a very strong and a very clear mandate," she promised to be a voice for all New Zealanders.



Ardern addresses Labour Party supporters election night (Lawrence Smith/Stuff)

Labour's win marked a major defeat for the National Party, which won just 33 seats, followed by the Green Party and ACT New Zealand at 10 seats each.

PSA Salutes Labour's Mandate

The **Public Service Association (PSA)** welcomed Ardern's progressive electoral landslide, saying its 77,000 members look forward to implementing policies that reduce poverty and inequality, support affordable housing and create decent jobs.

In the highest voter turnout in twenty years, the public overwhelmingly endorsed an agenda to invest in public and community services and reform industrial relations law to protect ordinary working people.

"We are thrilled to see New Zealanders rally in support of transforming our country for the better. Too



PSA

many diverse communities have been neglected or abandoned for too long... A government committed to wellbeing can not only help those in need, it can change the rules and empower them to rise with their own strength." said Erin Polaczuk, PSA Co-National Secretary.

The union is strongly focused on settling equal pay claims for groups such as District Health Boards (DHBs) and public service administrative workers, NGO social service workers and library assistants, who receive less pay and respect than they deserve because they are mostly women.

"New Zealanders want equality for women, Maori and Pasifika in the workplace and throughout wider society, as evidenced by the fact these groups were voted into our parliament in record numbers," says PSA National Secretary Kerry Davies. She added, "We all need pay transparency, to expose and eliminate the discrimination which thrives in darkness. We all need secure jobs, fair pay and safe working conditions. As economic hardship continues to bite for so many, our new government has a strong mandate to step in wherever necessary and ensure no one is left behind."

Administration Names E tu's Woods as New Workplace Relations Minister

E tu union congratulates one of its own, Labour's Michael Wood, on his appointment as Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety in the new Labour Government.

During his campaign, he emphasised the importance of workers' rights, including the role Fair Pay Agreements would play in ensuring decent work and wages.

E tu Assistant National Secretary Annie Newman says Woods, an 18-year veteran of the union movement, has continually put workers at the very heart of his political life, by emphasising the need for equality in the workplace.

"Michael truly believes that all workers deserve a fair share of the economic cake and wants them to have a voice in decision-making that affects them. He has worked in Parliament for many years and is a vocal supporter of working people, including low-paid and migrant workers, as well as those in the service sector."

Woods was on hand for E tu union's Biennial Conference November 4th-5th at Eden Park, where Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern addressed the crowd. AIL of New Zealand was a co-sponsor of the conference.



New Cabinet Minister Michael Woods and AIL of New Zealand's Mario Soljan, at E tu Biennial Conference

CANZ Tackles Violence in Prisons

Violence is on the rise in New Zealand prisons, with an increase in the number of attacks directed at Corrections staff.

Compared to 2016-2017 figures, there has been a 97 per cent increase in 'non-serious' assaults, and gang involvement in those has increased by 114 per cent.

'Non-serious' assaults can still result in overnight hospital stays and may include attacks involving X-rays and stitches, and could be acts like "gouging" or "biting." There's also been a 64 per cent increase in prisoners seriously assaulting other inmates, including a 93 per cent increase in incidents involving gang members.

In an interview with *Newshub*, one corrections staffer said workers couldn't speak up or talk about this behaviour openly because "There's a



(CANZ)

culture of fear. A lot of people would like to come forward and speak, but they will be ostracised by the Department of Corrections."

Chief custodial officer Neil Beales did not deny the allegations, saying that the assaults are a result of more violent people entering the system, and is a reflection of what's happening in the community. He added that there are psychological threats against inmates or officers' families as well, and that Corrections is committed to protecting its staff in a challenging environment.

Alan Whitley from the **Corrections Association of New Zealand (CANZ)**, which represents a portion of New Zealand prison staff, said he's hopeful a crackdown on behaviour would see better outcomes for its staff.

Air New Zealand Executives Option Shares Amid Redundancies

Aviation union members are "incensed" after hearing the news that a multi-million-dollar share offer has been given to Air New Zealand's CEO, including offers to the executive team. On Friday, the New Zealand stock exchange showed CEO Greg Foran issued with rights to around \$2.03 million worth of shares.

With around 4000 of the airline's workers having already lost their jobs and hundreds of 787 crew set to be made redundant before Christmas, workers have described the airline's actions as "tone-deaf," and "another kick while they're already down as crew numbers are being decimated."

ETU Head of Aviation Savage said union members are foregoing pay increases and not collecting contractual performance bonuses to help the airline save money. "For the board and the executives to take the share options at this time will do nothing to rebuild the airline's performance. Workers are incensed - it's rubbing salt into an already painful wound," he said.

Savage, who said the union will be taking up the issue of the share offers with Finance Minister Grant Robertson, added, "Air New Zealand has drawn down on their government loan and it seems this public money is now being spent on lining the pockets of the senior management."

