

# WORKERS FIRST



**2**  
POSTERS  
INSIDE

## Our 2020 Vision

Dennis Maga

The year 2020 is about combatting inequality. As representatives of working people, we are in the position to reduce inequality through collective bargaining and campaigning for progressive policies in the government. When unions are weak, inequalities increase. Our mission is to strengthen workers' power to organise for decent work for all. This includes accessible, free and universal public education, quality public healthcare and housing services. The work we do is therefore important not only for the wellbeing of working people and their families but for a healthy and stable economy.

### Union Growth

We have now achieved unprecedented membership growth. Our union has grown by almost 4% every year since 2017. We are now a 30,000 strong membership. The work we've done to increase membership in the private sector against a background of increasingly precarious employment should be applauded, and we have won significant union victories and campaigns over the last year. Simultaneously, it's clear that the trade union movement is facing serious challenges in the future. NZ is falling behind when it comes to union membership and coverage of collective agreements.

This year, we will continue to grow our union. Our target is to increase our density in existing sites and build union power by organising supply chains.

### Collective Action

While our growth is encouraging, we need to emphasise that the power of unions is rooted to collective bargaining for workers. Thus, we need to strengthen and widen the scope of workers covered by collective agreements. We need to focus our attention on gender and ethnic pay gaps. Like women, Māori, Pacific and Asian workers are over-represented in occupation groups that are lower paid. More workers need to be covered by collective agreements, including those in non-standard jobs, such as dependent contractors, platform and labour-hire workers, which is the focus of our campaign this year.

### Election

It's election year again. Many politicians will promise change. However, history has shown that collective action and solidarity are the historically guaranteed ways for workers to win fairer wages and working conditions. It's time to develop a workers' agenda and promote collective bargaining as key challenges for political parties and politicians who truly want to close the inequality gap.



### A word from the President

Robert Reid

First, I want to thank the delegates to our regional conferences for re-electing me as President of FIRST Union. It is a great honour to serve our union and its members in a variety of ways. I look forward to being your President for the next two years.

You will see from the column of the General Secretary that 2019 was another good year of growth for our union, and we also achieved good bargaining results. We are determined to carry this through into 2020.

2020 will also be a busy year for the Executive. We have to complete our work on Te Tiriti o Waitangi relationships in the union. The Executive has also decided that we should undertake a complete review of our Union Rules at the same time to bring them up to date. Our FIRST Union Biennial National Conference takes place in Auckland on 10-11 November, where the rule changes will be made. Delegates to this conference were elected at the regional conferences last year.

At the end of last year, I joined an international human rights mission to the Philippines. The situation for workers, peasants, trade unionists and human rights activists in the Philippines is terrible. More than 27,000 people have been killed by "the war on drugs", and now this has become a "war on the people" with trade unionists and human rights workers being arrested and killed by the Philippine Government. FIRST Union joined a CTU picket outside the Philippine Embassy in Wellington on Human Rights Day 10 December.

Robert Reid

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## ★ FIRST UNION WINS ★



★ **ALLIED CONCRETE (Blenheim):** Members ratified an agreement that included wage increases, allowances, conditions and overtime provisions. Membership has doubled as a result of a strong agreement.

★ **FRESH CHOICE (Takaka):** A first agreement was ratified at the end of last year that included a move from \$17.70 to \$19.50 and then \$21.00 after 12 months service, as well as a 3.5% pay increase for any worker who isn't on a new paid rate.

★ **GEORGE WESTON FOODS MAURI NZ (Otahuhu/Lower hutt):** The flour millers at George Weston Foods won themselves a new start rate of the living wage. This will effect workers in the Otahuhu and the Lower Hutt branches.

★ **MAXCO:** FIRST Union members at MAXCO won an interim settlement from \$20 per hour to \$22 per hour, as they move to their new employer T&G.

★ **FOODMORE:** FIRST Union members at FOODMORE Meatworks have won a minimum of living wages as a start rate. The members also achieved time a half for over time.

★ **PROGRESSIVE SUPPLY CHAIN:** Shift Managers at Progressive in Favona, Auckland achieved 10-15% STIP bonuses on top of a 4% increase over a two-year term and a minimum rate of \$76000.

★ **PAVLOVICH:** A bus driver at PAVLOVICH was award \$15k as a settlement for an unjustified dismissal case the union took.

★ **PAK'N'SAVE:** We reached settlements at MT ALBERT, PAKAKURA, WESTGATE, MANGERE and MANUKAU Pak'n'Save that delivers from \$20.50-\$21.15 for workers with 12 months or more service. These wins are building a precedent for decent wages at Pak'n'Save, and can be used in other Pak'n'Save negotiations to prove what can and should be paid to workers.

★ **THE WAREHOUSE:** Warehouse bargaining concluded in late 2019. Workers achieved a pathway to living wages, access to partial and voluntary redundancy and an increase to bereavement leave amid other wins.

★ **WESTPAC:** A new collective was negotiated for 4 teams outside of coverage of the main CEA. The average increase per member was \$4,000, plus new entitlements to long service leave and more sick leave.

★ **BNZ:** Late last year we had a ground-breaking set of negotiations with BNZ that included 6 weeks annual leave, one of the highest salary increases in years, access to partial redundancy and improvements to sick and bereavement leave entitlements.

★ **ASB:** Bargaining at ASB delivered 3% pay increases, sick leave entitlements increases and double time for working public holidays.

★ **HYGRADE PRODUCTS LTD:** Members won a conversion clause for labour hire workers of 7 months, improved bereavement leave, removal of duties as criteria of remuneration, wages above the living wage and a 5% increase over 2 years.



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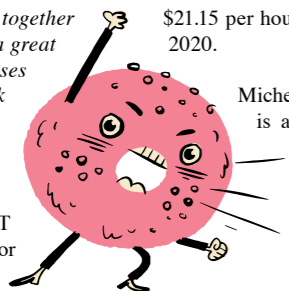
# SUPERMARKET WORKERS ON PATH TO LIVING WAGE AFTER NEW DEAL SIGNED WITH COUNTDOWN



In November, FIRST members at Countdown ratified a new agreement that will set their supermarket team on a path towards a living wage, and significantly raise the pay of 15,000 workers across the country.

The deal was reached after months of actions by members culminating in nightfall workers in Auckland taking strike action and holding a picket outside the Ponsonby store.

*“Our members are thrilled to have stood together and held out for a great deal that recognises their hard work and provides a clear pathway to the living wage,”* said Tali Williams, FIRST Union Secretary for



Michelle McKenzie, 43, is a Duty Supervisor at the Church Corner store who has worked at Countdown for eight and a

half years. For her, the deal is significant both at work and at home. *“A wage rise like this means we can spend less time worrying about making ends meet at home, making us less stressed at work and feeling more secure about our futures,”* said Ms McKenzie.

