



Amalgamated Workers Union Southern Inc

November / December 2010

WELCOME TO OUR SOUTHERN NEWSLETTER

Members in Invercargill, Balclutha, Alexandra, Cromwell,
Queenstown, Te-Anau, Winton, Stewart Island - and all points in between

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

MEMBERSHIP IS GOOD INSURANCE!



CONTACT HOURS

**Mon to Friday 8am - 5pm
7pm - 9pm evenings;
mobile or landline.
Contact outside these
hours urgent or
pre-planned. Emails are
welcome anytime**

Owen: 029 477 6026

awunz.ingill@xtra.co.nz

**Employment Law
research employment law
through the Department
of Labour web site
(Employment Relations)
and look for Fact Sheets.**

- **Emails using modern media to enhance services to members. If you have an email address send Owen an email confirming your email address.**
- **Sign up on line thank you to new members signing up online through our Awunz web page, real simple and no hassle!**



**"Awunz has been
looking after Kiwi
workers for 129
years' That's
impressive!**

Changes to Employment Relations Act—April 2011

Including 90 day trial period and cashing up to 1 weeks annual leave.

The Employment Relations Amendment Bill had its third and final reading on the 23rd November.

All employees in NZ who apply for a job are now subjected to a 90 day trial and the employer can terminate your employment at anytime and for any reason within the 90 days. Other changes to the Act can be viewed at the Department of Labour Web site.

Its not fair? 'WTF' said Charlie when he found out over a few beers at a work function that most of his workmates were being paid a higher wage than him.

The discussion quickly became animated and Charlie's confronted his boss saying 'this is fkn bullshit this is discrimination!' The boss said to Charlie 'you are not being discriminated against because you are paid just like all the other employees, which is, according to the value that you add to the business'

Charlie replies 'fk off I'm a better worker than most of those fk wits' If Charlie's right he has a point but if the boss is right, Charlie has a problem with his personal assessment of his value as an employee.

The boss invites Charlie to a meeting and asks him to read through his employment file. This takes sometime to complete. The boss then asks Charlie some questions:

'In the 5 years you've been here how many of the 5 opportunities which we have offered to you for further training and advancement, have you taken?' Answer: none!

'In the 5 years you've been here how many plant damage incidents have you been involved in?' Answer: 18!

'In the 5 years you've been here how many times have you volunteered to be on the call out roster?' Answer: none!

Charlie's file didn't help his claim that he was a better employee than his

workmates or 'fk wit's' as he called them.

Charlie's workmates had learned something that Charlie had either failed to understand or refused to accept.

'In today's hard arse business world if employees aren't prepared to understand and apply the concept of adding value to the business as an employee, then its not long before the employer sees you as a liability and goes searching for a replacement'.

Charlie's workmates were getting a higher wage than him because they understood how to add value as an employee whereas Charlie just expected to get the same for doing the same job, WRONG Charlie, your protest falls on deaf ears, and that includes your workmates.

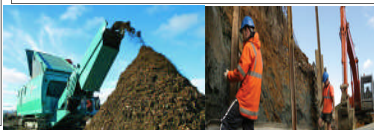
Bargaining environment most workers I know want and need more money in the wage packet; the question is how is this best done. I know of workers on individual agreements who haven't had a wage increase on average for 4 years; they are fearful of asking for one and have no way in law to push the issue.

I have workers on collective agreements who work alongside their workmates on individual agreements, both have been or are currently being subjected to a long wage freeze. The employees on individual agreements are reliant on their workmates on the collective to take action because by law they can, while those on individual agreements can't.

What a perfect MESS we find ourselves in! Non union guys saying to union guys, when are you going to settle the collective so we can get a wage increase, say what? Have we all gone stark raving mad!

We have 80% of the workforce reliant on 20% of the workforce

What group of 100 people in any given situation rely solely on just 20 of the group to defend their position!



Don't get me wrong I realise the problem employees have belonging to a collective agreement which attracts a wage increase that doesn't cut it so why belong to the union.

In the current economic environment weak collective agreements are in fact damaging all employees because employer's use the weaker group to bargain wages and terms and conditions and then pass these onto employees on individual agreements. If the guys on the collective are getting shit so are you on your individual agreement, unless you can tap the bosses shoulder for more.

The solution to the growing bargaining problem is simple yet powerful. We have a strongly supported collective agreement and each employee also has an individual agreement read in conjunction with the collective agreement, we have the best of both worlds.

When collective bargaining is completed all employees undertake a personal development and performance appraisal, and this is where individual employees have the opportunity to beat the collective benchmark based on agreed personal development and performance criteria.

To make sure that assessments are fair and balanced an appeal process exists.

Using this model all employee get the collective wage increase and all employees get the chance to do better through personal effort, no one is disadvantaged, and 'IT WORKS!' For example this process was recently implemented in one notable Southland workplace and in the first year 33% of employees beat the benchmark and in year two 55%.

**But wait there is more.....
SIGN UP! on our web site**



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Didn't think it was that easy did you?

Employers aren't disagreeable to the two tier bargaining process I've outlined but we had to agree to one very important element.

