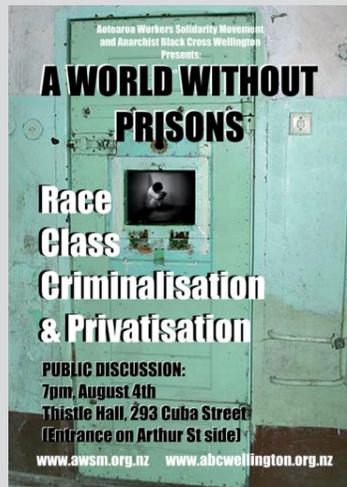


## Upcoming public events

WGTV, WED AUGUST 4, 7pm.  
Thistle Hall (downstairs meeting room).  
Public discussion on Prisons: Race, Criminalisation and Privatisation. Hosted by Wellington branch of AWSM in conjunction with the Wellington Anarchist Black Cross (<http://abcwellington.org.nz/>). All welcome.



CHCH, SUN AUGUST 8, 12pm.  
Protest against proposed new industrial legislation. See front page for details.

WGTV, THU AUGUST 19, 7.30pm.  
St John's, Cnr Willis and Manners Streets. Public meeting about proposed new industrial laws organised by a coalition of organisations/individuals.

NATIONWIDE, SAT AUGUST 21, 1-3pm. Nationwide 'fairness at work' rallies in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin organised by the Council of Trade Unions against the proposed new employment laws. Locations of the rallies to be advised.

WGTV, WED SEPTEMBER 1, 7pm. Thistle Hall (downstairs meeting room). Public discussion on proposed new industrial laws. Hosted by AWSM's Wellington branch.

CHCH: Beyond Resistance (<http://beyondresistance.wordpress.com>), also hold monthly public discussions on the first Wednesday of every month.



## ON PULLING SICKIES

AN IMPORTANT PART of the proposed attacks on workers is the attempt to suppress sickies. Bosses will be able to ask us to get a medical certificate for just taking a day off work. Rabid millionaire PM John Key (pictured above haranguing a journalist) has said chronic absenteeism is wrecking profits, particularly in the meat industry. His industrial reforms are all about restoring the profits of his capitalist mates during a recession. To do this he must further reduce our wages and conditions.

With strikes being outlawed except when negotiations have broken down, taking a sickie is a common and essential form of resistance to the dictates of bosses. Indeed, there is some evidence as that as the numbers of strikes have reached record lows, taking sickies has increased.

We take sickies because bosses force us to work hard and long hours in shitty conditions. Unrelenting work pressure makes us stressed, tired and unfulfilled. So we take a day or two off to relieve this pressure, and to temporarily reclaim our lives from the drudgery of wage slavery. We use sickies not only to look after sick family members, but also to chill out and live a little.

Union bureaucrats have distanced

themselves from throwing sickies. They've blamed them on a few 'scallywags', while the majority of workers supposedly take legitimate sick days. Sure, taking time off work when you're sick is an essential right. But it's also just as legit to throw a sickie. Informal resistance, like taking sickies and slacking off at work, is a crucial element of our resistance to bosses. This resistance often requires co-operation between workmates, such as sharing someone's job when they are taking a sickie, in the knowledge that when you are off 'sick' they will do the same for you. Informal resistance and formal resistance – such as strikes – are complementary. They need each other. Indeed, you can't have a successful strike if you haven't tapped into the informal co-operative networks between workers.

We need to resist this attack on taking sickies just as much as we need to resist the rest of National's proposed anti-worker legislation. As we are forced to work some of the longest hours among OECD nations, we need to take more sickies. Some have suggested a national sick-day, which seems a great idea. In the end, we need to push for not only more pay, but also less work!

# SOLIDARITY

Issue 11 – August 2010 – Free!

Newsheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement



## THE FIGHTBACK BEGINS

ABOUT A THOUSAND PEOPLE recently took to the streets to protest National's law changes such as the 90 day fire-at-will bill which directly threatens job security for workers and their rights (see inside for details). Protests took place on the 18th of July in Auckland and Christchurch, the 19th in Wellington and the 16th and 24th in Dunedin. Some of the unions present at the mobilisations included the CTU (Council of Trade Unions), NDU (National Distribution Union), EPMU (Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union), and Unite and organisations included AWSM, Socialist Aotearoa, and the Workers Party amidst other left groups and of course loads of indignant individuals.

John Key let off a string of unconvincing lies and double-speak in his announcement of laws designed to cripple the labour movement during the National Party conference in Skycity Grand Hotel in Auckland. At the same time, some 300-400 pissed off workers and unionists picketed the hotel entrance and eventually broke through police lines briefly causing chaos within. No arrests took place but police assaults on protesters were many. A giant rat was inflated at the entrance of the hotel where union heads gave speeches outside.

On the same day about a hundred people took to the streets in Wellington waving banners and placards and chanting class war slogans. A little over than a week later taxi drivers were on their second day of strike action. They demonstrated at parliament, calling for the bill to be thrown out.

