

# CHRONICLE

## MARCH 1981

The Mangere airport engineers' dispute wound down following the FOL's order to resume work on 3 March, in return for a government undertaking to discuss a review of the picketing laws. The arrested picketers appeared in the Otahuhu District Court on 2 March and were remanded to a later hearing. A unionist march through Auckland's Queen Street that day attracted some 3,000 workers, but a counter-march two days later drew a crowd estimated at 50,000.

Unionists returned to work throughout the Auckland province, except at Paihia where union drivers refused to service the Mount Cook Group fuel depot, because the company's drivers had ferried stranded Air New Zealand passengers from Mangere to Rotorua during the picketing dispute. This ban on fuel supplies was lifted after 13 days, when the union and the company reached an agreement. Another delayed action occurred in Christchurch, where 15 Islington freezing workers employed in the canning department struck on 9 March. During the picketing dispute they had been required to finish perishable goods and this, they explained, was their first opportunity to show their support for the FOL's call.

Air New Zealand resumed its talks with the airport engineers over a separate award. In what their secretary called a "tactical withdrawal" the men accepted the company's original offer, but gained an undertaking that Air New Zealand would not use non-union labour in future disputes, provided the union followed the legal provisions of the *Industrial Relations Act*, i.e. gave the required 14 days' notice of strike action.

The hearing of the FOL's application for an 11 percent general wage increase opened in the Arbitration Court on 25 March. Mr Knox presented the Federation's case and he was followed on the next day by Mr B. Tucker, of the Combined State Unions, who presented further submissions in support of the claim. The Court then adjourned to give the employers time to prepare counter-arguments.

A New Zealand Herald-National Research Bureau poll showed that unemployment remained the problem of most concern to New Zealanders, with 35 percent of responses, but that industrial relations had jumped into second place, with 17 percent, compared with only 2 percent two months earlier, in January 1981. Another public opinion poll (Auckland Star-Heylen) taken on 7 February but released in March, showed that public confidence in trade unions had increased between 1975 and 1981, while confidence in all other institutions (doctors, churches, police, courts, employers, etc.) had declined in that period. The unions were still at the bottom of the list, but in the youngest age-group consulted (15 to 25) more people had full trust in trade unions than in politicians or manufacturers.

The Air Stewards and Hostesses Union withdrew pay claims against Air New Zealand as "an act of moderation on our part" and because "the company simply could not afford to pay". The union did however instruct its members to work strictly according to the letter of the award, which was expected to cause some delays in services.

Negotiations over the Bank Officers' 6 percent work value claim to cover new skills and responsibilities broke down on 3 March. The employers wanted to refer the claim to the Arbitration Court, while the union preferred an independent arbitrator. After further discussions the union accepted an immediate 14 percent pay increase backdated to 1 March. The work value claim was referred to a joint working party which was to report by 31 August.

A dispute over allowances for handling natural gas at the Kinleith paper mill was settled on 12 March. Up to 50 members of the Engine Drivers' and Paper Workers' Unions who operate recovery boilers gained pay increases and extra unpaid leave.

A three-man evaluation committee set up to investigate pay claims of some 60 boilermen

at the Marsden Point oil refinery, recommended that the remuneration of a qualified refinery operator should be related to that of an auxiliary plant operator in a power plant, which was, in the committee's majority view, the "only comparison with validity". The union's original claim was for an hourly rate of \$5.40; the company's last offer was \$5.35, but in view of the committee's findings the union increased its demand to a rate of \$6.55. The company refused to accept the committee's recommendations, claiming that the committee had gone outside its terms of reference and had "botched" its report. The Minister of Labour upheld the company's view but, according to the secretary of the Engine Drivers Union, "the real cause of the trouble is that the employers want to disown the report because it favours the union". For the second time this year the union gave the required 14 days' notice of intention to strike and on 28 March the refinery shut down.

Mr N.B. Kensington, the Auckland accountant charged to investigate the financial position of the Auckland Farmers Freezing Co., found that the closure of the Southdown works had been "a reasonable business decision". Further discussions to save the works failed.