Trust between cabin crew employees and Air New Zealand was already at an all-time low according to the union, which represents many of the workers.

The news comes as the national carrier confirmed that they will be making around 935 international cabin crew redundant, including 550 previously furloughed staff, as New Zealand's border restrictions continue to take a toll on passenger demand.

Savage said 85 per cent of international cabin crew working on the Boeing 777 and 787 fleets had lost their jobs since the start of the pandemic. "Further staff cuts made at Air New Zealand is an appalling situation given it is a vital part of New Zealand's international trade routes and has received hundreds of millions of dollars of public money this year."



(Lawrence Smith/Stuff)

The redundancies come at the same time the International Air Transport Association (IATA), an industry lobby group, has warned that airlines cannot slash enough costs to offset severe cash burn in order to avoid bankruptcies and preserve jobs next year.

In June, Air New Zealand said its initial labour reductions of 4000 staff was expected to drive savings of \$350 million to \$400 million a year. It also said reorganisation expenses had cost the company \$140m to

\$160m.

In August, the airline posted a loss of \$454 million for the year of 30 June, the first time it has been in the red since 2002.

Full-year 2020 traffic was forecast to be down 66 per cent, compared to 2019.

In the interim, hundreds of crew opted for the company's furlough scheme whereby instead of collecting a redundancy pay-out, they went on leave without pay in the hope that when flying restarted they might be able to return and regain some employment benefits.

"E tu has proposed using extended leave without pay options and extending existing re-employment clauses as possible solutions but talks so far have not led to any agreement," said Savage.

Recovery had been slower than predicted due to new COVID-19 outbreaks, and Government-mandated travel restrictions including border closings and quarantine measures.

Air New Zealand chief operating officer Carrie Hurihanganui said, "We are working closely with our unions to see if there is a different way we can provide these crew with a pathway back to Air New Zealand."



(RMTU)

RMTU Calls For Strategic Rethink On Foundry

The **Rail & Maritime Transport Union (RMTU)**, New Zealand's largest specialized transport union, says the closure of a Dunedin foundry could be turned around by strategic leadership from industry and Government.

Bradken, which purchased the foundry off KiwiRail in 2012, confirmed in mid-October that they are closing the operations at the Kiwirail-owned Hillside site at the end of 2020.

RMTU National Secretary Wayne Butson says it would be possible for KiwiRail to step in and set up an in-house production unit. Butson, who says the Union has raised the issue with KiwiRail management and Government, said, "Taking back control of the foundry and maintaining employment of highly skilled workers is a shovel ready project that should be a focus of the Government and a state owned enterprise that is the recipient of large influxes of taxpayer funds."

"The foundry still produces castings for locally manufactured rolling stock not yet replaced by imported freight wagons, so we don't know where Kiwirail would source these in near future." The foundry also produces consumable castings for Tiwai Point smelter which, despite likely closure, is still operating for an unknown period of time.

There would be challenges in a setting up a new foundry operation but they were not insurmountable. The closure of the plant and loss of its skilled workforce would mean the end of the only large capacity foundry in the South Island and possibly the country.

Butson says there needed to be strategic thinking about maintaining an engineering hub based on rail but also servicing current and future needs for other industries. He added that the lesson of last year from COVID-19 was New Zealand must ensure it is able to produce essential goods and services in a volatile global situation.

Living Wage Week Kicks Off

This week, 9-13 November, marks the beginning of **Living Wage Week**, which highlights the importance of achieving a living wage for all Kiwis as a necessary step in reducing inequality and poverty in our

society.

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.

The [Living Wage Aotearoa New Zealand campaign](#) calls upon the Government, employers and society as a whole to provide workers with an hour wage sufficient to pay for the necessities of life and participate as an active citizen in the community.



ALL of New Zealand's Anita Ferris (far right) at Christchurch LW event

ALL of New Zealand Ltd, an accredited Living Wage Employer, was proud to sponsor last week's Living Wage Week kickoff in Christchurch and is thankful to Karena Brown for organizing the successful event.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

Essential Workers Deliver Win in Historic Victory for Joe Biden, Kamala Harris

Ohio, USA: Service Employees International Union (SEIU) leaders celebrate the election of the first black woman and person of Indian descent to be elected Vice President of the United States.

With the most votes of any presidential ticket in American history, essential workers across the country have delivered a decisive victory for President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris.

"Essential workers turned out in record numbers to vote for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, making history by electing the first Black woman and the first person of Indian descent as Vice President of the United States," said Becky Williams, President of SEIU District 1199 WV/KY/OH and International Vice President of the Service Employees International Union. "Now women and girls across the country and around the world will see a reflection of themselves in the Vice President of the United States and know that they can achieve their dreams no matter their zip code or the color of their skin."



(SEIU)

Even in the midst of a pandemic that has left more than 200,000 of our loved ones dead and created the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, essential workers like Cleveland-area homecare worker Carol Ford have turned out in record numbers across the country to vote, making their voices heard to pick new leaders who will care and govern for all of us.