In Dunedin, protests took place on the 16th and again on the 24th seeing hundreds of people take to the street



Protesters push police who unsuccessfully protected the National Party conference in Auckland

and an unplanned march on the 24th disrupting traffic briefly.

Meetings have been taking place in major cities with workers, unions and left organisations dedicated to securing workplace conditions that were won over centuries of workers struggling.

Christchurch witnessed one of the largest gatherings of community activists, union officials, delegates and workers seen in recent memory. Around 100 people, with less than 17 hours notice, met at the Cathedral Square on Sunday 18th July to make their feelings heard after National's policies were leaked late last week.

Since the initial demonstration, called by Unite Organiser and AWSM member Matt Jones, there has been an emergency meeting held where a group of 40 people discussed further actions as well as what we need to do to get the message out in the longer term.

"This wasn't some CTU backed structured meeting. It was in fact an open discussion where everyone was invited to engage and debate. The CTU's silence since the beginning has been deafening. What it has done however is allow space for resistance and action from the bottom up, we are witnessing the strengths of anarchism in action, where we refuse to stand by and be told to tow the line!" said Matt.

The meeting lasted just over an hour and by the end of it plans for action were made: Demonstrate! Sunday 8th August, 12pm Cnr Colombo St & Hereford St, Christchurch City Centre.

"This area is home to McDonald's, KFC and Burger King, where the staff are some of the most at risk from the newly announced bills. We hope to bring a lot of colour and enthusiasm to the event!" said Matt.

# BENEFICIARIES BURN BENNETT IN ROTORUA

JUST LIKE IN 1991, National is attacking both the waged and unwaged wings of the working class at the same time. We interviewed Paul Blair of the Rotorua Welfare Action Group about their response to National's assault on beneficiaries (for example, by cutting emergency benefits and forcing many sickness and domestic purposes beneficiaries to work). They held an incendiary protest on July 12 in Rotorua.

*AWSM: Can you give some specifics about the recent beneficiaries demonstration in Rotorua?*

Paul: The rally/demonstration theme was chosen so that if only a handful turned out the demonstration could still go ahead without losing credibility. On the other hand if a good crowd turns up we could march on the road. As it turned out we had about a hundred people (see photos) turn out so we marched around to the National Party Offices with our demands. A good turn out for Rotorua in the middle of winter.

The core aims included to get the issue of attacks on beneficiaries and their children out into the public media to lift the level of debate and to expose the lies and deceit of the National Government and their plans for the future of the Welfare State in NZ.



workforce and now under attack from Minister [for Social Development] Bennett and John Key's right wing National government.

To create a media and community platform from which to call for solidarity between the "working poor" and the "not-working" poor or so called social security claimants. To bring out the interconnections and shared experience between low paid workers and beneficiaries.

We burnt minister Bennett in effigy to get media attention to our plight and

to put our own militant stamp of "direct action" on the demo. Also Bennett is lying to the media and to the public about the intended welfare reforms and the most vulnerable people in NZ are being attacked by her.

As the march took off from WINZ on the way to National Party HQ in Rotorua some construction workers across the road started yelling out "get a job" etc. Mostly the public just came out of the shops and looked at us in amazement. Good pictures of the burning in *Rotorua Daily Post* and *NZ Herald*, Te Karere and some snippets on TV1.

Yes for the reasons given it was a success and the crowd of 100 grass roots people all on social security benefits were militant and powerful. The demo was organised by a loose coalition we called the Rotorua Welfare Action Group (RWAG). My Union the RPU (Rotorua Peoples Union) played a key supportive role in the organisation of the demo. The RWAG was a core group of about 6-8 activists/people. The RPU mails out to about 350 social security claimants.

To read the interview in full, go to <http://awsm.org.nz/?p=405>

# WORKERS SET TO FACE MORE ATTACKS

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT recently announced a series of new attacks on workers across New Zealand. The raft of proposed changes to the anti-worker Employment Relations Act (ERA, brought in by the previous Labour Government in 2000) and the Holidays Act will serve to further cut job security, wages and conditions for hundreds of thousands of workers in both the public and private sectors.

## WHAT ARE THE CHANGES?

Perhaps the biggest change is the expansion of the 90 day fire at will scheme. Under this, any worker can be fired within the first 90 days of employment without any way to legally challenge this. When originally introduced following the 2008 election, this only applied to workers in workplaces with 19 or fewer employees (around 1/3 of the total workforce) however the proposed expansion would see it cover all workplaces. Since it was brought in, approximately 22% of workers hired under the scheme have been fired within 90 days, many given neither a

reason nor a warning of what was about to occur, leaving them financially screwed.

A number of changes have also been proposed to the personal grievance process and the way the Employment Relations Authority works. All these changes make it harder for workers to challenge harassment, unjust firings and other problems and while making it easier for the bosses to get their way in a system that is already slanted in their favour.

We will also be pressured into working more often. The time honoured tradition of pulling a sickie is under attack (see elsewhere in this issue of Solidarity for details). Meanwhile, the 4th week of annual leave will soon be able to be exchanged (for cash), as will public holidays (for other days). National is declaring that both of these exchanges must be initiated by the employee, but in reality many workers will no doubt be pressured by their bosses into making them, especially those workers in the first 90 days of their contracts who are in constant fear of being fired! This all adds up to more work for an already overworked

population.

