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AFFCO TALLEY'S WORKERS IN WAIROA SAY ENOUGH

Around 250 members of the NZ Meat Workers Union in Wairoa are saying no to the unlawful lockout tactics of their employer, AFFCO Talley's, by refusing to accept punitive individual agreements as a precondition to returning to work after the seasonal lay-off.

Wairoa is the fourth AFFCO plant to experience this process in the last three months, after AFFCO Talley's walked away from mediation around renewal of the collective agreement and sought to have the Employment Authority end the bargaining.



Meat workers have returned to work in Rangiora, Invercargill and Manawatu to a climate of fear, of managerial dictate and punishment. Worse still, skilled workers with years of service are being forced to leave because of unreasonable shift arrangements and uncertain income.

In July, the NZ Meat Workers Union sought an injunction to prevent what they argue is an unlawful lockout at the first roll-out of individual agreements at Rangiora. At the time, Chief Judge Colgan denied the injunction, but said there is an "arguable case" and a full bench of the Employment Court will hear this in early October.

"Wairoa workers have seen the impact of accepting the company's individual agreements in other sites and they've decided they won't put up with that" says Eric Mischefski, NZMWU Branch Organiser.

"The workers know this isn't going to be easy. The company will try to recruit other workers both locally and from other towns to replace them".

"But in a small town like Wairoa, the workers have wide support, including whanau, hapu and iwi".

"Wairoa knows that it is important the workers at the freezing works do well or local businesses and the community pay the price." says Mr Mischefski.

TALLEY'S WAY IS NOT THE KIWI WAY

The Talley family are one of New Zealand's wealthiest families. Their operations include Seafood, Vegetables, Dairy, Ice Cream and Meat. One of their family, Peter Talley was recently knighted for services to business and the community.

But this company has a torrid history. In 2012 they locked out workers in their AFFCO meat plants for 84 days. Families and kids suffered, and it was only the support of fellow meat workers, unions, communities and iwi that got them through the then deadlocked negotiations and produced a new collective employment agreement that the company and workers could live with.

Now the Talley's are at it again

Around 1000 members of the Meat Workers Union work at the Talley's AFFCO meat plants in small communities like Moerewa, Horotiu, Rangiuru, Wairoa and Fielding and tannery plants in Wiri and Napier, where whanau, communities and local businesses depend on the freezing works .

Their collective employment agreement expired at the end of 2013 and the Meat Workers Union has been trying to settle a fair agreement ever since. All the union now wants is to roll over the agreement with a nil wage increase. The company have refused, have walked away from negotiations and have now applied to the court to end these negotiations.

The MWU and our members employed at (now) Rangiuru, Imlay and Manawatu meat plants (Wairoa Friday 4th September) AFFCO's actions in insisting upon employing those employees on the company's own and largely non-negotiable form of individual agreement is unlawful in a number of respects. These imposed individual agreements on members has stripped away many important provisions that were protected by the union agreement. Workers have been compelled to sign these agreements or lose their seasonal employment which in most cases goes back 20 years+.

One of the many repressive provisions of this new agreement is that workers must be available for work any time of the day or night 7 days a week if called upon to work. Now at most of the AFFCO sites the company has forced large numbers of union members to move from day work to night shift. If they don't comply they lose their job. (We suspect the company has done this as a form of punishment to these workers for belonging to a Union). This has caused huge disruption to these workers families and their wider communities. For these workers it is impossible to plan any family or community activities and it is having a negative effect on their wellbeing.

AFFCO/Talley's needed to negotiate new IEA's that reflect the competitive industry

Not likely, AFFCO are after low costs to increase profits.

The volume of meat exported per person employed has risen from 23 tonnes in 1980 to 44.4 tonnes today (2014) – a productivity gain of 93%.

Beef prices at record highs

The \$NZ averaged .71 from 1971 – 2015, today it is below that average at .64, this is of huge benefit to meat exporters.

Workers should not be enslaved

All these workers want is a fair collective employment agreement. Talley's actions are not the Kiwi way. If they want the trust of their customers, they have to show they treat their workers fairly and safely.