



December 2021, Vol. 12 No. 11

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NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

Fast Food Workers Seek Government Protection Against Anti-Vax Customers

Starting 3 December, New Zealand will adopt a new system of living with coronavirus, ending tough coronavirus measures and allowing businesses to operate in its biggest city.

Under the new rules, most freedoms will be available to those who are vaccinated, including visiting restaurants, bars, hairdressers and gyms. For the unvaccinated, however, the changes will usher in an increasing divide. As those without vaccine passes will face restrictions on gathering sizes, and will not be able to enter most hospitality businesses at higher alert levels.

Vaccine mandates are expected to affect about 40 per cent of the total workforce, and it is striking fear throughout the fast food industry, which is expected to bear the brunt of the unruly customers.

Suzanne Green, a McDonald's staff trainer for the past five years, is concerned fast food staff will not be able to handle the aggression of unvaccinated customers denied entry to the store. "I can see where the Government is coming from trying to protect people from COVID, but there needs to be something in place to protect workers checking the vaccine passes."



(Simon O'Connor)

Unite Union National Secretary John Crocker said, "Hospitality businesses in general are going to need extra support from Government. It might be appropriate to supply increased police presence around these businesses because they are going to be victimised by anti-vaxxers."

Members of Unite have been keeping a close eye on anti-vaccination social media groups, and had seen talk of targeting fast food businesses for "micro-protests."

Hospitality NZ CEO Julie White, who supports Unite's call on the Government for help, said business owners were also concerned they could become targets of angry anti-vaccination customers, and wanted to see heightened police presence at hospitality businesses to help de-escalate confrontational situations.

Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Michael Wood said any threats to the safety of frontline workers was completely unacceptable. "We've been clear throughout the pandemic that no worker should feel that they have to put themselves in a position of feeling unsafe or compromised."

Countdown Workers Win Wage Increase

About 700 workers at two Countdown distribution centres in Auckland walked off the job 24 November for three days, ultimately resulting in a long-sought 5 per cent wage increase.



(First Union/Facebook)

The raise, which is in line with the rising cost of living, also included extra sick leave and redundancy provisions.

First Union spokesperson Jared Abbott said, "The workers said "don't come back with an offer of less than 5 per cent," and to be able to stand in front of them last night and be able to tell them they were getting their 5 per cent was a really good feeling. The vibe and the parties that happened afterwards were a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me."

Abbott, who said the agreement also covered hundreds of workers in Palmerston North and Christchurch, added, "A huge thank you to the public support, it made a huge difference to these people."

Abbott said the new agreement made them some of the highest-paid distribution workers in the country, and the extra money would make a massive difference to their families.

A Countdown supermarket spokesperson said it is very pleased to have reached an agreement with striking workers. They said staff worked incredibly hard to minimise the impact on customers and "expect things will be largely back to normal in the lead up to Christmas."

Coalition for a Safe World of Work: Violence and Harassment Must End

The Coalition for a Safe World of Work is calling for an end to violence and harassment. 24 November was White Ribbon Day, the start of 16 days of activism to end violence against women.

Wheeti Haenga is a senior union delegate and one of the few women at the Tokoroa Mill where she works. Over a long career in male-dominated industries, she has seen and experienced far too much harassment and violence at work, saying it "has to stop."

"I believe education is key to helping change our work environments. As a union delegate I talk to every new person about respectful relationships and what's ok and not ok at work. And I make sure people know that work can support them if they are dealing with domestic violence."

Rachel Mackintosh, Vice President of the **Council of Trade Unions (CTU)** who is coordinating the coalition, said, "We can undo the power imbalances and stereotypes that result in violence against women, minority communities and marginalised people in Aotearoa New Zealand. We all suffer from toxic and outdated ways of thinking about gender. There are many other healthy ways of being and interacting."



(PSA)

The first phase of the Coalition for a Safe World of Work campaign is to call for the ratification by the Aotearoa New Zealand Government of the International Labour Organisation Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (190).

Convention 190 establishes the right for people to live free from violence, in all its forms, in the world of work. It is an international legal convention that, when ratified by the government, gives us the opportunity to change the laws, policies, and attitudes that currently allow violence and harassment to happen at work.

A joint press release from PSA and E tu stated, "It's a big issue and we need integrated, preventative approaches where governments, employers, unions, NGOs and communities work together and we welcome anyone who would like to join us."