Retail. *“Supermarket workers brought energy and creativity to the bargaining process and maintained that they are worth a living wage. We’re pleased that Countdown has listened.”* The deal will impact around 15,000 Countdown team members in a variety of roles from checkout operators to butchers. For team with 12 months or more of service currently on rates close to the minimum wage of \$17.70 per hour, the agreement will provide an increase to a living wage of \$21.15 per hour from September 2020.

half years. For her, the deal is significant both at work and at home. *“A wage rise like this means we can spend less time worrying about making ends meet at home, making us less stressed at work and feeling more secure about our futures,”* said Ms McKenzie.



*“In my life, it’s huge. I have four older kids, and as a family we can start to do more of the things together that we’ve sometimes missed out on in the past - two or three dollars an hour is a really big deal when it comes to living a good life and spending time with your family.”*

*“It’s a common myth that supermarket jobs aren’t careers, in my experience, plenty of colleagues have put 30 or more years of their lives into their jobs, and this agreement means a lot to them in terms of recognising their long service and the benefits of a career in retail.”*

Tali Williams believed that the

*“It’s a common myth that supermarket jobs aren’t careers”*

deal set a clear precedent and process that other supermarkets could look to replicate when entering negotiations with their workers:

*“An agreement like this shows that it’s both possible and practicable for all retail employers to pay their workers a living wage, and it makes good business sense too.”*

*“I’m proud of our members today: they set an ambitious claim, organised among themselves, and took action to achieve a living wage. They deserve this.”*

## CORONAVIRUS COVID-19S

FIRST Union is receiving increased enquires from members regarding the effect of coronavirus in the workplace.

Both government and employers are obliged to adopt a proactive approach to protecting workers’ health and safety at work and ensure no financial hardship occurs should members be isolated away from the workplace.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, all employers have a duty to eliminate or minimise risks and hazards to their workplace. This means an employer should not require workers to attend work if they are sick and expected to be in isolation. In such circumstances the employer has to insist the workers stay at home and continue to pay them as normal without drawing on sick leave entitlements.

Where employers are refusing to support staff, your union should be informed as soon as possible. We are aware that in workplaces where understaffing is an issue, pressure is put on workers to get back to work earlier than they should when they are unwell. Such practices are in themselves unacceptable but considering the significant public health risk such actions could pose in the current environment, it would be unconscionable for an employer to continue this practice.

In terms of the Government’s role clear policy needs to be developed that ensures income protection for workers impacted by the coronavirus. This policy should comprise a mix of direct Government support packages and employer contributions to ensure no financial hardship on workers.

If you have any concerns about your workplace preparedness for coronavirus, please contact our Member Support Centre on: **0800 863 477**

# TIP TOP WORKERS’ VICTORY BRINGS NATIONAL BREAD SHORTAGE TO AN END



FIRST Union members at George Weston Foods Ltd in South Auckland, who produce Tip Top branded bread products, signed a new deal with the company after emergency negotiations that ended almost three weeks of industrial action and brought a national bread shortage to an end.

Anita Rosentreter, the union’s lead advocate, said members voted in favour of the company’s offer after striking for fairer pay and conditions, including major changes to overtime rates.

*“Members at George Weston Foods who work overtime will earn significantly more than before (up to \$160 more a week for some), with overtime rates kicking in after ratification,”* said Ms Rosentreter.

*“Many of the members work upwards of 50-55 hours per week, and formerly this was paid at ordinary rates. They will now receive a well-deserved premium on these hours to compensate for their weekly sacrifices of personal time.”*

*“The deal includes increases to hourly rates - up to 4.1% - with the majority of members now being paid a living wage or above, and workers will receive full back-pay from September 1st 2019.”*

Strike action began in late November with a withdrawal of labour and a picket outside the

company’s office. Workers highlighted that they were the ones who made George Weston’s 24-hour operation a possibility, warning of possible bread shortages ahead due to the strike.

Within a fortnight, many supermarket bread shelves in the North Island were empty, and all major media outlets reported on the emerging ‘bread crisis’, putting pressure on the company to reach a resolution.

*“I’m so proud of our members - they knew they were worth more than they were being paid, they stood together and made their voices heard, and after industrial action, the company finally listened to their argument and agreed to settle on terms that are fair to the workers,”* said Ms Rosentreter.

*“The deal came just in time for Christmas, meaning bakers could enjoy the holiday season with the knowledge that they would be putting more than just bread on their tables.”*

*“Many wanted me to express that they were so grateful for all the public support despite the shortage of bread - it shows that a mild inconvenience for shoppers doesn’t outweigh their sense of fairness and justice.”*



# AOTEAROA NEEDS TO CATCH UP ON CONTRACTOR LEGISLATION

**The future of work.** What do you think of when you hear that phrase? The robots are coming? 40 per cent of jobs will be automated – or is it 70 per cent? Do you imagine a dystopia where workers are all contractors and forced to cobble together dozens of gigs to make ends meet?

These are the pictures being painted by economists and other business insiders, as though the future has been written and we as workers have no say and no control. It is true that more and more workers are being classified as contractors rather than employees. It's been happening for decades. Employers are doing so to save money and discourage unionisation.

Contractors are not entitled to annual or sick leave, KiwiSaver contributions or even the minimum wage; they cannot join a union, collectively bargain their wages, nor challenge an unfair dismissal.

Contractor 'George' (not his real name) says, "I didn't even know I was a contractor at first. Then I received a massive tax bill at the end of the financial year and I had no way of paying it. When I brought it up with my boss, he told me he didn't need me anymore anyway. No notice, no holiday pay, nothing."

There is little about being a contractor that benefits workers. So why would we sit back and let this be our future? All over the world, workers are fighting this trend towards contracting and other forms of insecure work. Job security has – and probably always will be – of the utmost

importance to workers; it means income security and therefore housing and food security, it is the difference between raising happy, healthy kids and worrying about whether you will be able to feed and clothe them from week to week. Decent work is secure work.

In California, the **ground-breaking Assembly Bill 5 (AB5)** has just come into effect. The bill codifies into law a landmark Supreme Court of California case, **Dynamex Operations West Inc. vs Superior Court**, which holds that most workers are actually employees, should be classified as such, and the burden of proof for classifying individuals as contractors belongs to the hiring entity.

One of the biggest companies affected by the bill is **Uber**. The app-based ride-sharing company engages more than 200,000 drivers in California alone, all as contractors. If those drivers are reclassified as employees under AB5, they will have access to the greater protections and benefits that come with that, including the right to unionise and collectively bargain – a massive win for these workers.



In South Korea, the **Korean Federation of Public Services and Transportation Workers' Unions' Cargo Truckers Solidarity Division**, has won historic 'Safe Rates' legislation, which recognises that the industry's contracting model has driven down wages and, in turn, forced drivers to work long hours, overload their vehicles, speed and neglect vehicle maintenance. The law established a 'Road Freight Rates Safety Committee' to set fair, safe rates and hold corporations like Samsung and Hyundai accountable. Prior to it coming into effect in 2018, 1,000 people died annually in South Korea due to truck crashes.

Last year, in recognition of the principles underpinning the South Korean 'Safe Rates' system, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted guidelines outlining the

responsibilities of governments and transport companies and a sustainable pay model for drivers. The ILO is a tripartite organisation, made up of government, worker and employer representatives. The system has thus become the international benchmark.

