

Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union

Fired for reading a newsletter: The NZ Meat Union's ongoing fight against Talleys, the worst company in the world

The meat industry is full of shady characters, but few characters in Australia can compare to Talley's, New Zealand's largest agribusiness company. This enormous company owns and operates nearly all of the meat processing plants in New Zealand. They control their plants with the kind of iron-fisted regime that you'd expect from a moustache-twirling movie villain, and they *hate* unions.

Talleys hates unions so much that they have actually banned their workers from wearing union shirts on site. If you show up to work wearing a green '[Jobs That Count](#)' shirt you won't be let in the front gate. That's the Talley's order.

No unions allowed

In 2012, [Talleys locked 776 union workers out of their plants](#) across New Zealand for 84 days. Negotiations for a collective agreement broke down so the company did the sane, sensible thing: they just barred all of those union workers from coming to work - end of story.

Talleys had to back down after a massive strike action by the union forced them back to the bargaining table. A momentarily frustrated Talleys went quiet, bided their time, and then when those contracts expired... they did it all over again.

In June 2015 Talleys shut the gates on 170 workers at one of their AFFCO plants. These union workers had refused to sign individual contracts that would have lowered their wages and slashed their conditions, so Talleys locked them out.

They continued locking them out even after [the Employment Court found in November that it was illegal](#). It was another three months until Talleys let them back to work in February. Three months without pay, without work, illegally kept out of your job by a company that hates you because you want to get paid and treated fairly.

Like all good villains, Talleys doesn't care about little things like "the law". Talleys cares about crushing its enemies - at all costs.

Maybe there's more to the story?

At this point you're probably thinking "There are two sides to every story. Maybe Talleys is misunderstood!" Let us clear that up for you: we're talking about a company that sacked a worker over "serious misconduct"... [for reading a union newsletter](#). This is a company that [couldn't be bothered to call an ambulance](#) when one of their workers slashed his arm open on a slaughterboard.

Talleys is the sort of company that tried to force its employees -- against the law -- [to work on the Waitangi Day public holiday](#). The sort of company that makes repeated [submissions to the](#)

[Government](#) to water down Health & Safety laws, arguing that “making sure people don’t die” will cost them too much money. The sort of company that [secretly \(and illegally\) donates millions of dollars into politics](#) to get anti-worker parties elected.

It’s not just their meat workers that Talleys wants to screw over. They [gassed 11 frozen foods workers with carbon monoxide](#) and had to pay \$110,000 in fines. They lost a sexual discrimination case after [refusing to allow a woman to work as a fish-filleter](#). Andrew Talley defended this decision by saying that fish-filleting was ‘a man’s job’ and a woman’s place was to be a ‘pole dancer or a beautician’. Yes, **this really happened**.

[Talleys Wikipedia page](#) has a string of industrial relations and health and safety disputes as long as your arm. Over the years they been fined, and fined, and fined again. They don’t care. In fact, in an unprecedented step, Talleys was ordered last year to [pay \\$144,000 directly to the Meat Workers Union](#) after the Employment Court found that the company had illegally blocked union representatives from entering workplaces.

Talleys doesn’t care. By this point, you’ve hopefully realised that Talleys only cares about one thing, and one thing only: Talleys.

Watch your mouth

The Hollywood supervillains at Talleys have launched a new offensive on our comrades in New Zealand this month, taking their fight to social media. Talleys are now aggressively shutting down their employees from discussing work on Facebook and Twitter, warning staff to keep their mouths shut if they want to stay in a job.

They’re also trying to get the Meat Workers Union to keep their mouths shut, too: they’ve filed an application with the NZ Employment Authority for an interim compliance order which would gag the union from saying nasty things about them “on any website, twitter account or other site viewable on the internet”.

The language of their application is so broad that it could be applied to any union member, anywhere online, at any time. This isn’t a problem for Talleys: they hate every member of the union, from the bottom to the top -- but there’s nobody they hate more at the moment than union organiser Darien Fenton.

New Zealand’s evil meat mega-corporation are particularly angry at Darien for her frustrating tendency to do things like “tell the truth” and “not shut up”. This year they took the unprecedented step of applying to the Employment Authority to bar Darien from negotiations, arguing that it was “unfair” of Darien to tell people how relentlessly awful they are. It won’t work of course, because like nearly everything else Talley’s does, it’s **completely illegal**.

The fight in New Zealand is ongoing and we’re supporting our comrades there 100%. Why not share this article around with your friends for a glimpse at just how bad things can really get if an employer is allowed to have their way?