

The Northern News

CONFIDENTIAL INTERNAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN AMALGAMATED WORKERS UNION

NAWU 2011

This year will be a busy year for your Union. We will have some difficulties when the 90-day 'Sack at Will' law and Union Access laws that come in on April 1st (April Fool's Day). However I am reasonably confident that only a small number of Employers will try to take advantage of these draconian anti-worker laws.

Our main focus, this year will be on protecting our members from injustices and negotiating the renewal of Collective Agreements, including the 13 we have with the new Auckland Council. I feel strongly that the amount of disciplinaries will increase, as sacking people is cheaper than paying redundancy compensation. Again, we believe this will only apply to a reasonably small number of Employers.

Of course, later in the year the big issue will be the General Election. Workers need to ask themselves if the Key Government has improved things for

themselves and their families. The reality is that everything continues to rise in price and as Key sells off State assets, the Government income from these assets will fall and we will pay more. Can we really trust Key when he says it will only be a partial sale of these assets. Don't forget prior to the Election in 2008 he promised not to increase GST (he told a 'Porky')

He certainly has no love for workers. So if people continue to put their trust in him, they will be bitterly disappointed.

Finally there is a small Union that operates in Northland that has shown interest in amalgamation with the NAWU. Talks appear to be progressing favourably and if this eventuates, we hope to have it finalised by March of this year. You can expect a further report next issue.

UNIONS ENDORSE LABOUR TAX & JOB PROPOSALS

Unions have welcomed the Labour Party's proposals to focus on job creation and overhaul the tax system.

"The Government's tax changes in the last budget gave by far the most to those who needed it least, and the tiny benefits to the lowest paid have disappeared in the GST hike and the rising cost of living. A tax free band and increased taxation on the highest incomes is fairer and will begin to reduce the extremes of inequality that have grown in New Zealand over recent years."

We have also been calling on the Government to do more to create and protect jobs from the moment

unemployment began to soar as a result of the global financial crisis. Despite an initial willingness to discuss initiatives the Government has not done nearly enough support for employment. We welcome the Labour Party's commitment to invest in skills training, smarter working and higher value industry, especially the double wins which can be had from green technologies.

The current Government has abandoned the unemployed and the low paid. New Zealand needs policies which will lift employment over the long term, redress inequalities and build a sustainable future for everyone.

THE BENEFITS OF BELONGING TO AWUNZ!

In late December 2010 a family trip to Rotorua ended in tragedy. 10 year old Toromon Falaile fell into one of the many hot pools at Kuirau Park, Rotorua. He suffered very severe burns. He was moved to Middlemore Hospital in Auckland, but despite the best efforts of Doctors and Nurses, this young lad died.



His father, Falaile Toromon is a member of AWUNZ. His workmates contacted the Union to let us know of this tragedy and on 26th January 2011, the Secretary Ray Bianchi travelled to Hamilton to meet

with Falaile and to express on behalf of all AWUNZ members our sympathies for his loss and to hand over on behalf of the Welfare Committee a cheque for \$3,000. This was one of the first payments made under the revised level of payments endorsed by members at last year's round of Stop-Work meetings.

This fund is included in members Union Fee and is not run by an Insurance company, but by the Union's Welfare Committee which enables payments such as this to be made quickly, at the time that a family is in need. Our koha scheme is the only Union scheme we are aware of that not only helps the family if the 'Bread Winner' (Member) passes away, it helps the Member if the Member's Spouse/Partner or Child (up to the age of 16) passes away.

Also in attendance, were a number of workmates of Falaile at Downers in Hamilton. We again, express our sympathy to Falaile and his family.



Why is Construction in such a state?

Problems in the economy at large are magnified tenfold in Construction. Developer's hunger for short term profits, leads to 'bubbles' in the property market that inevitably burst, leading to misery for Construction Workers.

A classic example is the "Soho Square" development in Ponsonby, which has remained a bloody great hole in the ground since the Developers went into receivership in late 2009. The Global Financial Crisis that hit us in 2007 resulted in the collapse of about two-thirds of the finance companies in New Zealand. This meant that an important source of finance for new and existing construction projects dried up nearly overnight. The crisis was originally caused by Speculators gambling on the international markets, but the workers – who had nothing to do with the crisis – are now expected to carry the can, with redundancies and lesser conditions. It's time we got organised to say **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!**

Part of the problem is the contracting system that dominates the industry. Subcontractors engage in a 'race to the bottom' to put in the lowest tender to win the job. It has now got to the stage of 'buying work' i.e. pricing jobs at zero margin (or less). The 'Subbies' then try and screw the difference out of their workers. One such outfit approached us a couple of years ago to ask if our members would agree to take a **6% PAY CUT!** Naturally, we told them to "go forth and multiply"!

The solution is pretty simple; we can close the wage gap with Aussie by building up a similar level of unionisation in the Construction industry over here. It's achievable – we did it in the 70s and 80s, and we can do it again. A better deal for construction workers will set the trend for bargaining in other industries. So if you're fed up with low wages, long hours, questionable safety and no job security. **IT'S TIME TO SPEAK TO THE UNION!**

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