The police brought additional charges, under section 33 of the *Police Offences Act*, against the 33 picketers arrested at the Ravensdown works. One man pleaded guilty and was convicted and discharged without penalty. The case against the remaining picketers opened in the Dunedin District Court on 31 March.

A committee of inquiry set up after last December's national port strike to investigate wage relativities between watersiders and harbour boards employees, found a significant linkage between the pay of mobile plant operators and waterside workers driving tractors. The committee recommended a general wage increase for harbour boards employees of 15.8 percent, with 16.5 percent for crane drivers. The employers had offered only 13.75 percent, and the union saw the committee's findings as a vindication of its stand.

The Auckland Provincial District Local Authorities Officers Union gave 14 days' notice of intention to strike on behalf of some 1200-1400 salaried supervisors employed by 15 power boards in the northern region, after the electrical supply authorities had rejected the men's claims to retain their relativity over electrical workers. These relativities had been upset when the Arbitration Court in October 1980 granted electrical workers linkage with state service workers and a pay increase of about 24 percent. According to the union, power boards extended this increase to non-electrical trades, such as carpenters, painters and storemen, but refused to restore "internal relativity" to their salaried staff, many of whom now received less than the workers they supervised. The union withdrew its strike notice when the employers agreed to hold "meaningful negotiations" on 30 March. These talks proved abortive, and the union reimposed its 14 days' notice, except in the case of four boards which had agreed to preserve margins for skill and responsibility.

NZ Forest Products settled a new wage agreement with the combined unions in its paper mills, providing for improved production bonuses and advances in long service leave entitlements, as well as an 11.5 percent increase in the hourly rate. Members of the Paper Workers Union, who negotiate separately, were not covered by this agreement.

When the State Services Commission announced that it would discontinue the special allowances and extra stress leave relating to the use of gas at the New Plymouth power station on 1 April, the PSA members at the station decided to cease handling natural gas from that date. Last minute talks on 31 March averted the ban: the government agreed to continue the allowances and leave, while the SSC and PSA negotiated a new agreement. If no agreement was reached by 1 June, the matter would be referred to a mediator.

A threat by the PSA to withdraw its members' services if the Springbok rugby tour went ahead was rejected by the Prime Minister. Mr Muldoon alleged that groups within the PSA were likely to break away because they objected to their union "continually politicising in more or less a left-wing manner"; he was backed up by a Mount Eden prison officer, who claimed to have "tremendous" support for a breakaway public servants' union in the Prison Service and in the Justice Department, but after some initial publicity nothing further was heard from that quarter.

Thirty Ministry of Works staff on the Haast Road imposed a ban on overtime and wet weather work, when their claim for an increase in the remote living allowance was rejected.

The Wellington, Taranaki and Canterbury shop assistants' unions amalgamated to form the New Zealand (except Northern, Marlborough, Otago and Southland) Shop Employees Union, with a combined membership of about 15,000 workers. A three weeks' strike at the Ford assembly plant at Wiri was settled on 12 March when the company agreed to extra payments to workers handling containers. The dispute had delayed the release of the new Laser car.

Primary teachers discussed what action to take following the Government Services Tribunal's rejection of their claim for parity with secondary teachers. "Teachers," said the president of the NZEI, "have traditionally put the children first, but now they see where it has got them — nowhere." Eighty-three percent of the membership responded to a questionnaire, and a majority opposed stopwork meetings. The executive therefore decided to hold a series of 19 mass meetings outside school hours between 7 and 13 April.

The Waterside Workers' Award for the first time in many years was settled without preliminary strike action and within the term of the existing award. The men had asked for an 18.5 percent wage rise, but agreed to an increase of 14 percent. The first shots in a long-term campaign to reduce working hours were fired in the last week of March, when national officials of seven unions decided to press a claim for a 35-hour working week in the oil industry. Award negotiations were due to start in November.

