

AFFCO Talley members – update #3

What's happened?

AFFCO Talley members at Rangioru were given company IEAs. It was made clear that they had to accept them if they wanted to return to work after the layoff.

What did our union do?

The Meat Workers Union asked the Employment Court for an interim injunction to stop AFFCO Talley's requiring members to sign new IEAs in order to return to work. AFFCO Talley argued that the plant couldn't operate without the 480 minutes, among other things. The Judge decided that on the balance of convenience, not to grant that injunction.

Why did Rangioru members sign the Company IEA?

If the members didn't sign, they wouldn't have a job. This goes back to decades old court decisions that say every time meat workers start work after the seasonal layoff, they are "new" workers, which gives the boss the right to set new terms and conditions.

Why didn't they just refuse?

Workers could have refused to sign but this would have left them with no job and unclear legal rights because they would no longer be "employees" under the law as it currently stands.

Does this make them non-union?

They are all still union members. The law says anyone can join a union and organise, regardless of whether they are on an individual or collective agreement. This still gives the union the right to represent them, to bargain collectively, and the workers the right to organise, including things like stop work meetings.

So what is the difference between a collective and an individual?

Where there is a collective agreement [CEA] in place, new workers can join it by joining the union. If they don't they are on individual agreements [IEA]. At AFFCO Talley's, the collective agreement expired in December 2013, so members have been on individual terms and conditions based on that expired collective.

Prior to the AFFCO lockout in 2012, a number of workers signed and are still signing individual agreements that have lesser conditions. The latest individual agreement has many more conditions removed and a longer working day before penal rates (overtime payments) apply.

So, where to from here

It's clear that AFFCO Talley's intend to roll out this model of trying to get all workers on their preferred individual agreements to all plants. Imlay is next.

Legal action is just one step in part of a bigger strategy. The Judge has ordered mediation around the issues at Rangiuru and the collective agreement which will take place soon.

The bigger proceedings will go to a full hearing of the Employment Court where the union will argue workers were unlawfully locked out, and challenge decades-old decisions that say that meat workers are new workers every time they are re-employed after the season.

The collective agreement

None of this means that bargaining is over for a new collective agreement. Talley's actions change nothing and bargaining for a new collective agreement is still our best way through this. The union will continue to push for this and we need to organise in every way we can to succeed. The Collective Agreement will cover Rangiuru and company Individual Agreements will no longer apply.

What you can do

Stay union, stay strong. Sign up those non-union members. Everyone is in the same boat now and we need to build our organisation and strength on every job.

What our union will do

We will continue to pursue legal action, as outlined, along with every other avenue to get support for settling the collective agreement. We have built strong community support and lifted our profile in the media. Your stories matter, and we will tell them. With your help, we will reach out to your local community and get them on board as well.

We will do this together.

**We knew this would be tough.
Keep in touch, support each other and stay union.
This is week #4 of taking back the power.**

AFFCO Talley union members – update #2

It's been a hard week for our fellow union members at Rangioru. The Meat Workers union asked the Employment Court for an interim injunction to stop AFFCO Talley's requiring them to sign new IEAs in order to qualify for a return to work.

The Judge decided that on the balance of convenience, not to grant that injunction. AFFCO argued that the large number of non union members would be disadvantaged if the plant didn't open and that Rangioru couldn't operate without the union members agreeing to the 480 minutes, among other things.

However, this was just the first step. The proceedings will go to a full bench hearing of the Employment Court where the union will argue workers were unlawfully locked out, and challenge decades-old decisions that say that meat workers are new workers every time they are re-employed after the season.

What it has meant for Rangioru members is they had no choice but to sign the individual agreements to get back on the job. It was a tough call, but the decision was made collectively by union members. They needed keep fighting because if they walked away, the Company would win.

We have also filed in the Employment Authority for breach of good faith and undermining the bargaining and the parties have been ordered to urgent mediation around the collective agreement negotiations.

Rangioru MWU members have their heads held high. They took the decision to stay union and fight another day.

This is now going to happen in other plants, starting with Imlay in the next fortnight.

**We knew this would be tough.
Keep in touch, support each other and stay union.
This is week #3 of taking back the power.**

AFFCO Talley union members - update

At Rangioru this week, workers have been invited to unpaid “information” meetings and given individual agreements for the new season, which is due to start on 22 June. They have been given a week to sign, including getting advice if they want.

The new agreements incorporate many of the changes the Company has been trying to get you to agree to in collective agreement negotiations and other cutbacks.

Rangioru members are not signing the agreements.

Our union has filed legal action in the Employment Court for an injunction to stop the company requiring workers to sign an individual agreement to get a job, on the grounds this is an unlawful lockout.

We have also filed in the Employment Authority for breach of good faith and undermining the bargaining.

Rangioru MWU members are staying strong. We are doing our best to get the story into the media and we are ramping up the social media.

Please keep an eye on www.jobsthatcount.org.nz or on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/jobsthatcount?ref=settings> . Some sites have their own closed Facebook pages, which are a good place to talk to each other without the company spying.

If you don't have access to the web, keep in touch with your delegates, who know how to contact union officials or the union office.

**We can do this together. It may not be quick or easy.
But this is week #1 of taking back the power.**

PS : This is probably a good time to talk to those non union members as well. At Rangioru they are also being asked to sign agreements that will take rights away and reduce their conditions.