"For four years, people across our country have demonstrated our commitment to standing with and for each other. In 2020, a year that has tested us like no other, we're pulling through the pandemic by pulling together," said Carol Ford, Ohio Private Sector Member Vice President for SEIU District 1199 WV/KY/OH and Cleveland-area homecare provider. "Through it all, we've rejected every attempt to divide us based on what we look like, where we come from, or where we live. And this election is no exception. We the people are proving nothing will stop us from making our voices heard."

Now essential workers say it is time to hold our new government leaders to account - to not merely tackle the crises the last government created - but to make this a place where all of us can thrive.

SEIU members believe that President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris will deliver on the issues that matter to working people, specifically raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, rewriting the rules so all workers can have a Union and healthcare for all.

"Today we celebrate this historic victory for our nation, and tomorrow we continue our collective work to demand our elected leaders take action bold enough to meet this moment of unprecedented crisis," continued Williams.

Unions Publish Own Equal Pay Directive to Protest Commission Delay

The **European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)** has taken the unusual step of publishing its own pay transparency directive in protest over the delay to European Commission legislation originally due to be published today - European equal pay day.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen promised "binding pay transparency measures" within the first 100 days of her mandate.

But 339 days after von der Leyen took office, women are still waiting for the Commission's proposal to tackle the EU's 16 per cent gender pay gap.

And the Commission has cast its commitment to the initiative into doubt by marking it as "to be confirmed" on its calendar, with publication delayed until at least 15 December.

To help get the process back on track, the ETUC commissioned experts in European labour law to draft legally watertight legislation from which the European Commission can take inspiration.

The 18 articles of ETUC's 3,000-word proposal include measures to:

- * Ban pay secrecy clauses in contracts so that workers can discuss pay
- * Require release of information on job evaluation for the purpose of establishing equal pay for work of equal value
- * Make all employers produce pay information audits and annual action plans on pay equality
- * Support trade unions to negotiate with employers to tackle the pay gap



(ETUC)

The publication of the model legislation comes a month after the ETUC revealed women in the EU will have to wait until 2104 to receive equal pay without action to speed-up the current pace of change.

Commenting on the model legislation, ETUC Deputy General Secretary Esther Lynch said: "The election of the first woman Commission president and her promise of pay transparency brought real hope of positive change for women whose work has been systematically undervalued for too long.

Sadly, equal pay seems to be slipping off the Commission's agenda despite women making up a majority of the workforce on the COVID-19 frontline in underpaid jobs like caring and cleaning.

To help President von der Leyen keep her election promise, trade unions have prepared a draft directive on gender pay transparency which the European Commission are free to use.

We urge President von der Leyen on European equal pay day to recommit to her promised pay transparency law so that Europe's women won't have to wait until the next century for equal pay."



Albertans Returning To Work Find Themselves Working Under Freshly Guttled Employment Standards Code Provisions

Alberta, Canada: It's not just a post-Halloween sugar crash that working Albertans are feeling today. It's a crash in their workplace protections, as well. The Employment Standards Code changes contained in Kenney's Bill 32, the so-called Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, came in to effect on

November 1st.

"The implementation of these Employment Standards changes moves Alberta far outside the Canadian mainstream when it comes to rights and protections for workers," said Gil McGowan, president of the **Alberta Federation of Labour**. "It tips the balance of power outrageously in favour of employers."

As of November 1st, Albertans are now working under a lower set of minimum Employment Standards, which include attacks on their holiday pay, worse layoff protection, a lack of notice for shift changes, and a near end to overtime pay for many.

"This will effectively be the end of overtime as we know it for non-union workers in Alberta," said McGowan. "This is going to vaporize huge chunks of income for many Albertans, especially those who work in industries characterized by long hours and seasonal work, like construction, energy and agriculture."

Another change worth noting is that Bill 32 allows employers to individually, or as a group, apply to be exempt from parts of the Employment Standards Code, meaning they are no longer bound by these minimum workplace rules.

"Before Bill 32 some exemptions were allowed but employers had to meet criteria and justify why certain parts of the Employment Standards Code should not apply to their business," said McGowan. "Exemptions like this could mean that entire industries would not have to pay minimum wage. It could mean that employers do not have to give 30 minute breaks every 10 hours. It could mean that overtime would never have to be paid. And so on."

The implementation of yesterday's Employment Standards changes is designed to reward bad employers and encourages bad practices that take advantage of workers.

"With the changes coming in to effect today, it is clear that Jason Kenney and his UCP government are not on the side of working Albertans," concluded McGowan.

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

[Sign Up for AIL's New Zealand Labour News](#)

American Income Life · Insurance Company · 1701 K Street, N.W., Suite 300 · Washington, D.C. 20006 ·
(202) 833-2030

[Unsubscribe](#)