## APRIL 1981

A joint meeting of chief executives of the Manufacturers', Employers and Retailers' Federations and of the Chambers of Commerce and Federated Farmers voiced strong opposition to the union campaign for a 35-hour working week without reduction of pay. They referred to the enormous cost involved in what they described as "a massive wage claim in disguise" and warned that a 35-hour week would cause lower living standards and higher unemployment. They were supported by the Minister of Labour with a statement that "every time the cost of labour goes up by such innovations as the 35-hour week, the more jobs are put at risk", and by the Social Credit industrial spokesman who claimed that a 35-hour week would "close more businesses, force up prices and increase unemployment". The Labour Party was somewhat more positive, with a statement that a 35-hour week should be part of a government-negotiated industrial package.

The Federation of Labour rejected an offer by the Prime Minister to address its forthcoming annual conference, an honour usually reserved for the leader of the Labour Party. The Federation's letter of reply said it did not consider it appropriate or desirable to provide a platform for the representative of a government which sponsored, promoted and implemented anti-union policies which had disastrous effects on living standards and employment levels.

A vacant seat on the FOL executive, caused by the elevation of Mr E.G. Thompson to the vicepresidency, was won by Mr E.W.J. Ball, the national secretary of the Engineers Union. Ms Sonya Davies, another FOL executive member, was elected to represent New Zealand workers at the ILO Conference in Geneva.

The Arbitration Court heard counter-submissions to the FOL case for an 11 percent general wage increase and the Federation's final submissions, and then reserved its decision.

Marsden Point refinery operators resumed work on 2 April after a five days' strike, when the Minister of Labour decided to set up a new committee, under an independent chairman, to investigate their pay dispute. The two sides agreed on the choice of chairman — Mr George Whatnall, formerly chairman of the now-defunct Industrial Commission — but could not reach agreement on the terms of reference. The Engine Drivers' union wanted

the committee to take into consideration the findings of the earlier committee, which had favoured the union's case, but the employers objected.

Judgement in the case of 32 Ravensdown picketers was given on 3 April after a hearing lasting two days. The judge found that both charges – of watching and besetting the premises, and of preventing two employees of the company from working at their occupation, had been proved against all defendants. He did not impose any penalty but ordered the men to pay costs of \$38.10 each. The secretary of the Meat Workers Union announced that the union would meet the cost. Also on 3 April trespassing charges arising out of the Mangere airport dispute were heard in the Otahuhu District Court. The men's lawyer claimed that the civil aviation regulations, under which the charges were laid, were "woolly and confusing" in that they did not state who was to set aside areas for public use and how the public was to be notified. The District Judge reserved his decision.

Workers at the Gear Meat Company's Petone freezing works returned to work after a six-and-a-half weeks' stoppage. They claimed victory in the dispute which centred on payments to cutting-room workers and muttonboard labourers. The Southdown freezing works in Auckland, which had been the scene of an earlier dispute, closed finally on 30 April.

No progress was made in the dispute between power boards and the Auckland Local Authorities Officers Union by the time the union's 14 days' strike notice expired. Some 400 engineers, supervisors and clerical staff of the Auckland Electric Power Board went on strike but returned 18 hours later to allow negotiations to continue. When these talks broke down, the workers resumed their strike on 17 April, and were joined a few days later by employees of the Rotorua, Tauranga and Thames Valley boards. They returned to work after a week, when the union agreed to refer the dispute to a three-man committee chaired by the industrial conciliator, Mr J.H. Bufton. The union stressed that this was the first time in over forty years that it had been forced to resort to direct action.

Another strike of salaried staff (a "bosses' strike", according to the newspapers) closed the Auckland factory of the Aluminium Wire & Cable Co., when 11 managerial and salaried employees walked off the job in protest against poor working conditions and inadequate pay rises. This was the second such strike at this factory in less than two months. The company is wholly owned by Australian interests.

The combined unions at NZ Forest Products' Kinleith paper mill reached agreement with the company on preferential employment for local school-leavers. The company had wanted to pay youth rates only, while the unions insisted that youths doing adult work should be paid adult wages. A compromise formula was adopted which, according to a union spokesman, represented a definite breakthrough.