Australian workers' fight for their own 'Safe Rates' system is expected to culminate in widespread strike action across the country this year. **The Transport Workers' Union (TWU)** wants better, safer jobs and regulation of wealthy companies at the top of the supply chain, rather than the passing down of risk, responsibility and liability to squeezed and vulnerable workers.

*"A precondition for creating better safety outcomes is by ensuring accountability among the wealthy companies at the top of transport supply chains, critically, this includes new economy behemoths such as Amazon and Uber Freight that want to destroy the industry chasing market share at the expense of lives on our roads."*

*"By ensuring the likes of Amazon, Uber, wealthy retailers, manufacturers and oil companies are responsible for the safe transportation of their goods we can lift standards. This will have the effect of making transport businesses more sustainable, jobs in transport safer, fairer and more attractive and it will reduce risks on the roads,"* said TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine.

Our own Government is currently considering how to improve protections for people working as contractors. **The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)** released a discussion document called **Better Protections for Contractors** in November 2019

and held public consultation on it until mid-February 2020.

This comes after calls from employment law experts like Victoria University of Wellington Professor Gordon Anderson for New Zealand to "improve its legal approach to the 'gig economy' to prevent people missing out on basic protections."

Many of the options included in MBIE's discussion document were based on what workers around the world have already won. We are, in this regard, lagging behind, and it is imperative that our Government act quickly to bring about wide-reaching changes to contracting.

'Mary' (not her real name), a contractor who provides interpretation and translation services, says she is hoping any new legislation that comes out of the process will allow contractors to join unions, "so [we] can negotiate the terms of [our] contracts. [So we] can get advice, information, and also feel stronger."

Among the options are those which would ensure better enforcement of existing laws; for example, giving Labour Inspectors the ability to decide workers' employment status, introducing penalties for misrepresenting an employment relationship as a contracting arrangement and reducing costs for workers seeking employment status determinations.

Others would require legislative changes, such as broadening who would be classified as an employee under the law, defining some occupations of workers as employees and extending the right to collectively bargain to

some contractors.

These options together would deter employers from misclassifying workers as contractors and create a safety net for workers. However, if thinly applied, it is likely that the legal loopholes employers are currently exploiting would remain and the problem would persist.

Similarly, if the wrong approach is taken, workers could be exposed to significant risk. Of the 11 options, there is one that stands out for this reason: an option to create a third category of worker, somewhere in between employee and contractor.

This is precisely how the UK Government responded to the employee/contractor conundrum. This third category, simply called 'workers', fares slightly better than contractors, receiving wage protection, paid holidays, protection from discrimination and some union rights.

However, they remain excluded from other core protections; their employment can be terminated at a moment's notice and they have no guaranteed hours.

A third category of work, subsuming some of what may have previously been categorised as employment, would be detrimental to workers in New Zealand. It would present exploitative employers with yet another avenue for misclassification that would deny workers the full rights and protections of employees.

Uber drivers are one group that would be at risk of ending up in this third category, like they did in the UK, and they are



some of the most vulnerable contractors in New Zealand. Along with the usual layers of contracting getting in the way, Uber drivers are further prevented from engaging with their true 'employer' because they are effectively managed by an app. In August 2019, Uber had 6,500 drivers registered here. The company has since entered six new cities, taking its number of markets in this country to 13.

A spokesperson for the **New Zealand Ridesharing Driver's Network (RDN)**, an organisation of thousands of app-based ride-share drivers, says, "Uber claims their platform is all about giving their drivers flexibility, good earnings and the ability to be their own boss. However, in practice the service agreement ... is crafted in such a way that it only permits one-sided flexibility. The terms of engagement are dictated to us."

In July 2018, the network conducted a survey of its members. It was found that a majority of drivers (53%) undertook ride-sharing on a full-time basis, and a vast majority (76%) earned less than the minimum wage in the six months prior. It also found that drivers' pay had gone down in the 18 months preceding this as a result of Uber decreasing their pay in response to an 'oversupply' of drivers.

Uber drivers, as contractors, are not covered by the Minimum Wage Act or Wages Protection Act, which would guarantee them at least the minimum wage and prevent their pay from being decreased.

The contracting system in New Zealand is broken and needs to be fixed now.

Workers in Aotearoa need a

comprehensive system to eradicate sham contracting and reverse the trend towards insecure work.

The future of work has not yet been written and workers deserve, and should pursue, as much control of it as possible. Even if full-time, permanent work does become a thing of the past, why can't the reality that replaces it be even better for workers? A world where we all have decent work, get paid enough to live prosperous lives and raise happy, healthy families?

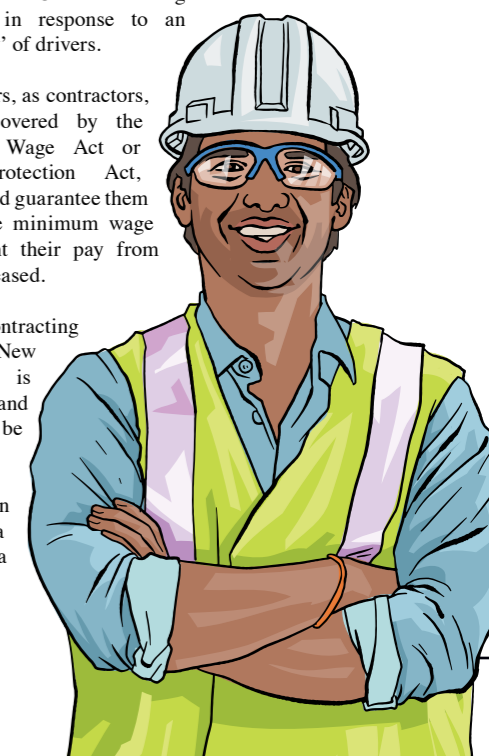
A world where billionaires don't exist, because workers are receiving their fair share?

The narrative of the future of work has been designed to make us feel small and powerless, to discourage us from standing up and fighting for what we deserve. So let's change it.



To join **FIRST Union's Real Work Real Jobs** campaign to close the legal loopholes disadvantaging contractors:

'Like' our **Real Work Real Jobs** page on Facebook or visit our website: [WWW.REALJOBS.NZ](http://WWW.REALJOBS.NZ)





# LOOKING AFTER FRONTLINE WORKERS IN THE FORESTRY INDUSTRY

A Q&A with forestry worker Wade Brunt.

In January this year, two forestry workers took up the newly created positions of Toroawhi in the NZ forests; Wade Brunt in Gisborne and Richard Stringfellow the Central North Island.

Toroawhi are **roving health and safety representatives**” The appointment of the first Toroawhi was the result of years of advocacy by FIRST Union President, Robert Reid, on the Board of the Forest Industry Safety Council (FISC). Their appointments give life to the call for greater worker engagement and participation in their own health and safety, which was a key recommendation of the Independent Forest Safety Review in 2014.