Strike Notices Announced For National Rail Stoppage

Rail workers are preparing to enact strike actions in December to pursue a general wage increase of 8 per cent, after a zero increase in 2020.



Rail and Maritime Transport strike actions scheduled to take place 16 & 17 December (NZHerald/File)

A recent nationwide postal ballot of KiwiRail workers saw an overwhelming majority, 94.41 per cent, vote for strike action in what will be the first full national stoppage of the rail system in New Zealand since 1994. The move is expected to paralyse KiwiRail operations next month, affecting both rail and ferry transport.

On 23 November, **Rail and Maritime Transport Union** General Secretary Wayne Butson served KiwiRail with two separate strike notices: A one day strike to be held by South Island union members on 16 December from 0001 hours to 2359 hours; and a one day strike to be held by North Island union members on 17 December from 0001 hours to 2359 hours.

As train control functions are located in the North Island, this will halt operations in both islands on Friday, 17 December. The strike action will affect all rail operations in New Zealand including the rail ferries and Auckland and Wellington Metro systems.

Butson said rail workers are essential workers who played their part in keeping New Zealand rolling through the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, while KiwiRail senior management received huge bonuses in the 2020/2021 financial year.

Butson, who said "there has not been an acceptable offer forthcoming from management," explained the claim for an 8 per cent increase would provide a flat rate universal increase for all members, with an 8 percent increase being applied to the gross payroll of all members then distributed equally amongst all members.

NZEI's Nga Aukaha - All in for Tamariki

NZEI Te Riu Roa, New Zealand's largest education union, is leading a new campaign: Nga Aukaha - All in for Tamariki.

According to their mission, "Tamariki in Aotearoa are missing out because learning support is massively underfunded. Issues of funding and extremely long wait times means many tamariki are not receiving the support they need to thrive. Together, we can push the government to increase funding so a child can feel connected, supported, and valued at school or in their early childhood education.

Educators, parents and whanau across Aotearoa are passionate about making sure our education system fulfills the potential of every tamaiti. Nga Aukaha - All in for Tamariki is a campaign to address the underfunding in the education system, so that all tamariki can access the support they need to thrive.



(NZEI Te Riu Roa)

Our current system means that our youngest learners are waiting an average of 80 days to access an early intervention service. Access to funding is no easier, with approximately one third of ORS (Ongoing Resource Scheme) funding applications being rejected.

The purpose of this campaign is to utilise the collective power of educators, parents, students and organisations to ensure the government takes urgent action...Now is the time for us to come together." Find out more: www.ngaaukaha.org

MUNZ Calls for Levy to Safeguard New Zealand's Fuel Security

The **Maritime Union of New Zealand** (MUNZ) says New Zealand needs to keep its own fuel tankers on the coast to ensure fuel security, paid for by a small fuel levy.

MUNZ National Secretary Craig Harrison says the closure of Marsden Point refinery was going to have a "domino effect" on New Zealand's fuel logistics network. Apart from the Marsden Point-Auckland pipeline, domestic fuel is currently shipped by New Zealand-flagged tankers to regional ports for distribution.



(MUNZ)

Harrison says the future of New Zealand coastal tankers is now in jeopardy, as Marsden Point owners Refining NZ plan to use international shipping to deliver fuel to regional ports in the future. This makes New Zealand at risk from any disruption to global shipping schedules, as had been seen with container shipping during the COVID pandemic.

"Maritime trade is very vulnerable at this point to supply chain shocks," said Harrison, noting a reliance on other countries to refine and transport our fuel was a high-risk strategy by the Government. "There has to be a comprehensive survey of fuel security issues that considers the wider

implications of a fuel crisis on the New Zealand economy."

He said a small fuel levy that provided a guarantee of New Zealand-flagged coastal tankers remaining on the coast would provide security and reduce risk in an unpredictable global environment. "In the case of a national emergency, New Zealand flagged coastal tankers could provide essential backup services, unlike international shipping which has other priorities."

Harrison said the collapse of the "just in time" supply chain model had moved the world to the "just in case" model, which placed a new emphasis on supply chain security and redundancy to protect from system failure.

Lack of PPE Puts Workers At Risk

On 25 November, which marked 100 days of lockdown for Aucklanders, unions that represent thousands of home healthcare and support workers called on the Ministry of Health for quality PPE supplies to protect all frontline workers.