Primary and intermediate school teachers, members of the NZ Educational Institute, held meetings throughout New Zealand to discuss their claim for parity with secondary school teachers. They expressed strong support for industrial action, but their executive decided to lodge another salary claim, details of which will be discussed at the Institute's annual conference.

## MAY 1981

The Federation of Labour's annual conference (reported elsewhere in this issue) rejected the Government's wage-tax trade-off proposals. The Prime Minister declared himself "astonished and disturbed" at this decision which, he said, was contrary to the best interests of rank-and-file union members. Similar concern for the interests of unionists was expressed by the president of the Employers Federation, and the press chimed in with accusations that the FOL was "torpedoing the government's inflation battle". Counter-arguments, that a significant trade-off would lead to massive cuts in government spending or to a further boost to inflation by increasing the already high government deficit, were

dismissed by the Prime Minister as spurious. The FOL decision, he claimed, was part of the Socialist Unity Party's continuing campaign to destroy the New Zealand economy.

At the Labour Party conference, which met in the week after the FOL conference, the party's industrial relations spokesman hinted that Labour Party election policy would include proposals to revise all industrial legislation, to split the Arbitration Court into a lay arbitration commission and an industrial court, to upgrade mediation, conciliation and arbitration services, and to set up an industrial democracy foundation. Mr Knox, who addressed the conference, stressed that the FOL was prepared to continue negotiations on the wage-tax trade-off but, he said, "in all the talk that has gone on about this we have seen no paper from Treasury officers, no figures have been mentioned, there has been nothing we can have a look at." He also told the conference that the FOL no longer wished to meet the government to discuss changes to the picketing laws.

When the tripartite wage talks resumed on 19 May, the Prime Minister confirmed that the Government had no specific proposals to put at this stage, but he insisted that there would be no tax cuts in this year's budget without prior agreement on a wage-tax trade-off. The FOL and the CSU refused to agree to a trade-off "in principle", but asked instead that the Government produce something definite which they could consider. The Prime Minister however explained that the Government could not make specific proposals until the budget figures had been assembled. The talks thus ended in deadlock, though the unions offered to meet again when something specific was before them. In the unions' view the Government was bluffing when it made tax cuts dependent on a prior deal. They reasoned that tax cuts were inevitable in an election year budget, and saw no reason why they should pay for something they were going to get anyway. Meanwhile more than sixty union advocates met in Wellington under FOL auspices to discuss strategy in the forthcoming round of award talks. They urged immediate tax reforms and not minor adjustments, and stressed that they would enter the award talks "in the normal manner".

On 21 May the Arbitration Court released its decision on the FOL application for an 11 percent general increase: it decreed a 5 percent all-round increase as from 11 June. This award, said the Court, was "an act of judgement rather than a calculation" and it expressed the view that the award "should have very considerable bearing on any 1981 wage round". Mr Knox regarded the increase as a properly determined wage catch-up, while the Employers Federation attacked the decision as "totally unjustified". The Prime Minister commented: "I believe we made a mistake in setting up that hearing in the first place." He indicated that the Government would accept wage increases of about 9 percent this year, but hoped the unions would trade off part of that 9 percent in the form of tax cuts. Failure to accept such a trade-off, he warned, would probably lead to wage fixing by regulation.

On the initiative of the National Party caucus, the Government wrote to the FOL to propose yet another meeting on the trade-off. The FOL accepted the invitation but, said Mr Douglas, "we will not get anywhere if the Government is not prepared to lay its cards on the table."

The Airline Pilots Association, according to press reports, planned to lodge a salary claim for pilots of the new Boeing 747 planes, which are due to come into operation on 11 June. The figure quoted was in excess of \$100,000, compared with the current rate of \$72,000 for captains of the smaller DC-10s. The Airline Stewards and Hostesses Union reached agreement with Air New Zealand on the size of the cabin crew in the new planes, but the union was dissatisfied with other aspects of staffing.

Ten women cleaners at the Avalon television centre went on strike because their employer, Crothalls, refused to provide free transport when public transport was not available. The cleaners' working hours are from 4.30 a.m. to 7.30 a.m. The women picketed the television centre and asked service vehicles not to cross their picket line. The dispute was settled when the company agreed to additional payments.