That review followed a large spike in forestry deaths and was championed by the late Helen Kelly (then President of the Council of Trade Unions.) *Workers First* interviewed Wade Brunt soon after his appointment.

### What is your new role?

I'm Toroawhi at Safetree, which is a joint collaborative project between Worksafe and the Forestry Industry Safety Council (FISC). It was created with the idea that together, we can create change and give forestry workers a strong voice.

### What will it involve doing?

It's about engaging with workers on the frontline, visiting crews out in the forest, coaching workers – everyone from silviculture to harvesting operations to truck drivers and roading crews in the forest – and supporting them to become more involved in the decision-making around health and wellbeing on the job.

### Why did you want to do it?

I'm passionate about health and wellbeing. I'm already running an initiative called Jogging for Logging, which has become pretty popular in the community – it's about getting people active, building on what they care about, and getting people to talk and share afterwards. You can't separate physical health from mental health. For me, I want to share my journey of losing 40kg and realising that you still



have work to do beyond the physical, especially in terms of mental health. It's vital that we keep improving mental and physical health in forestry.

### Why is it important to have union reps on FISC?

It's the voice for workers. The union, and this new role, is about standing up for the workers on the frontline.

### What are the biggest issues you see in forestry right now?

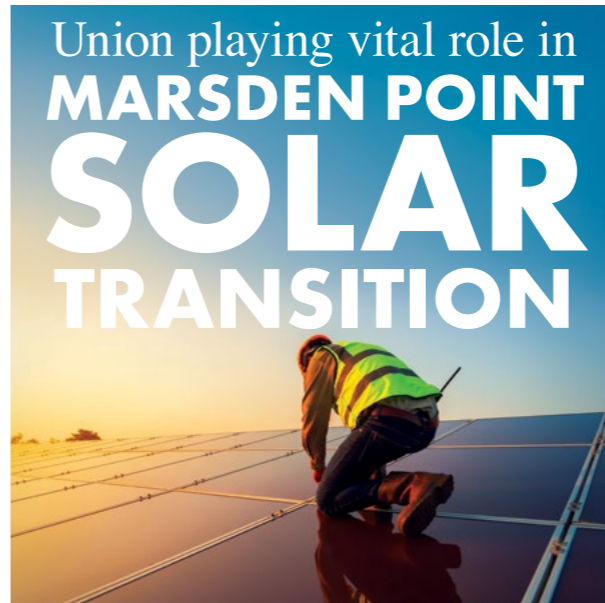
The first thing that comes to mind is that there's a lot of pressure, issues with the culture, and sometimes a lack of communication from the top down. As Toroawhi, I have to make sure that communication is happening, and there's engagement from the top down. At the moment, there's also a lot of uncertainty around the market and what the flow-on effects of the coronavirus will be. It's been a big shock for the industry, leaving some crews switched off and workers without work.

### Do you have any messages for our readers?

We've got our next Jogging for Logging event on March 21st – a group of loggers are running a relay from Gisborne port to Tolaga Bay, which is about 54km. We need to focus more on health and wellbeing rather than compliance, and together we can create change that includes everyone. A healthy worker is a safe worker.

For more information on the work of the Forest Industry Safety Council and the Toroawhi please go to:

[www.SAFETREE.NZ](http://www.SAFETREE.NZ)



While unions usually operate in the space between employers and workers, tasked with ensuring fair wages and conditions first and foremost, FIRST has also been playing a vital support role between employers, Government and local communities, in the proposed solar farm transition at Marsden Point in Northland.

“The Government have been clear on their plans to move away from oil and gas exploration and refining, and the question is now how we ensure that a skilled refinery workforce can transition to a new sustainable future,” said Justin Wallace, FIRST Union organiser.

“As a union, we're supporting Refining NZ, the owners of Marsden Point and the proposed Maranga Ra solar farm, to make sure the central government are looking at the whole picture for the north and the local communities - it's all about a fair and just transition for these workers and also about producing domestic renewable fuel.”

“I'm proud of the work our members are doing, and we're positive about this being an opportunity for the future-proofing of skilled workers and the ability to create skilled jobs.”

# LINFOX LOGISTICS MEMBERS SIGN NEW DEAL



Linfox Logistics, a major trans-Tasman trucking company with almost 200 drivers in New Zealand, have signed a new two-year Collective Agreement that includes significant improvements in pay rates and conditions for union members around the country.

Base rates for the agreement will increase by \$1.27 and \$1.47 per hour before allowances, while the company has agreed to a guaranteed 42.5 hours across five days per week for workers, with a minimum payment of 8.5 hours per day (2.5 hours paid at time, and 0.5 hours for those on staggered rates).

The settlement comes after members voted to take industrial action, which shows once again the power of workers organising to withdraw their labour in support of a fair deal at work. Members will also enjoy the employer's Kiwisaver contribution being continued for those over 65 years of age.

The agreement applies nationwide to all drivers, with the exception of those in fuel and forestry. The company operates several hubs throughout the country.

## WE ARE NOW OPEN SATURDAYS! MEMBER SUPPORT CENTRE



Our member support centre is your first port of call whenever you are in need of assistance or advice from the union.

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WORKERS FIRST

# FIRST UNION



## FIRST in solidarity with FRENCH PENSION STRIKERS

FIRST Union President Robert Reid has written in support to the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), one of the largest French trade unions, who have been leading enduring protests and strikes over the last few months against President Macron's proposed changes to national pensions, which have angered many workers.

*"This reform implies a profound moderation of our current system, which is redistributive and based on solidarity... for a transition to a "point-based" system, which would lead to lower pensions and hence raise the need for capitalisation to ensure a living pension..."*, wrote Philippe Martinez, General Secretary of the CGT, in response.



The CGT has been working with a broad group of unions from the public and private sectors, and their industrial action has drawn worldwide attention to the reforms. Teachers, energy workers, firefighters and dockworkers have all taken to the picket line, with railway and Metro staff on strike for over 45 days.

Mr Reid wanted convey FIRST's solidarity and support for *"the brave struggle of the French working class and its unions against the austerity policies of the Macron Government"*.

## Bargaining begins at Briscoes and Bunnings



Starting in March, FIRST Union members at Briscoes and Bunnings will begin bargaining for better wages and conditions in their next Collective Agreement.

### Briscoes

In 2018, FIRST negotiated the first ever Briscoes Group Collective Agreement, covering all union members at **Briscoes, Living and Giving and Rebel Sport**. Union members achieved a \$1 per hour pay increase and improvements to hours of work and sick leave provisions, and in 2019, a further \$1.15 per hour was achieved.

However wage rates at Briscoes are still well below what we have achieved in other retail chains. Over the past few weeks, more and more Briscoes and Rebel Sports workers have been joining our union. The more Briscoes workers that join the more Briscoes will listen. Join the union now and be part of our Worth It campaign for living wages and secure hours of work.