They argued latent business risk in giving an employee an additional wage increase above the collective arising from the personal development and performance appraisal process and locking this in when the employee could soon after revert back to substandard performance.

As a workable compromise it was agreed any additional wage increase to the individual employee above the collective wage increase resulting from a personal development and performance appraisal would only apply in the year in which it is achieved.

To clarify: If you received a 2% wage increase this year based on the CPI through the collective agreement and then received an additional 50cph from your personal development and performance appraisal the additional 50cph is only guaranteed until the next appraisal in 12 months time.

If at the next appraisal your personal development or performance standard is judged to be below the previous year you may lose some or all of the additional 50cph; conversely you may have the additional 50cph increased or you may remain at the same rate.

Remember the appraisal is able to be appealed.

The other most important aspect is that you get a **real** opportunity to present your credentials to management at the appraisal and without the cloak and dagger aspect often associated with split bargaining onsite.

The biggest challenge for me is to help members be confident at patting themselves on the back in the appraisal and for them to take notes through the year of high end performance to form a good appraisal presentation.

The power of this bargaining paradigm cannot be underestimated by all employees in the workplace because it enables all employees to protect the bottom line in terms of wages and conditions at your workplace but also by law a collective agreement ring fences your workplace from negative outside influences such as wage rate competition from other people offering to work longer hours for cheaper wages.

Only collective agreements provide this protection (30 day criteria) whereas employees on individual agreements have no such protection. If you're on an individual

agreement it is much easier to replace you with cheaper labour. And the impact of the new 90 day rule will bite harder on employees covered by individual agreements.

Non union employees who can't understand the power and value of the new **dual** (two tier) bargaining process I have outlined and the reasons why this shift is important need to think different, even if that commitment is conditional for 12 months on getting the dual two tier bargaining model in place.

The alternative is for the 20 union members to give up and withdraw from the union and the employer throws the collective out with the rubbish, while inviting new employees onto the job with individual agreements tucked under the arm.

The workplace labour market you're now working in will soon change because these new workers are prepared to vigorously compete for your job on wages and hours worked! **Ahhh!** My job is now not so secure and we have no collective to protect us against this low wage economy monster. As parents we lament as we witness our kids competing for the minimum wage and doing long hours of work.

The simple message to non union workers is **WAKE UP!** before it's too late.

Does the term 'Banana Republic' ring a bell; it's time to pay your dues and bring your support to the collective.

Union Advocacy

Of all workers in NZ only 20% are in a union and of this 12% work for a Government Department. That leaves just 8% of workers in the private sector in a union.

I'm reminded of Samuel Duncan Parnell (a contracted carpenter) who in February 1840 said in bargaining a job 'there are 24 hours given us per day and 8 of these be for work, 8 for sleep, and the remaining 8 for recreation and in which men do what little things they do for themselves'

171 years later and here we are heading for the economic scrapheap in NZ and unless it has escaped your attention, things have got worse in proportion to the decline of union membership.

Even the most ardent anti union person can hardly deny the factual correlation.

The fact is unions haven't caused the economic rot in NZ, they have been far too busy defending the thin grey line for workers against almost impossible odds, because of the default of 92% of workers in the private sector who continue to reject union membership.

Remember this? **Bill English** said it will take until 2025 for Kiwi wages to match Aussie wages. Bill's calculations means wages have to increase by 4.8% each year for 15 years to close the wage gap with Aussie, is this likely to happen without strong union membership? Of course not. What can one person on an individual agreement do to achieve anywhere near this figure on a regular basis, especially with 20 other job seekers willing to work much cheaper and for longer each day? Taking all these things into account it is clear if workers don't lift union support the union movement is sunk and NZ society which espouses itself as a caring and united society, where fairness and balance applies, will become the new Brazil in years to come.

My very best wishes to members and their families for Christmas and the New Year, also please be safe.
Owen



5 STAR HOTEL FOR PAMPERED PETS

LORNEWOOD BOARDING KENNELS AND CATTERY

- 5 minutes from Invercargill
- Std & K.C. Vac. required
- Heated facilities
- Individual sleeping & 10m runs
- All inspections welcome



Monday to Friday
9.30-11.30am, 4.30-6pm
Saturday 9.30-11.30am
Sunday 4.30-6pm
or by appointment



Paul and Evelyn Sooclo
PH. 03 235 8563
FAX. 03 235 8568

workrural.co.nz
rural job search ... made easy!



Rural job vacancies can now be accessed through a single independent website

The recently launched **workrural** website is the first to pull rural vacancy advertisements from New Zealand employment websites onto one search engine.

Job seekers are able to search for jobs by text or map providing instant information about location and the job description.

We aim to make it easier for job seekers to access information, find good jobs and make the right employment choices.

New initiatives are being developed

Do you need contract advice? help with your CV? information on proven good employers? a job seekers page? contact with other rural workers?

Would you like more information in vacancy adverts about -accommodation? heating? remuneration? rosters?

Tell us at **workrural** what you need: enquiries@workrural.co.nz

If you have a problem at work ring or email us! We help people by listening and talking about the problem. If further help is needed we ask that you join AWUNZ



If you have moved or changed your contact numbers please email your new details to admin.chch@awunz.co.nz and your records will be amended accordingly. Thank you.