An agreement between the drivers' unions and the Education Department to deduct

union fees from the wages of part-time school bus drivers caused angry reactions from some of the drivers concerned, who had not been aware of their legal obligation to join the union. Members of the Auckland Education Board supported the protests, but the general manager revealed that he had received written objections from only two of the Board's 253 drivers.

Talks between the Minister of Labour and the president of the FOL reached agreement on the terms of reference of the three-man committee set up to investigate the Marsden Point boilermakers' dispute. The findings of the earlier committee, which had favoured the union's case, formed part of the union submissions at the first meeting of the new committee in Whangarei on 22 May. The FOL and the U.S.—Japanese consortium, which is to build the planned extensions to the Marsden Point refinery, began talks on a site agreement for the estimated workforce of about 1200.

Prosecutions against picketers charged with trespassing during the Mangere airport dispute proceeded in the Otahuhu District Court. All defendants were convicted and ordered to pay costs.

The NZ Institution of Engineers proposed to add the word "professional" to its name, because of concern that the public confused the Institution with the Engineers Union. Members were mystified when the Mayor of Auckland addressed their conference in February and lectured them on industrial harmony.

The Harbour Boards Employees Union wrote to the Marlborough Harbour Board about the treatment meted out to two union members who had gained election to the Board last year. According to the union, the two men were at first refused paid leave to attend Board meetings, and they were then challenged on the grounds of conflict of interest between their roles of employees and Board members.

The New Plymouth power station dispute remained unsettled. Talks between the PSA and the State Services Commission broke down and the issue was referred to a mediator. The PSA however made no agreement to accept arbitration. The television sound operators' dispute was settled on 21 May, and the operators lifted the overtime ban which had disrupted programmes. Other disputes involving PSA members were caused by understaffing: Wellington District Court clerical staff walked out on 13 May, search staff at the Wellington Land Transfer office instituted a work-to-rule, staff of the School Publications Branch placed a ban on publication of the *Education Gazette*, South Auckland traffic officers imposed an overtime ban, and administrative staff at the Technical Correspondence Institute imposed an overtime ban and a work-to-rule. The restrictions imposed by staff on the Haast Road continued.

Members of the Seamen's Union voted at their regular stopwork meetings to cease work for 24 hours on 19 July, the day the South African rugby team is due to arrive in New Zealand. According to the union president, the seamen's involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle dates from 1965, when three members, two Maoris and a Niue Islander, were refused entry into South Africa.

The Shop Employees Union agreed to take up a personal grievance case on behalf of a member who complained about sexual harassment by her employer. The young woman claimed that she had lost her job because she refused sexual advances. The *Public Service Journal* had earlier carried out a survey by questionnaire of sexual harassment in government offices.

## JUNE 1981

Unions and employers met the Government on 2 June to discuss once more the wage—tax trade-off, but the talks failed to reach agreement and were followed by recriminations as to who had been responsible for the breakdown. The Government, which had answered in writing nine specific questions put to it by the FOL, accused the unions of torpedoing

the talks by introducing at the last minute a new demand for a minimum tax cut of \$4.50 a week, or 8 percent. The unions said they were prepared to continue the talks, but the Prime Minister announced that negotiations were at an end: "From here the Government has to accept responsibility for wage fixing."

The employers' advice to the Government was "to keep talking". A meeting of executives of the top tier of business organisations – the Chambers of Commerce, Federated Farmers, and the Manufacturers, Retailers and Employers' Federations – discussed the deadlock and decided to urge the Government in a joint letter not to reimpose wage controls. The Government followed this advice; the Prime Minister announced on 4 June that he did not plan any move in the meantime but would "deal with events as they occur". He also blamed the Socialist Unity Party for the breakdown of the talks, because Mr Douglas had led the union side in the absence of Mr Knox who was travelling to the ILO meeting in Geneva.