Workers who want to join a trade union may find it much harder if the proposed changes go through. Unions will require permission from the employer before they can set foot on the property, meaning it will be especially difficult for unions to get onto sites where they don't already have members. Additionally, companies will be able to communicate directly with workers during collective bargaining meaning yellow unions (unions run by the company) may become more common, with the associated drop in wages and conditions.

Separate from this lot of law changes but also coming up soon is a private members bill from National MP Tau Henare, which would place further restrictions on strike activity. The bill, which would force unions to hold secret ballots for all strike activity, would give bosses another avenue with which to have strikes declared illegal, at a time when workers are already heavily restricted in their choice of industrial activity by the ERA.

## What is AWSM?

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism. We are a small national organisation with members in Wellington and Christchurch and in a few smaller centres.

As class-struggle anarchists our priority is active involvement in workplace struggles and industrial action as well as community based campaigns in our neighbourhoods. We are currently involved in a variety of struggles, including protests against National's proposed industrial legislation and more. We encourage working class people to organise themselves against capital and the state. We do not seek to paternalistically organise people from the top down.

To become a member of AWSM, you must agree with our Aims & Principles (available on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>), and be involved in the life and activity of the group. If you're interested in joining or just finding out a bit more about us, e-mail or write to us via the contact details listed in the next column.

## Subscriptions

If you want to make sure you don't miss an issue of Solidarity, you can subscribe to either the print or electronic version. To subscribe to the AWSM announcements list, put your email address in the form on the top right of each page on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>. Subscribers will be sent .pdf copies of Solidarity each month, along with other publications produced by AWSM and occasional information – we promise we won't spam you with a ton of useless stuff though! Or, you can subscribe to the print edition. \$8 for 12 issues. Mail a cheque to our PO Box listed below, or contact us to organise an alternative method of payment.

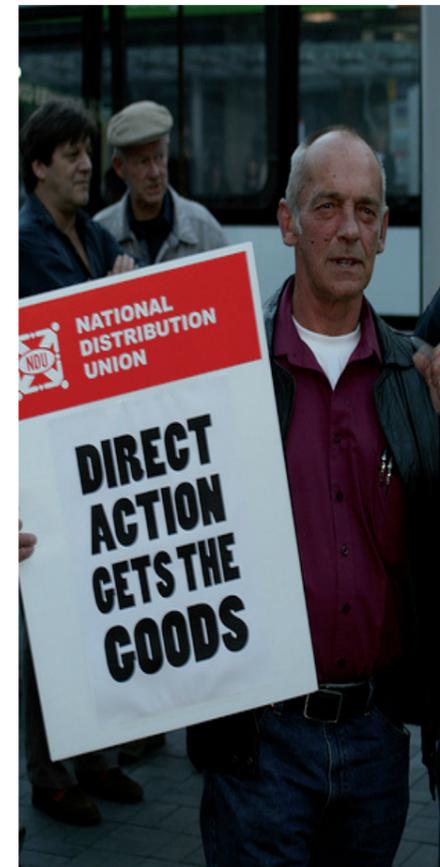
## Contact us:

We welcome stories about workplace and community resistance.

Write to us at: **P.O. Box 6387, Wellington 6141**

E-mail: [info@awsm.org.nz](mailto:info@awsm.org.nz)

Website: [www.awsm.org.nz](http://www.awsm.org.nz)



## WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Talk to your workmates: Build a culture in your workplace where you all support each other when there's an issue, even if it only effects one or two people. Collectivise problems – it's much harder for the boss to ignore a larger number of workers.
- Take industrial action where possible: Work to rules, go slow, taking lunch breaks at the same time, strike activity and more. As workers we produce the wealth that lines our bosses pockets – by threatening that profit we can force bosses to give into our demands. When we do engage in industrial activity, make sure it is controlled by us, not by trade unions. While unions can sometimes be useful (for legal protection, resources etc), industrial activity is our weapon, not theirs, and should be controlled by us without interference.
- Support other workers' struggles: We're all in this together, and one strong workplace won't be enough. If you hear of another workplace that's going out on strike, and you can make the picket line, go and stand with them. If you can't, support them in other ways – there may be a strike fund you can donate to, or even just go in when they're not striking and let the workers know that you support them.
- Don't rely on the trade unions or the Labour Party: The response of the Council of Trade Unions (the umbrella body for NZ unions) to these latest attacks has been pitiful. They have announced they will distribute 20,000 copies of a "Fairness at Work" leaflet – not even enough to reach 10% of their affiliate unions' membership, let alone the millions of unorganised workers. The Labour Party introduced the anti-worker ERA in its last term in power and has shown time and time again that it is no friend to the working class. In opposition it may encourage members to attend protests, but in Government it'll just be more of the same.
- This is our fight: These attacks impact on all of us who are forced to work to survive. We, the working class, must stand together and fight in our workplaces to not only protect what little we have, but to create a better future for us all. Separate we will fall, but together we have a chance to win.