

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CHRONICLE

JANUARY, 1977

The year began with warnings that 1977 would be a difficult year for the New Zealand economy. The price freeze ended for a number of commodities — building materials, food, metal products, cars — and the Prime Minister predicted a 3% increase in the Consumer Price Index for the first quarter of the year with the hope that the overall 1977 rate of inflation would come down to 10%, compared with over 15% in 1976.

The new Wage Hearing Tribunal met to consider applications from the Federation of Labour and the Combined State Services Organisation for a general wage order, the FOL pressing for a 12.8% order and the CSSO for 13%. A senior partner in a Wellington law firm represented the Department of Labour at the Tribunal's hearings, the first time in New Zealand's pay arbitration history that the Government had direct representation as of right before such a tribunal.

The Auckland Trades Council placed a 'green ban' to temporarily block the disputed subdivision of Bastion Point.

FEBRUARY

The Commission of Inquiry into the Heavy Engineering Industry began its hearings. While the commission looked at the finances and economics of the industry, its primary attention was focused on industrial relations and the activities of the Boilermakers' Union.

A New Zealand working women's council was formed with the aim of creating co-operation and understanding between wage-earning women and women who work in the home. The council will encourage wage-earning women to participate fully in trade union affairs and will assist home workers to understand unions, particularly in times of industrial conflict. The council will also help women preparing to re-enter the workforce.

Representatives of the Employers' Federation and of the Minister of Labour appeared before the wage hearing tribunal and argued that any general wage order should be small. Their cases were supported by the Secretary of the Treasury and the Governor of the Reserve Bank on the grounds that the general economic situation was such that only a moderate or

modest wage order could be safely contemplated.

The publication of the Bullock Committee report in the United Kingdom and the visit to New Zealand of Mr Hans Lindestad of the SAF (Swedish Employers Confederation) renewed public discussion of worker participation issues. The Minister of Labour suggested that encouragement should be given to varying degrees of worker participation up to management level. The Employers' Federation stressed the importance of participation developing on an individual company basis and the need for better methods of communication and consultation at the workplace. The Federation of Labour advocated legislation to provide for worker participation on company boards.

The 75th Jubilee National Convention of the New Zealand Employers' Federation, held in Auckland, was addressed by H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh. The Prime Minister announced at the convention the establishment of the New Zealand Industrial Relations Trust Fund to promote industrial relations education, training and research. Scholarships funded by the trust will be awarded in the name of the Duke of Edinburgh and called Prince Philip scholarships. At the same convention the Minister of Labour outlined the need for new legislation to encourage the development of work place bargaining and the modernisation of trade union structures.

A green ban was placed on the proposed route through the Hakarimata scenic reserve, near Ngaruawahia, of the multi-million dollar Maui gas pipeline. Labourers, drivers and engineers working on the pipeline voted to ban all work on the Hakarimata section until a local petition for rerouting the pipeline was heard by the Government.

MARCH

The Wage Hearing Tribunal, from whose decisions there is no appeal, awarded a general wage order of 6% payable from 14 March. The Prime Minister expressed dismay, said he had hoped for a 3% order, and hinted that there might need to be government measures to counteract the effects of the order.

Auckland Stevedoring (1977) Ltd was set up as a joint venture by the Auckland Waterside Workers' Union, the Auckland Stevedoring Company and McKay Shipping, each party having an equal shareholding and appointing directors to the board. For the past two years the union has run the Maritime Union Stevedoring Company which deals mainly with Pacific Islands trade.

The Minister of Labour stated that voting on voluntary unionism would go ahead despite FOL threats. He said that the first ballots would be held within the next few months, although it might take up to five years before the ballots were completed. The FOL said that all affiliated unions had been asked to boycott the ballots and that the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions had agreed to place a black ban on any goods handled by non-union members in New Zealand.

Hearings are still proceeding on the question of travel allowances for freezing workers. The Committee, set up in December 1976, held its first hearing in Invercargill on 6 March and finishes up in Auckland in May.

State Servants accepted a 3.5% pay offer from Government following the Order of the Wage Hearing Tribunal. The 3.5% is back-dated to October 1976. This offer now has to go to the State Services Tribunal for approval under the Wage Adjustment Regulations, 1974 s. 37A. ©

NEWS and VIEWS

WELLINGTON:
Carol Fuller*

JANUARY

Committee of Inquiry on Shearers Working Conditions

A Committee of Inquiry (under s.121 of the Industrial Relations Act) chaired by Mr E. G. Davey, a former Secretary of Labour, commenced sitting in Wellington on the matter of shearers working conditions. The Minister of Labour, Mr Gordon, undertook to set this Committee up following a return to work by shearers who had been refusing to come forward for shearing on the grounds that employers were refusing to pay the demand rates of local agreements.

The Committee has received submissions *inter alia* from the New Zealand Sheep-owners Industrial Union of Employers, the New Zealand Workers' Union, and the New Zealand Shearing Contractors Industrial Union of Employers.

A report is expected in April.

FEBRUARY

Redundancy

The Caucus Labour Committee resumed discussions on the Government's planned Redundancy legislation. Earlier discussions were halted following insertion in the Wage Adjustment Regulations of guidelines for acceptable redundancy agreements.

MARCH

Redundancy at Peter Pan Ice Cream Company

The Industrial Commission approved redundancy payments on a generous scale to the 60 or so workers at the Peter Pan Ice Cream Company at Waipukurau who were to be redundant from 1 April. From 4 weeks pay up to 1 year's service, redundancy payments extended to 24 weeks after 20 years' service. At 31 March 39 employees of the Company were enrolled with the Department of Labour's Employment Service, which is actively assisting in finding alternative employment for the workers. The Department of Trade and Industry is also looking into the situation.

Registrar's Decision on Freezing Workers' Election

The Registrar of Industrial Unions, follow-

* CAROL FULLER is on leave from the Department of Labour.

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