### Bunnings

In 2018 Bunnings workers achieved a historic living wage settlement, which launched our Worth It campaign and set a new precedent for fair wages in retail. Shortly, Bunnings delegates from across the country will meet to decide the focus for the 2020 negotiations. Key areas to be addressed at bargaining include acknowledgment of workers' skills and service, as well as consistent and safer staffing levels on the floor.



The Ambulance service in New Zealand is only partially funded by the government. Unlike the Firefighters or the Police, it is not a Government-run emergency service. Instead it is contracted out to two providers – Wellington Free Ambulance in the Wellington area and St John Ambulance in the rest of the country.

Last year ambulance officers at St John spent nearly one year bargaining a new collective agreement. The campaign was for recognition of working nights and weekends and to raise the rate of the lowest paid workers, Emergency Medical Assistants (EMAs). Ambulance professionals are the only health service workers who do not receive shift pay and EMAs were earning less than \$20 per hour. St John claimed poverty, just as they always do.

It was a long fight and nearly 40 partial strike actions were issued. Ambulances were chalked with campaign messages, there was a paperwork ban, and a refusal to work overtime or attend public events (a side business for St J).

The campaign was well covered in the media, particularly on The Project and by Radio New Zealand. A petition was delivered to the Government on the steps of Parliament with a delegate discussing it further at Select

Committee. After a long fight, St John eventually signed up to give workers time and quarter for shift pay (from 1 July) and a commitment that the EMAs would be better paid for their skills in the next round of funding. Both St John and Wellington Free Ambulance receive around 72% of public funding with the rest of the costs made up by donations, charges for callouts, membership subscriptions and other paid services.

St John have always claimed insufficient funding as a reason for depressing the salaries of their frontline staff and now both the workers and the New Zealand public are suffering. Every day, all over New Zealand, ambulances are left in stations or staffed with a person of a lower qualification to the Government contract because St John cannot attract new staff. Newly qualified paramedics are heading overseas, tempted not only by better wages but quicker pathways to achieving their Authority to Practise Certificates.

What this staff shortage can mean is long wait times after an ambulance is called, and the Fire service are responding to more and more calls to prop up the service. We even have reports that some people in need are calling the Fire service directly. This July, we are back in

bargaining and it is not looking promising. At the end of last year St John decided they do not want to pay their workers the agreed 1.25% for shift pay, but instead have decided on 1.15%.

They have refused to provide a copy of an 'independent' workforce review to staff and have not applied for enough funding (again) to meet the signed collective agreements. It is troubling behaviour as Peter Bradley (the CEO) promised the bargaining team last year that, although he had not included pay rises for staff in previous funding rounds, he would do so in the future. It is also worrying as last year frontline officers voted to walk off the job, and workers say that right now morale has never been lower and they are still very angry from the last bargaining round.

So what does this mean for the future of the service? At the end of last year, we asked ambulance members the same question, with a variety of options. Should the ambulance service be run by another provider? Should ambulance combine with a service such as Fire Fighters? Workers at St John said they would prefer to be back under the running of the Government as a core emergency service and perhaps

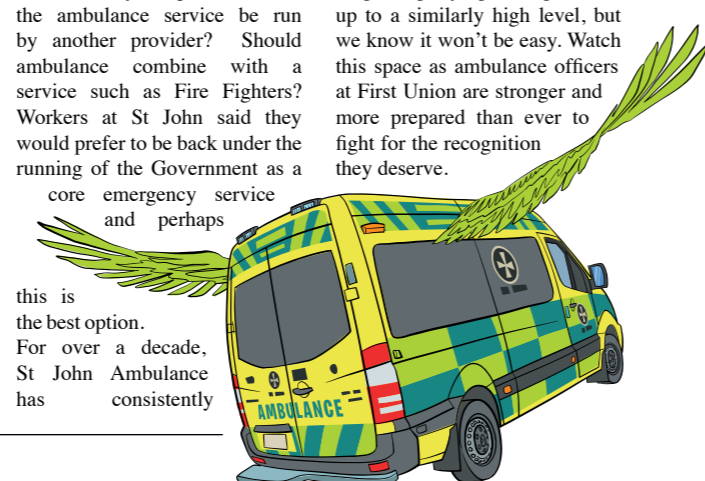
this is the best option. For over a decade, St John Ambulance has consistently

failed to ask for enough funding from government (they fully acknowledge this) and now NZ is paying the price.

When money does go into the service it is taken away from frontline staff into new streams of work and many more positions in administration, management and human resources. Winston Peters has promised that, if elected, he will increase the funding to 90% (St John doesn't want 100% as it would alter their charity status) but if St John won't pass it onto ambulance officers, nothing will change.

As a contrast to St John taking the year to settle, the bargaining at Wellington Free Ambulance was completed in less than two days. The organisation said it didn't want to just deliver a gold standard ambulance service but that it wanted to be gold standard in its treatment and conditions for staff.

This July we will be back in bargaining, trying to drag St John up to a similarly high level, but we know it won't be easy. Watch this space as ambulance officers at First Union are stronger and more prepared than ever to fight for the recognition they deserve.



# BAKING INDUSTRY COUNCIL

The Baking Industry Council is newly established and excited to be representing baking members within FIRST Union. They met for their inaugural meeting in January to talk about how they can support workers in New Zealand's baking industry to improve their working lives through their union. Convenor for the North Island is Todd

Wilton and Convenor for the South Island is Richard Jefferies (not pictured).

To find out more about the Baking Industry Council, contact: [anita.rosentreter@firstunion.org.nz](mailto:anita.rosentreter@firstunion.org.nz).

## What is the best part of being a FIRST Union member for you?



From left to right: **James Sausau** from George Weston Foods Tip Top Otahuhu, **Todd Wilton** from Breadcraft Wairarapa, **Adam McLean** from Goodman Fielder Quality Bakers Auckland, **Donna Peacock** from Goodman Fielder Quality Bakers Dunedin, **Patrick Hartstonge** from Goodman Fielder Quality Bakers Wellington,

*Hui tātou ka tū,  
Wehewehe tātou ka hinga.*  
*United we stand. Divided we fall.*

**KOTAHITANGA**  
TE RŪNANGA MĀORI

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RŪNANGA MĀORI REPRESENTATIVE  
*Marcus Coverdale*  
ON 021 626 094

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We assist, give a voice to, and empower our Pacifica Union Members

Contact FIRST Union  
Pasefika Fono Representative  
**Terry Tuiletufuga**  
**0211 263 655**



# RECAPPING THE NZ BUS DISPUTE: SUSPENSIONS, SOLUTIONS AND SOLIDARITY

Auckland-based NZ Bus drivers had a busy and demanding December following a breakdown in bargaining with the company that eventually led to free fares strike action, heavy-handed mass suspensions, and finally a commitment from Auckland Council to step in and fix the broken competitive tendering system that underlies the drivers' problems. With a new year beginning and a new set of challenges ahead, we revisit the last eight weeks and break down the series of events that led to this point.

Around 800 bus drivers – members of FIRST and the NZ Tramways Union – voted in late November to reject NZ Bus' offer, feeling that it offered little benefit in terms of wages and conditions as well as failing to resolve serious ongoing issues around rest and meal breaks.