On 8 June, Mr Knox spoke at the ILO conference and delivered a stinging attack on New Zealand Government policies in industrial relations. The Prime Minister countered by accusing Mr Knox of slandering his own country and of harming the international image of New Zealand. He also threatened to withdraw government funding for attendance at future ILO meetings. Union spokesmen supported Mr Knox's criticisms, while government MPs tabled notices of motion in Parliament denouncing the Geneva speech as disloyal, irrational, inflammatory, unpatriotic, untrue, outrageous, traitorous and treasonable.

The Minister of Justice introduced a new *Summary Offences Bill* to replace the *Police Offences Act*. It leaves the picketing provisions unchanged but doubles the maximum fine for picketers. In the earlier address-in-reply debate, the Minister had described the Mangere picketing dispute as "one of the most serious challenges to the rule of law in New Zealand's history". In another statement, the Minister of Justice called trade union attitudes the greatest impediment to equality in the work-place, and blamed "union intransigence and prejudice" for discrimination against women workers at the Ocean Beach freezing works and in the Auckland fire service. The chairman of the Human Rights Commission replied that the FOL and many unions had been most helpful and had given full support to the Commission.

Professor D.E. Feller of Berkeley University, who had settled the pilots' seniority dispute following the Air New Zealand merger, accepted an invitation to arbitrate in the current dispute over pay scales for jumbo jet pilots. Hearings on the claim opened in Auckland on 15 June. The Air Line Pilots Association, which had welcomed the Mahon Commission report on the Mt Erebus crash because it exonerated the pilot from any blame, "unreservedly condemned" attempts to question the Mahon findings by Air New Zealand and by a special review committee set up by the State Services Commission. The Association also voted not to accept a return to flying duties of executive pilots who had been placed on restricted duties by Air New Zealand, until their role in the disaster had been cleared up.

The Drivers Federation on 15 June lodged a 17.8 percent wage claim for the General Drivers' Award, which covers about 15,000 workers. Taking account of fiscal drag, this was calculated to produce a net increase of 15 percent. A review committee, chaired by the mediator Mr Walter Grills, which had been examining appropriate wage levels, existing relativities, and conditions of employment in the industry, presented an interim report when award negotiations began on 30 June.

The conflict over compulsory union membership of part-time school bus drivers continued. About 1400 drivers are employed by private contractors, and about 900 by Education Boards. Cabinet decided to make the drivers state servants by Order-in-Council. "They can either join the Public Service Association, which is a voluntary organisation," explained the Prime Minister, "or not join anything and continue as they have in the past perfectly happily." According to officials of the Drivers Federation, this decision was taken without consulting them and against the advice of the Education Department. The Drivers

Federation applied for registration as a State Service negotiating body, and the Combined State Unions voiced their opposition to any attempt to remove school bus drivers from Drivers Union membership.

Mr Leo Dromgoole, whose clash with the Auckland Seamen's and Drivers Unions led to Mr B. Andersen's arrest in 1974, was again in conflict with the Drivers Union. Bus drivers employed by his Oneroa-Surfdale Transport Co. went on strike, when Mr Dromgoole dismissed a driver on 18 June, for being involved in an accident. The dismissed man had been cleared of blame by the police and traffic department, and his own son had been injured in the accident.

Proceedings against the Mangere airport picketers concluded in the Otahuhu District Court. Charges against Mr Syd Jackson, the secretary of the Auckland Clerical Workers Union, were dismissed but all other defendants were found guilty and fined. In the case against Mr J. Butterworth, the secretary of the Auckland Engineers Union, the judge said that the demonstrations at the airport had been extremely well organised, orderly, well controlled and non-violent and that there was no question of any real security problem or any danger to personnel, aircraft or the public. Butterworth, however, had acted in an openly defiant manner, had ignored warnings and had been "the front runner". For these reasons the judge imposed the substantial fine of \$250, plus \$150 costs.

Some 90 engineers and storemen at Hawke Coachwork Ltd. in Takanini started a campaign of rolling strikes to gain pay equality with other car assembly workers. The firm has contracts for the assembly of buses for the Auckland Regional Authority and the Wellington City Council.