The **Public Service Association** (PSA) and **E tu** said that community support workers, who will increasingly be coming into contact with COVID positive people, need N95 masks, aprons, gloves, and other adequate PPE for COVID infection prevention.

These care workers are at risk because the gloves being provided to them are breaking, exposing workers to bodily fluids and putting them at risk of infection and disease.

A Southland care and support worker said, "It's not acceptable that we have to wear food grade gloves (which) don't protect us from anything. You would never see a healthcare worker in a hospital or GP practice wearing food gloves...so why does the Ministry of Health think it's ok for us?"

E tu health director Kirsty McCully said that despite raising the matter with their employers, the Ministry of Health and chief nurse, workers are being told the gloves are safe. "This simply isn't their experience. Home support workers put themselves at risk to care for the most vulnerable in our communities. That risk increases with COVID circulating in the community."



*E tu members have been documenting how the vinyl, food-grade gloves break
(E tu)*

McCully, PSA Assistant Secretary Melissa Woolley, and Home and Community Health Association Chief Executive Graeme Titcombe, have written to the Ministry of Health's national lead for PPE saying, "We are not prepared to be fobbed off as if we are merely some second-class appendix to health services

unable to appropriately judge the appropriateness of equipment we utilise every day."

Titcombe added that the Association would be pushing for a resolution alongside the unions and does not accept that staff are being issued with inappropriate PPE. "Infection control for a support worker is paramount because they see multiple people. This is a topic on which the union and employers are one."

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

UAW John Deere Members Ratify Landmark Agreement

United States. As reported by UAW.

A strike that captured the mood of a nation in search of fairness in wages and benefits for workers, ended...when **United Auto Workers** (UAW) John Deere members ratified a landmark agreement after weeks of striking.

According to the UAW, by a vote of 61 per cent to 39 per cent, UAW John Deere members ratified the agreement, which includes an \$8,500 signing bonus; 20 per cent increase in wages over the lifetime of the contract with 10 per cent this year; return of Cost of Living adjustments; three per cent lump sum payments; enhanced options for retirement and enhanced CIPP performance benefits. Healthcare remains the same for the life of the agreement.



(CNN)

UAW President Ray Curry, on behalf of the International Executive Board, thanked the members and families of UAW John Deere for their willingness to sacrifice. "UAW John Deere members did not just unite themselves, they seemed to unite the nation in a struggle for fairness in the workplace. We could not be more proud of these UAW members and their families."

"Our members' courageous willingness to strike in order to attain a better standard of living and a more secure retirement resulted in a groundbreaking contract and sets a new standard for workers not only within the UAW but throughout the country," said Chuck Browning, Vice President of the UAW and Director of the UAW Agricultural Implement department. "The sacrifice and solidarity displayed by our John Deere members combined with the determination of their negotiators made this accomplishment possible. They have started a movement for workers in this country by what was achieved here today and they have earned the admiration and respect of all that strive for what is just and equitable in the workplace."

Locally, UAW Region 4 Director Ron McInroy thanked the communities and families of John Deere UAW members for their support and thanked the members for their solidarity. "Our members stood together and did not waiver," said McInroy. "Members and their families put a lot on the line for these gains and the community support was overwhelming. I'd like to thank the John Deere members, their families, their leaders and our bargaining team for standing firm and achieving these important gains."

Starbucks Launches Aggressive Anti-Union Effort As Upstate New York Stores Organise

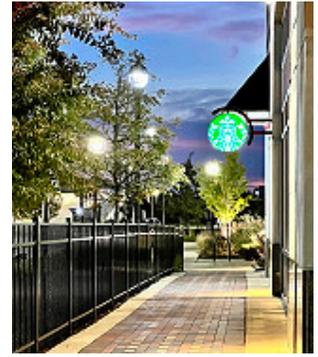
United States. New York. As reported by *The Guardian*

Will Westlake, a Starbucks barista in Hamburg, New York, whose store recently filed for a union election, was told by a manager he could attend an earlier mandatory anti-union meeting on 8 November because he was scheduled to work early the next day.

The hour-long meeting was in a nearby hotel and when Westlake arrived he found out he was the only worker in attendance, with six members of Starbucks management. "That was basically how my last anti-union meeting was, totally separated from the rest of my co-workers and having to be surrounded," said Westlake. "They started off by...saying that they wanted me to vote no for the union. And then they went back and forth talking about how great all the benefits are at Starbucks and if we vote in a union, we may not have those benefits."