As an example, an Auckland-based urban bus driver might have to work long split shifts that are paid for eight hours work while the driver endures a four-hour layover between shifts that is unpaid, essentially meaning that many are earning less than minimum wage when a full twelve to fourteen-hour day's work is considered.

Drivers at Go Bus in Auckland were already involved in their own dispute with their employer and had taken the unusual step of refusing to collect passenger fares as a strike action. As a tactic, it allows drivers to clearly communicate their problems to the public while keeping the buses on the road and the drivers working. Union drivers at NZ Bus opted to join this protest at the end of November, initially for one week.

At the time, Jared Abbott, Secretary for Transport at FIRST, was already pointing out that the Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM) was the genesis of the dispute: "All of the concerns we raised about the effect PTOM would have if it went ahead have already come true in Auckland," said Mr Abbott.

"It's not good enough to just shrug our shoulders and say it's here now and that's that - drivers are struggling, the industry is facing a shortage, and we seem to be the only ones proposing solutions."

The PTOM system relies on cost-cutting, and wages and

conditions are the first thing to go, Mr Abbott said. The company with the lowest bottom line for delivering the service is more likely to get the contract from the Council than the one who pays a living wage and spends plenty of its resource ensuring that buses are properly maintained and serviced. Drivers and passengers bear the cost of the penny-pinching, and the companies are the only ones that profit.

*the driver endures a four-hour layover between shifts that is unpaid,*

After the first week of NZ Bus drivers refusing to collect fares and no prospect of meaningful negotiation on the horizon, drivers announced their intention to continue with the free fares protest until Christmas.

In response, the company suspended all drivers and cancelled most of its services, implicitly blaming the unions and attempting to mobilise public frustration against the workers.

Except it didn't work – drivers received near-universal support from passengers, the free fares protest had

been supported, and despite some of the media reporting on the conflict as a strike rather than a series of mass suspensions, the public were clearly sympathetic to their regular bus drivers, who had now been deprived of income and security just weeks before Christmas.

In early December, drivers protested outside Auckland Transport's offices, calling for the Council's involvement in resolving the dispute and ending the suspensions in the short-term while longer-term fixes for the broken contracting model could be considered. Unions also met with NZ Bus for an urgent bargaining session, but the offer had not improved, and was duly rejected.



## FONO TO HOST PACIFIC TRAINING ON PEOPLE'S RESEARCH



FIRST Union's Pasefika Network will be hosting the Pacific Sub-Regional Training on People's Research in Auckland from 15-18 April 2020. Participants are coming from Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, New Caledonia, West Papua, Vanuatu, New Zealand and Australia.

The training workshops focus on building the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) and people's organisations (POs) to conduct and facilitate research based on a pro-people paradigm for knowledge-building, information dissemination and education, and advocacy on emerging issues around trade and development, regional integration and connectivity, natural resources, peace and security, and development effectiveness for the Pacific region.

There will be a forum on the first day on the economic and geopolitical situation of the Pacific and its impact on human rights, livelihood and life, including the mass displacement of the Pacific peoples.

Led by experts, the discussions and mutual learnings in the forum will feed into the training proper, which will include discussion on the people's research process; workshop sessions on research methodology, data processing and analysis; and discussions on utilising people's research for policy advocacy.

To link the lessons of the training to policy engagement, participants are expected to propose research designs framed within the paradigm of people's research. The participants will also be encouraged to contribute to future knowledge-building and information dissemination campaigns to influence policy at the community, national, regional, and global levels.

The training will be conducted by the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) and its affiliate Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM). The Pasefika Fono is optimistic that this Pacific Sub-regional conference will raise collective awareness in the region and strengthen coordination from international research networks and progressive organisations.

## Job losses could have been avoided in WOOD & FORESTRY SECTOR

A spate of saw mill closures closely followed by forestry workers being laid off highlights the need for Government intervention in our wood and forestry sector.

FIRST Union has been campaigning on regulation of wood from our foreign owned forests for a number of years. In 2018, a symposium attended by various governing bodies, overseas experts, industry stakeholders and workers concluded that the amount of wealth New Zealand is missing from wages caused by the export of raw logs alone would be insurmountable. This is due to exporting commodities as raw materials, instead of producing a wider range of products before exporting, and this is especially true for the forestry and wood processing sector.

The prices for logs in New Zealand have been driven up to unprecedented levels over recent years by foreign buyers operating on subsidies provided by their own countries. These subsidies enable foreign buyers to artificially inflate prices here, effectively capturing the domestic log market by creating some of the highest softwood log prices in the world.

Despite big talk from the Minister of Forestry, Shane Jones, very little has changed. In 2018 Mr Jones sated "the high tide mark, where New Zealand society is going to tolerate the wholesale exportation of all the raw logs with diminishing processing happening in New Zealand, has come and gone." Two years later the status quo remains.

The distorted log prices, coupled with a lack of intervention from Government, saw the announcement of hundreds of job losses in the last couple of months, with processing companies Carter Holt Harvey, Claymark, Pacific Pine and RH Tregoweth announcing saw-mill closures.

Only weeks after the industry has reported restrictions in place because of the coronavirus scare, forestry workers are the restrictions on a massive dip in the local log price, local manufacturers are still short on supply as forestry companies are choosing to shut down operations rather than supply local sawmills at the market rate. This is solely in the interest of the foreign owned forestry companies and comes at the cost of local jobs.

If the log supply had been regulated to ensure a reasonable portion must be supplied to local saw mills, coupled with a procurement policy that saw Government building investments use local saw mills for wood supply, this could have all been avoided.



# FOODSTUFFS LIVING WAGE PROTEST

HIGHLIGHTS DISPARITY BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH ISLANDS



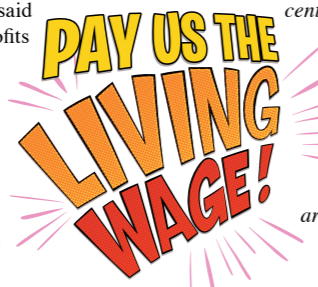
5 Pak'n'Save stores in the North Island, offering average starting rates of above \$19.50 per hour, with consistent rises to well above \$21 by 2021."

Members at Pak'n'Save Richmond and New World City Centre in Dunedin spent their Christmas Eve protesting the lack of meaningful bargaining with the two Foodstuffs South Island supermarkets after waiting over three years to settle new collective agreements. Workers took limited industrial action after voting to wear stickers that stated **'We deserve the living wage'**.

FIRST Union Regional Secretary, Paul Watson, said that minimum pay and conditions and maximum profits remained the name of the game for Foodstuffs.

"Consumers also need to start questioning why these store owners charge the same prices for supermarket products as in the North Island when South Island workers are paid so much less," said Mr Watson. "For example, we recently settled agreements with

"In contrast, Richmond Pak'n'Save is offering a printed rate of 0.05 cents above the minimum wage of \$17.70, and Dunedin New World is offering much the same but with some possibility of earning up to 0.50 cents an hour extra, but only if performance standards are high enough."