The three-man committee of inquiry into pay rates at the Marsden Point oil refinery continued its investigation. At a sitting in Auckland it heard evidence from the chairman of the earlier job evaluation committee. In the case of the three-man committee of inquiry into power boards officers' pay, it was left to the Minister of Labour to decide the terms of reference after the parties failed to agree.

A strike closed New Zealand's largest freezing works at Whakatu, when the Hawke's Bay Farmers Meat Co. dismissed a 19-year old cooling store worker. The man had already been dismissed and reinstated five times since 1978. Both the union and the company took full page advertisements in both Hawke's Bay papers before referring the dispute to a mediator.

A meeting of freezing industry employer and union representatives hosted by the Government agreed to set up a consultative committee to oversee the introduction of new technology. The committee will be chaired by an industrial conciliator, Mr L. Fortune, who will also lead a twelve-man team on a study tour of Canada in July, to see how new technology has been introduced there.

The Auckland Local Authorities Officers Union put forward an on-the-job youth training scheme for local bodies lasting six months, during which time the employer would pay one-fifth of the wage, the Labour Department three-fifths, and parents the remaining "notional" one-fifth. The Auckland City Council's resources and organisation committee, chaired by the deputy mayor Mr J. Strevens, which received the union scheme, proposed that the Government introduce legislation which would allow anybody unemployed for more than three months to work for any amount, regardless of award rates.

South Auckland traffic officers abandoned their three-week old overtime ban, because it was affecting road safety. Searchers at the Wellington Land Transfer office resumed normal duties after three weeks of work-to-rule and two 24-hour stoppages, when they were offered additional staff. Administrative, printing and service staff at the Technical Correspondence Institute called off their work-to-rule when the State Services Commission agreed to consider their claims, but they walked off their jobs on 15 June because they felt that their dispute was not being treated seriously.

280 rubber workers at the Firestone Tyre Company in Christchurch went on strike over the dismissal of a union representative on 28 May for alleged unsatisfactory work perfor-



mance. They returned to work while a conciliator heard the case, but walked out again on 15 June. The company issued suspension notices to laboratory and technical workers and to some cafeteria staff. In an unusual move, the Canterbury Rubber Workers Union officially informed the Stock Exchanges Association of the "unsatisfactory industrial relations" existing at the Firestone plant.

The New Zealand Farm Workers Association, a union not affiliated to the Federation of Labour, settled its wage negotiations by accepting a 6 percent increase from 1 July. The Northern District United Storemen and Packers and Warehouse Employees (other than in retail shops) Union changed its name to Northern (and Hawke's Bay) Storepersons, Packers and Warehouse Union. Women make up between 10 and 20 percent of the union's 6900 members. According to the union secretary, the Registrar of Unions objected to the name change until the union threatened to approach the Human Rights Commission.

## JULY 1981

The Budget did not contain any income tax concessions. The Prime Minister blamed the Federation of Labour for the breakdown of the trade-off talks, but hinted that a later mini-budget could contain tax cuts if the Federation reconsidered its position. Mr Knox replied that this was "the tired old ploy of blaming the trade union movement in an election year," and criticised the Prime Minister for hinting that wage controls may be reimposed. A joint statement by the FOL and CSU rejected any responsibility for the Government's "inability to act decisively" on tax reforms, but offered to meet the Government to discuss specific proposals.

Mr G. Knapp (Social Credit) introduced on 3 July the *Industrial Relations (Protection of Political Freedom) Amendment Bill*, intended to give union members a choice on whether they wanted to be levied for political parties. Speakers in the parliamentary debate pointed out that the *Political Disabilities Removal Act* already allowed unionists to opt out of political levies, and that out of nearly 300 registered unions only 48 were affiliated to the Labour Party, where they provided 9 percent of the funds. A Labour member, Mr D. Butcher, introduced an *Employment Protection Bill* on 24 July, designed to lessen the impact of redundancies. A Government-sponsored measure, the *Factories and Commercial Premises Bill*, came under attack from union representatives because it removes clauses protecting outworkers and provisions relating to ordinary working hours and overtime from existing legislation.

