

*This is what I know . . .*

*Over 18 months ago AFFCO/Talley's Meat Workers Union members asked for their existing collective contract to roll over along with a meagre 1.5 % pay increase. Talley's refused to sign off the Collective Employment Contract and mucked around until their buddies in the National government passed a new law allowing them to walk away from negotiations. Although it's hardly negotiations when you are only asking to be able to carry on as is.*

*Union members (2012 Lock Out survivors and brave new souls) knew they were in for a hard time this year and fully expected to be forced on to Individual Contracts or find themselves without a job.*

*My husband started working for AFFCO Moerewa at the age of 18 and he's been there for 22 years.*

*He's one of the "old hands" at the plant, all of whom are union members. They go to work every day, they work hard and they take home a decent enough wage to keep their whanau in warm homes, kai on the table and plenty of school and sport club fundraising ticking over. See that's the thing about this particular crew, they are also our rugby coaches, club captains, club volunteers, school board members, kohanga helpers, marae helpers, family farm helpers, kai moana gatherers, the ones who are always called to cut up beef for tangi, the ones who collect the kids and mokopuna from the school gates. They are not just loving, dedicated whanau members, they are "community" members as well in every sense of the word. And all they want is to work and to not have any of their rights as workers eroded each year.*

*This weekend delegates were summoned to Auckland by Talley's in a last ditch effort to prevent the strike and march on parliament that was to occur today and tomorrow. The only catch was that union officials were prevented from attending. So the same hard working whanau members accepted the burden of going up against the corporations and making the best decision on behalf of their mates back home.*

*And they did this, talks took place, negotiations happened and they came home to tell their work mates the strike was called off. The general feeling was one of relief along with the knowledge that this was not over but a reprieve for now. Like I said, this was a huge burden for the delegates and they did right by their mates.*

*Within hours AFFCO Moerewa phoned each union member to tell them they are now on night shift. A night shift that has been hastily set up for the sole purpose of demoralising and destabilizing union members. A night shift that union members were threatened with when they declared they would strike.*

*A night shift that takes seasoned workers away from their families every night and one that makes their community work a whole lot harder. Not impossible because they will carry on but just a whole lot harder on them and their whanau.*

*A night shift that sees many mums now doing sports runs, tea time crazy, homework, bath and bed time on their own. A night shift that takes the fight down to the kids who won't see their dad's tonight.*

*So to Talley's and AFFCO Moerewa - I hope it rains and the farmers hold on to their cows for the duration of your night shift you cold hearted a..holes.*