"Comparisons between North and South Islands stores show the same prices for food, but that doesn't translate to the same wages for the workers - South Island Foodstuffs supermarkets are taking a greater margin because their wage costs are lower and profits higher."

# SHOCKED WORKERS LEARN OF IMMEDIATE BUNNINGS SHUTDOWNS

Workers at two Bunnings retail stores, in Waikanae and Te Aroha, learned just a week before Christmas that their stores were to close before the new year, leaving workers in the dark.

"This is just cruel. It's completely unnecessary to blindside employees with terrible news like this just before Christmas," said Kirstin Miller, FIRST Union spokesperson.

On December 18th, Bunnings informed employees at the stores that they were considering redundancies. Bunnings apparent basis for the closures was that "we are concerned that we are no longer able to operate the store to a standard we feel meets Bunnings operational requirements, for you, our Team and of course, our customers".

One worker who had been employed at the Waikanae store for 2 years was shocked and angry at the closure: "We have lives and friendships here, and our store is doing a roaring trade."

**The way they gone about this is disrespectful**

FIRST Union wrote to the company and requested that due to the inadequate notice to workers and lack of information about redundancies, the consultation period be suspended until the new year. This request was denied and just two days before Christmas, the company announced that it would close the stores before the new year.

"We were told just three weeks ago that the plan was to move to a nearby location in March 2020. Today we hear this vague statement that 'the numbers don't stack up'."

"They have lied to us and the timing is appalling. At this time of year especially the thought of being out of work is very stressful. The way they gone about this is disrespectful."

# ACTION ON BANK GENDER PAY GAP must begin at the bottom

FIRST Union welcomed Westpac's public admission in September of the significant gender pay gap in its workforce and reiterated its call for employers to work with unions to close this disparity, arguing that this work must begin at the bottom of the pay scales.

transparency and proactivity, and we hope other banks will follow suit and report publicly about gender-based wage disparities in their workplaces, it's time customers and prospective employees know who they are supporting."

"A number of New Zealand's major employers have a guilty secret - they aren't paying women fairly - and it's because their entry-level customer service roles are done predominantly by women, lowering the bottom of the wage scale," said Tali Williams, FIRST Union Secretary for Retail, Finance and Commerce.

"However, we would place much more emphasis on the cause of the gender pay gap being low wages for the lowest-paid workers, many of whom are women in customer service roles."

"It's been our focus in terms of both pay equity and equal pay, and Westpac's admission that the gender pay gap is as much as 30% really confirms that structural inequality at the



bottom is stymying progress at the top - on boardroom seats for women, for example." FIRST Union General Secretary Dennis Maga congratulated Westpac CEO David McLean for the bank's willingness to address the gender pay gap, and Mr McLean accepted the union's offer to work together imminently on the issue.

the Living Wage Movement Aotearoa New Zealand in November.

"This has not happened through goodwill alone - union members have been bargaining for fairer, higher wages for many years, and today's announcement would not have been possible without the foundation they established," said Callum Francis, FIRST Union organiser.

"Businesses shouldn't have to pay a lot of money for consultants to report on the issue," said Ms Williams.

**major employers have a guilty secret - they aren't paying women fairly**

"Public reporting should be required and enshrined in law. Unions are already well-aware of the gender pay gap thanks to our members, and we're always willing to work with employers to address this."

In other banking news, FIRST Union also commended ANZ on receiving accreditation from

A N Z 's accreditation - the second bank to receive it after Westpac - recognises that the bank's direct employees are paid \$21.15 per hour or more. The bank says contracted service providers included cleaners, security and concierge will also receive a Living Wage or above in future; something that is crucial to receiving accreditation.

# SAMOAN WORKERS WIN INCREASE TO MINIMUM WAGE

In January 2020, the Samoan Government increased the minimum wage from \$Tala 2.30 to \$Tala 3.00 (NZD 1.77) per hour, which came after a five-year long campaign by Samoa FIRST Union since its formation in 2015. Until the formation of SFU, there had been no private sector union in Samoa. SFU was quickly able to recruit over 1,000 members after its formation and a key demand of the new members of the union was an increase to the minimum wage.

During the 2016 Samoan parliamentary elections, a number of Opposition party candidates endorsed the increase in the minimum wage but unfortunately were not elected. SFU continued to run its media campaign after the election, and in March 2017, with over 2 years lapsing since the last increase to the minimum wage and prices continuing to rise, they decided to lift the target for the minimum wage increase to \$Tala 5.00 per hour.



Finally, in 2019, the Samoan Government announced a review of the minimum wage. SFU made comprehensive submissions to the review and the review came out with a recommendation that the minimum wage be lifted to \$Tala 3.70. Unfortunately, business owners lobbied conservative MPs to reduce this increase, and in the end the Government announced an increase of \$Tala 3.00. "We are pleased to see the minimum wage increased," Saina Tomi told WORKERS FIRST. "But the increase should have been much bigger. We will just keep fighting."

The minimum wage in Samoa had been increased from \$Tala 2.00 to \$Tala 2.30 six months before SFU was formed in 2015, but for Samoan workers, this was not enough. Soon after its formation, the SFU launched a campaign for an increase in the minimum wage to \$Tala 3.00, including petitions, leafletting, workers talking to their traditional leaders at village level and a continuous media campaign by SFU Secretary, Saina Tomi.



# WHY WE MUST END THE PRACTICE "FORUM SHOPPING" BY NEW ZEALAND EMPLOYERS

FIRST recently reported on the shocking case of Joel Matic, a Filipino migrant worker and carpenter who, until very recently, was unable to return to his fixed employment in New Zealand after his former employer, Auckland-based building firm Renovo, arguably used the reprehensible practice of 'forum shopping' to litigate demonstrably false NZ employment issues against him in the Philippines.

This caused the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration to withhold Mr Matic's overseas work certification and marooned him in the Philippines when he was due to return to work in New Zealand imminently.

To state that in plainer terms, a New Zealand employer who wanted to discipline a migrant worker for leaving his role to take another, made a trumped-up complaint about him to the manpower agency in the Philippines that he'd used to find his initial job in New Zealand.

So: a man who had done nothing wrong but leave his job, where he was being bullied and intimidated by a colleague, is then facing trouble in his home country because a Kiwi employer has decided to go after him where they're most likely to find a favourable judgement against him – hence the term "forum shopping."

Mr Matic has since returned to New Zealand after transiting through several other destinations, and while able to return to work, his issues in the Philippines remain and necessitate a response from the New Zealand Government. FIRST will continue to advocate for him.



"New Zealanders should be outraged at the conduct of Renovo," said Mikee Santos, Chairman of M I G R A N T E Aotearoa.

"We're calling on the Government and MBIE to intervene immediately and let the employer know that New Zealand is the right forum for employment issues within our country and forum shopping is not an option."



# ZERO WASTE NETWORK

New Zealanders care about our environment. While many FIRST Union members already work for the big multi-national companies collecting rubbish and recycling for councils, in many communities across the country there are growing numbers working in community enterprises where the emphasis is on minimising the waste we send to landfill and retrieving goods for reuse or reprocessing.