The annual conference of the Chambers of Commerce denounced proposals for a 35-hour week as "selfish". A discussion paper by the Employers Federation claimed that a 35-hour week would mean another boost to inflation and unemployment, and the Minister of Labour also told the Institute of Personnel Management that a reduced working week would worsen unemployment. In a speech to the National Party conference on 31 July, the Minister of Labour announced that he would impose reduced wage rates for young people by legislation, if no agreement could be reached with the unions. The Auckland City Council voted against a proposal to seek legislation to pay less than award rates to workers who had been unemployed for more than three months. The FOL and the CSU asked employers' organisations to discuss a draft national agreement on the introduction of new technology.

Professor Feller left New Zealand without settling the jumbo jet captains' pay claim. He indicated that a further hearing might be held in California.

Negotiations for a new drivers' award were adjourned to let the review committee complete its work. The bus drivers' strike on Waiheke Island continues. Mr Dromgoole announced that he had no intention of giving in; the union retaliated by organising a well-attended

public meeting to explain its stand, and by promoting a petition seeking a review of transport licences on the island. Parents had to use their own cars to take children to the area school. After teachers had voted against driving buses which the Education Board was willing to supply, the Drivers Union offered to drive school buses voluntarily, provided the Oneroa-Surfdale Transport Co. made no profit from this. This offer was withdrawn when the company declared two of its drivers redundant.

The Engineers Union filed a claim for a 25 percent wage increase and a 35-hour working week in the Metal Trades award, which covers about 30,000 workers. Some 250 maintenance engineers at the Kinleith paper mill stopped work on 17 July in support of a claim for an extra gasfitting allowance. They returned to work after three days to allow talks to continue. The dispute at the bus assembly plant of Hawke Coachwork Ltd. was settled when the union accepted a pay increase of more than 50 cents an hour. This brought wage rates to within 16 cents of the rates at Auckland car assembly plants.

The union nominee on the committee of inquiry into operators' wages at the Marsden Point oil refinery withdrew in protest against what he called "a distortion" of the terms of reference. The men imposed a ban on the working of shore valves and pumps, but lifted it on the advice of the FOL. The committee was divided on its report: two members recommended an hourly rate of \$5.47, backdated to 8 November last, but the union representative recommended a rate of \$6.18.5. Further negotiations took place on 31 July, but meanwhile tradesmen at the refinery held up maintenance work in protest against lack of progress in their wage talks. Negotiations on a site agreement for the refinery extensions between the FOL and the joint-venture consortium reached substantial agreement.

Mrs Anne Barry, who five months earlier had won a ruling from the Human Rights Commission that she was entitled to become a firefighter, was informed by the Fire Service Commission that she had been accepted for the next recruits' course in Auckland.

The strike at the Whakatu freezing works over the dismissal of a cooling store worker was solved by the mediator, who ruled that the dismissal must stand, but that the man should be re-employed as from 5 January in the freezing chambers, at higher pay but with a written final warning endorsed by the union secretary. A five-week stoppage at two mutton-chains in the Patea works was also settled. Workers at the Westfield works in Auckland voted to accept a union-negotiated agreement on the reduction of manning levels, which will affect more than a hundred jobs. Workers at the Gear Meat works in Petone called on the Government to nationalise the plant and put the union in charge of day-to-day running. They also voted to oppose any plans to cut staff or wages.

Psychiatric nurses held stopwork meetings throughout the country to discuss the effect of staff shortages caused by the "sinking lid" policies. Nurses at the Tokanui Hospital banned work in a new isolation ward until staff numbers were increased. Officers on two government research vessels refused to take the ships to sea until their wages were raised. They resumed full duties when the State Services Commission agreed to hold discussions on their claims.

More than 150 railwaymen struck work in Christchurch on 2 July because they had not received an updated issue of uniforms. After a second strike on 8 July the department agreed to the appointment of an arbitrator. Auckland railway staff began the long-delayed stripping of asbestos lining, which had held up the conversion of Silver Star carriages. Work resumed on 6 July at the Firestone tire plant in Christchurch. Shearers in Central Otago lifted a seven-week shearing ban and accepted an interim wage rise offered by the employers.

Bert Roth