Westlake emphasized the numerous anti-union meetings have been framed as listening sessions, but it's the workers who have been doing most of the listening.

Westlake's experience is just one part of an aggressive anti-union campaign run by the giant coffee chain as six Starbucks stores in the Buffalo, New York, area have filed for union elections with the National Labour Relations Board in recent weeks. If successful, the stores would be the first Starbucks corporate locations to unionise in the US.



Workers have reported numerous captive audience meetings, one-on-one meetings, store shutdowns, closures, remodelings, and text messages -- a mode of contact previously used only for emergencies. Dozens of corporate executives have flooded stores with the intent to deter workers from voting to unionise, workers say.

"The company has sent more managers here to Buffalo than workers voting in the first three elections. There's no way it can be viewed as anything other than an attempt to spy on partners and intimidate them," said Brian Murray, a Starbucks barista in Lancaster, New York.

The former Starbucks CEO and billionaire Howard Schultz visited Buffalo to present a case against unionising to workers on 6 November and incited criticism for making an analogy to the Holocaust in discussing the company's mission.

Starbucks Workers United filed an unfair labour practice charge with the NLRB on 4 November over Starbucks' conduct during the union campaign, which included Starbucks shutting down two stores that are holding union elections and transferring workers to disrupt the voting units. Starbucks called the closures coincidental.

At one store, said Richard Bensinger, an organiser with Starbucks Workers United, 80 per cent of workers signed union authorisation cards, and Starbucks shut down that store. The company transferred workers to other stores and turned the location into a training center.

According to a December 2019 report conducted by the Economic Policy Institute, US employers are charged with violating labour law in 41.5 per cent of all union elections and spend nearly \$340m annually on union avoidance consultants, tactics that labour leaders and many elected officials are hoping to rein in with the Pro Act in Congress.



SB Workers United
A Union of Starbucks Workers, By Starbucks Workers, For Starbucks Workers

"It's been really stressful, especially when there are times when they come in a group of four or five of them to talk to every single person on the floor. It's 10am, peak coffee time, and we're trying to keep up business while they're trying to do one-on-one meetings," said Angel Krempa, a shift supervisor at the Starbucks location in Depew, New York. Krempa's is one of three stores that filed for a union election with the NLRB this month, joining three other nearby stores that have begun their mail-in ballot elections.

As corporate executives have shown up at stores as a part of the anti-union campaign, her store manager, along with several others in the area, have resigned. She noted that shortly after her store filed for their union election, on 9 November, Starbucks announced the store would be remodeled, the third time in the past eight months.

The corporate presence, Krempa argued, has worsened working conditions, as workers feel constantly under surveillance, and it has consistently disrupted regular job duties, while problems such as short staffing, lack of proper training and safety measures remain unresolved.

Starbucks deferred comment to a letter by Starbucks Executive Vice President-North America Rossann Williams, who noted operational changes in the Buffalo area were a response to operational gaps.

"We care deeply about our partners here in Buffalo, as we do in every market across the country, and we want to preserve our partner to partner relationship," wrote Williams. "While it is certainly our partners' right to make their own decision -- and one we fully respect -- I do hope our partners will give us a chance as they make the best decision for themselves, their families and their fellow partners."

Nursing Unions Around World Call for UN Action on COVID Vaccine Patents

EK, EU. As reported by The Guardian

Nursing unions in 28 countries have filed a formal appeal with the United Nations over the refusal of the UK, EU and others to temporarily waive patents for COVID vaccines, saying this has cost huge numbers of lives in developing nations.

The letter, sent on behalf of unions representing more than 2.5 million healthcare workers, said staff have witnessed first hand the "staggering numbers of deaths and the immense suffering caused by political inaction".

The refusal of some countries to budge on rules about intellectual property rights for vaccines had contributed to a "vaccine apartheid" in which richer nations had secured at least 7bn doses, while lower-income nations had about 300m, it argued.

Such a distribution was not only "grossly unjust", the letter said, but the rampant transmission of COVID in developing nations also increased the risk of new variants emerging, such as Omicron, first identified this week in South Africa and which has prompted the UK and other nations to tighten travel restrictions and other rules.



(Sumaya Hisham)

South Africa, along with India, has been pressing the World Trade Organization (WTO) to help improve access to vaccines by waiving the multinational Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (Trips) agreement.

A temporary waiver on Trips provisions for COVID vaccines would, supporters say, allow them to be manufactured more widely, improving global distribution. On Friday, US President Joe Biden called for WTO members to take this step following the emergence of the Omicron variant.