There are around 35 community enterprises who are members of the Zero Waste Network, and there are likely to be more as we shift to 'the circular economy' – this approach rejects the current system of using the earth's resources to make something and then discarding it after use. Both Government and councils are pushing for increased resource reuse, and more and more local communities are getting involved.

These community businesses are generally social enterprises. Their purpose goes beyond minimising waste to providing social benefits for their communities, including local jobs. While many of these social enterprises are very lean, we don't believe they won't be achieving their social outcomes unless they are paying their workers a living wage, at the minimum.

In the next few years, the industry is expected to grow, and experienced workers will be in high demand. The community sector is likely to have access to an incredible amount of additional funding from product stewardship schemes (e.g. Government-introduced refunds on drinking containers, for example) and will be much better off than they are now. We want the community sector to set the standards for working conditions and wages in the industry, because otherwise it will be left to international companies who will always try to drive wages down to increase profit.

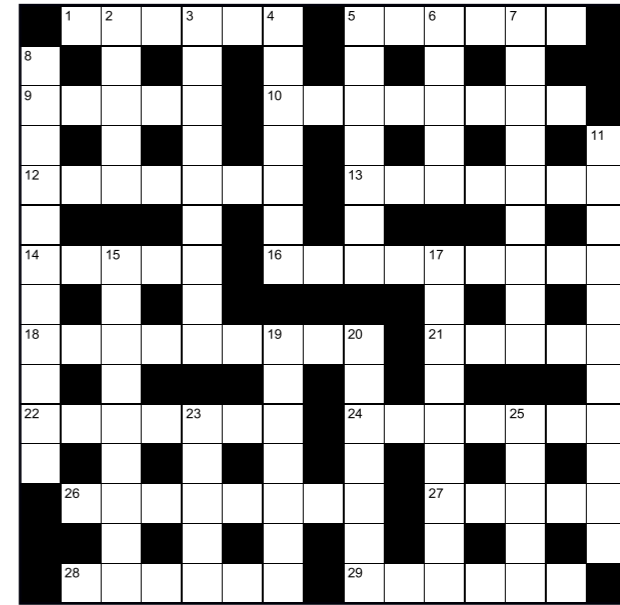
Recycling and waste jobs are important jobs, and it's dirty and physically very challenging. The pay must reflect that.

**ACROSS**

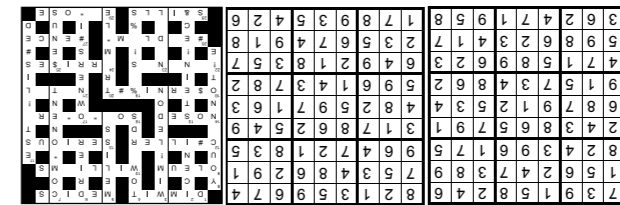
- 1- Darling, principally I'm a comedian but I'm not very bright (6)
- 5- Editor in charge absorbed by manuscript for doctors (6)
- 9- Old mule spilled sulphuric acid (5)
- 10- See 25 Down
- 12- Scary story from German poet needing no introduction (7)
- 13- See 8 Down
- 14- Backward boy Edward pried (5)
- 16- Thus a popular time is needed for TV series (4-5)
- 18- Her voting changed in a short space of time (9)
- 21- Some frown at allegation of birth (5)
- 22- Crazy for fruit (7)
- 24- Reaches a turbulent river second (7)
- 26- Henry's first pal made off with car part (8)
- 27- Bird starts to collect eggs from here (5)
- 28- Son wastes talents (6)
- 29- Former model's show (6)

~ \* PUZZLES \* ~

**CROSSWORDS**

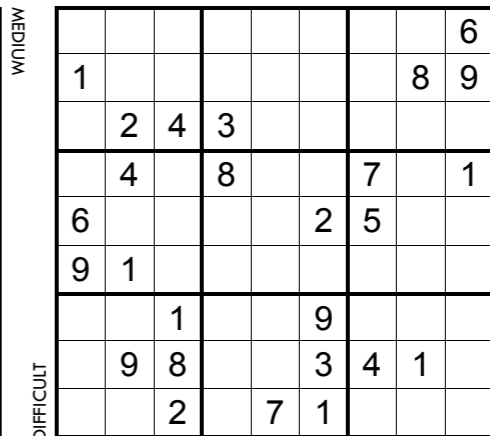
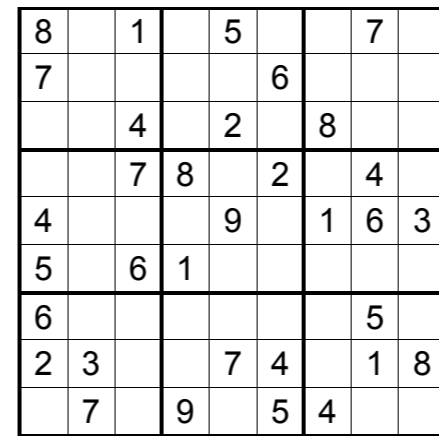


**SOLUTIONS**



**DOWN**

- 2- Old tribe bringing diamonds to Northern Ireland (5)
- 3- Where racketeering goes on in the courts? (9)
- 4- Wot's up? A road's approaching (7)
- 5- Girl's aimless wandering (7)
- 6- Tea towel perhaps is not so damp (5)
- 7- Con men opt out in part (9)
- 8,13- Across "Surely you jest?" famously addressed to judge in court (3,6,2,7)
- 11- Settled Sheila's debt somehow (11)
- 15- One US writer or another by stream (9)
- 17- Now his rep gets busted for possession (9)
- 19- They talk incessantly of balloons (7)
- 20- MP later resolved to tread roughly (7)
- 23- Boy, a new rising 3 Down champion (5)
- 25-,10 Across Evening Star is going to set out aims for 3 Down champion (5)



sudoku129.com

**SUDOKU**

Each row contains the number 1 to 9, each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9 and each set of 3 x 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.





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UNION**

## NEW FEE RATES FROM 1 May 2020 to 30 April 2021

*(Not applicable to finance sector members who are on a different fee scale. Contact the Union for more information.)*

36 to 40 hours or more	\$8.45 per week
26 to 35 hours	\$6.50 per week
15 to 25 hours	\$5.80 per week
11 to 14 hours	\$4.35 per week
1 to 10 hours	\$2.80 per week
Special Fee (Includes UNIMEG)	\$2.80 per week minimum

*Note: Where special fees apply members employed in those companies will be advised.*

**Funeral Insurance:** This voluntary payment is 95 cents per week in addition to your union fee.

**Other fees:** Some sites have a levy added to their fees (e.g. Ambulance Officers)

- ! The fee schedule for finance sector members will change from 1 May 2020
  - Members will be contacted to determine where you fit on the new scale
- Refer to our website for more details

THE UNION ACCEPTS NO LIABILITY FOR FEES PAID SHOULD YOU FAIL TO ADVISE THE UNION.

