



# UNION NEWS

November 2013

**Insecure work affects at least 30% of NZ's workforce - over 635,000 people - and probably far more than that. Insecure work is most found in casual, seasonal, contracting (including labour hire) & fixed-term types of work.**

**2014 - GENERAL ELECTION - are you on the roll to vote? If you don't vote, then you are accepting, low wages, fast chain speeds, shorter smoko breaks (no breaks), long hours of work, high accidents and minimal ACC entitlements!**

## Insecure Work In NZ

Workers in NZ are under pressure - and much of this pressure comes from insecure work. This is the insecurity of not having definite hours of work, of not knowing if you are an employee or a contracted worker, of having no protection against sudden redundancy, of experiencing the absence of a collective employment agreement protecting your pay and conditions. This insecure work often leaves workers feeling they are not wanted, not valued, not really needed. It is damaging for them, for their families and for our communities.

Insecure work, for most people, means their lives are dominated by work; waiting for it, looking for it, worrying when they don't have it. They often don't have paid holidays - which

can mean no holidays at all. They lose out on family time, they often don't have sick leave. They are vulnerable if they try to assert their rights or raise any concerns. They are exposed to dangerous working conditions and have to accept low wages. They can't make commitments - to family time, to sports teams, to church activities, to mortgages, or even increasing their skills.

Insecure work was widespread over a 100 years ago, before protections were put in place across the developed world to promote greater security and ensure that work benefited both employer and employee. But now there is a concerted trend to turn the clock back, to move once more towards a world of insecure work, one in which the risks in the employment relationship are shifted still further from businesses and more and more on to workers.

**Mike and Kevin, meatworkers, contributed to this Summary Report.** They have worked at the meat works for 40 and 20 years respectively. The meat industry is hard on its workers. They don't know from day to day how many hours they will be working, and because its seasonal, they don't know from year to year how many months they will have. Mike worked 24 hours last week and 30 this week. Pay at the works used to be good, but now our families can no longer survive. Kevin describes his usual day: *"we go to work, and if we're there all day, you're there all day. You really can't plan for anything."* Typically, the off season is 8-16 weeks a year, and there will be 1 weeks' notice of the end of the season and 2-3 days' notice of the 'call back'. But Mike says there are also lay-offs throughout the season. *"There's no loyalty from this company anymore, it used to be enjoyable place to work. But now you get up and think 'Aw God, what's today going to bring?'"*

## Meat Industry 2013 - 14

**Meat Inspection:** The Washington Post reported September 20 "Food Safety Coalition ask USDA [US Department of Agriculture] Chief to cancel deals with countries using controversial inspection system" NZ and Australia are two of three countries allowed to use this controversial inspection system, some plants are accelerating processing line speeds and replacing Government inspectors with meat industry employees. Already USDA inspectors have rejected 11 shipments of meat from Australia with visible signs of both fecal matter and partially-digested food on shipments of beef, mutton from plants using the system. This flawed system can put NZ export markets in peril - we require independent inspection, not the system that is being expanded for this season in NZ.

### **NZ Exports - NZ Jobs:**

NZ meat industry has been "trumpeting" how the frozen carcass trade has gone and that jobs lost through the introduction of technology will be created in added value work in the boning/cutting rooms. Well those 'PR' phrases we liked to hear are becoming a thing of the past as the meat industry exports bone-in in greater numbers - not just overweight sheep but more lamb & sheep carcasses. The Chinese importers are prepared to pay more for bone-in carcasses than if they were boned-out. P.T.O.

**LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE:** Your Union Leaders attended the Christchurch conference 'lobbying' on your behalf. We were very impressed with the new leader. David Cunliffe is saying that **"WE"** intend to bring workers & middle NZ'ers through to share the benefits of a growing NZ economy. Labour will tax the rich more. National is looking after its rich mates by bringing in new Labour Laws that will make workers poorer and their rich mates wealthier.



### UNDER PRESSURE:

Insecure Work In New Zealand

A Summary Report from the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kaitiaki Kaitiaki



# CHINA TAKES NO.1 POSITION FOR NZ SHEEPMET EXPORTS

China became NZ's biggest single sheepmeat market last year, accounting for 28% of lamb exports, 52% of mutton exports and 33% of sheepmeat exports. Beef and veal exports were up 4.6% year-in-year in 2012-13 to 367,000 tonnes (t) shipped weight, exports to China increased almost six-fold, from 6,300t in 2011-12 to more than 36,000t in 2012-13.

The average value of beef exports to China increased 15% hitting the same level as received from the US. Total sheepmeat exports to China reached 131,000t in 2012-13, compared with 74,000t exported to the UK.

**More and more sheep carcasses are being exported "6 way cuts" and "9 way cuts" and packed straight into a cartons, minimal number of NZ workers required. Traditionally NZ meat workers have fully cut up (boned) sheep carcasses.**

## SILVER FERN FARMS - RESTRUCTURING

SFF announced the closure of Shannon, closure of its Waitoa Beef processing plant (retaining calf processing for 8 weeks) and closure of Silverstream, a lamb cut processing plant (depending on China market). [Waitoa below]



Disappointing news for all those workers that have lost their jobs. To get work many will be required to travel some distances to pick up ongoing employment with SFF. The Silverstream closure could be the start of a number of other similar closures as meat companies decide to sell carcasses direct to China. This latest round of restructuring does not address the NZ Industry overcapacity in lamb slaughtering. Lamb numbers are forecast to be down 4 million nationally this season.



## Collective Employment Negotiations (CEA) for 2013 - 14

The Union has initiated two major CEA negotiations - with AFFCO and Silver Fern Farms. Another initiation will commence with Alliance in December. Approx. 5,500 members are covered by these 3 CEA's. To achieve a reasonable

settlement in these negotiations the Union Negotiators need 100% support from its members. It is pointless for those that are non members to moan after the settlement "my mate is a supermarket worker, they were paid a 5% increase".

⇒ Non members enable the employer to drag down your wages and conditions by demanding "claw backs".

⇒ Non members enable the employer to split and divide a unified workforce.

Meat Industry employers look at the strength (union density) of the union before they make any offer in negotiations.

- ◆ The minimum wage has increased to \$13.75 from \$13.50 (1.85%),
- ◆ the Statistics Department said average hourly earnings ordinary time has increased from

\$27.27 to \$27.98 (2.6%),

- ◆ the Consumer Price Index (inflation) has increased 1.4% for September 2012-13 year.

Meat Export returns continue to increase, however, ongoing competition at the farm gate drives down meat company profits. Change is being driven by the Meat Industry Excellence [MIE], they want a merger of the Co-ops and that farmers commit all their animals to that new entity for 3 to 5 years.

Living Wage Campaign - \$18.40 an hour as at February 2013. The living wage is the minimum wage necessary for a worker to survive and participate in society. It reflects the basic expenses of workers and their families such as food, transportation, housing and child care. Research into the benefits of a living wage in the UK shows that a living wage:

- \* Supports recruitment and retention of staff, saving turnover costs
- \* Lowers the rates of absenteeism and sick leave
- \* May enhance productivity, through higher quality work by employees
- \* Boosts morale and motivation
- \* Improves public image and reputation of business

Will your Employer agree and commit to the  
**LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN ?**

This is the question you need to ask your supervisor/foreman/ Manager.

We will be seeking a commitment from the NZ Meat Industry Employers to agree to the living wage campaign.