However, other countries have resisted. The letter to the UN-coordinated by the healthcare umbrella organisation Global Nurses United, and Progressive International, a collection of leftwing parties, movements and unions – cited what it called an "immediate threat to people's right to health" from the EU, UK, Norway, Switzerland and Singapore.

It said that at least 115,000 medical and healthcare staff around the world have died as a result of COVID, and that while 40 per cent on average have been fully vaccinated, in Africa and the western Pacific the figure is lower than one in 10.

"As frontline workers, we are well placed to testify against the violation of the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health because of the impact of a delayed COVID-19 Trips waiver," the letter warned.

It was sent to Tlaleng Mofokeng, a South African doctor and health campaigner who is the UN's special rapporteur on physical and mental health, and has the power to launch an investigation under the UN's human rights council.

Mofokeng said the demand for a patent waiver "is one I share." The role that health workers have played during the pandemic "provides them with moral authority" over the issue, she added.

In addition to South Africa and India, the call comes from unions representing nurses and healthcare staff in the US, Ireland, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Curacao, the Dominican Republic, Greece,

Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Uganda and Uruguay.

Deborah Burger, Co-President of the National Nurses United union in the US, said the unequal distribution of vaccines and the resultant likelihood of new COVID variants "poses a dire risk to all people around the world".

Shirley Marshal Díaz Morales, the Vice President of Brazil's Federação Nacional dos Enfermeiros union, said: "It is way past time for the governments of the world to prioritise the health of the people over the profits of multinational corporations by approving the vaccine waiver."



UNIFOR Local 914 "Flying Squad" (CLI)

Gender Equality Key in Toxic Waste Strike; Employer Choppers in Scabs

Canada, Ontario. As reported by the Canadian Labour Institute. Scabs running picket lines is bad enough. But airlifting scabs over picket lines is something else again. But that's the kind of bare knuckle battle the employer has forced on the workers at a toxic waste treatment site in Sarnia.

The 76 workers at the Clean Harbors site, all members of **Unifor Local 914**, went on strike 22 November. They are lab workers, janitors, and loader and fill operators.

"Gender equality and fairness are at the core of this job action," said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President. "The employer can either follow the collective agreement and ensure wages keep up with inflation or it can expect work disruptions."

"It is not business as usual at the Clean Harbors site," said Tom Rinker, Local 914 President. "These workers have earned a fair offer that reflects their role in the profitable operation of this facility."

National Representative Gary Lynch says the employer deliberately discriminates against the women they hire. He points out women don't even have their own changerooms or showers at the facility.

"The company is not progressing the female members and staff onsite by seniority," says Lynch. "The erosion of seniority rights and their progression around the plant isn't being honoured. So, we've got some big ticket items still to deal with."

"We have female individuals that have been skipped over for job progression, which it's clearly spelled out in the Collective Bargaining Agreement."

"The company's been fighting with the union over — 'Ah, we don't feel she's qualified,' but you hired her. You brought her in on an entry level, her seniority takes her to the next progression and you're saying 'no' and hired outside the unit and brought somebody else in."

Lynch said the women are not brought on to just be janitors and be stuck at the very lowest pay scale, adding that it's 2021 and time for the company to get with it.

"The company will not budge on some of these issues. To be honest, they've filed for a Section 108 which forces a vote of the membership should the minister see fit. It's all posturing, we've already had a strike vote and we had 100 per cent unanimous support."

An early settlement is not likely, says Lynch, particularly with the employer decision to go bare knuckle and fly in scabs just three days after the strike started.

"Unifor has taken the stance that the company -- with flying in scabs in helicopters -- is trying to send a message that this is now a dispute over monies and who has the most money to spend, and not what's in the best interest being our members and their employees."

The use of the helicopters adds a whole new dangerous dimension to the strike, says Lynch. "What goes in that landfill needs to be covered. They're landing near the talc site, which they have stockpiled waste there, and now that's become airborne.

"Everybody in hell's radius there is going to be exposed to terrible, toxic stuff. Now, I'm going to go bang on every single farmer's door and let them know that their children could be exposed."

"We don't bake cookies here," said process operator Derek Roehler "we're in a hazardous waste environment. "It's a very dangerous environment and I hope that the other people that are coming in are trained to do the job."

The last collective bargaining agreement expired on 29 April, 2021.

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