

CHRONICLE

NOVEMBER 1990

The Employers' Federation, unlike the Manufacturers' Federation, rejected any extension of the growth agreements saying that many employers could not afford 2 percent increases. The CTU, however, urged the National government to continue the agreement despite the Prime Minister's refusal to offer any quid pro quo for wage restraint. Far from any growth in jobs, unemployment was forecast to reach 250,000 in 1991. The Prime Minister did call for restraint on higher salaries but the Fletcher Challenge board, chaired by Sir Ron Trotter, ignored the call and decided to increase the fees for non-executive directors by half. The annual salary survey by the PA Consulting Group showed that in the year to 30 September pay rises for top executives had outstripped those of all other workers with an average increase of 8.6 percent,

Labour Minister Bill Birch told the annual meeting of the Employers' Federation in Wellington on 15 November that a bill, put through all stages before Christmas, would repeal the pay equity legislation. A small working party would develop alternative means of promoting equal employment opportunities, and the government would encourage employers to adopt appropriate practices. Protests came quickly from unions, women's and other organizations, Figures released by the Statistics Department showed women's average weekly earnings in mid-August at \$443.79 lagging behind men's \$571.83. The number of filled jobs had decreased by 4.1 percent in mid-August, compared with the level at the same time last year. The government also announced its intention to introduce labour law reform legislation before Christmas and to refer this bill to a select committee which would hear submissions early next year.

A special CTU conference on 14 and 15 November approved a major organizational shake-up, with the abolition of regional structures and the national council and the automatic representation on the national executive of affiliates with 20,000 or more members. The conference also endorsed a proposal to draw up twin charters of trade union and worker rights and to launch a campaign to gain public support for these charters and their recognition by government and employers.

Air New Zealand forecast further substantial redundancies, mainly in the administrative and "support" areas, in the second stage of its restructuring into 6 divisions. Mount Cook Airline's 58 pilots stopped work for 10 hours on 22 November over the breakdown of their award talks. They had accepted the company's offer of a 5.5 percent pay increase for a 3-year period, but they were not prepared to reduce their rest and leave periods. Holiday flight schedules were threatened by a dispute between aircraft refuellers represented by the Engineers Union and the Shell, BP and Mobil oil companies. After award talks collapsed, the union gave notice of 48-hour strikes starting on 10 and 17 December. A 3 percent pay rise had been agreed on but the companies rejected a union claim for an allowance to cover changes in duties and responsibilities. The Engineers' Union also announced a 2-hour stopwork meeting of some 2000 Air New Zealand airport maintenance engineers and baggage handlers on 14 December to consider a 48-hour strike starting on 16 December. The union claimed a 3 percent pay increase, with another 2 percent phased in later, but rejected a company demand for the removal of Saturday penal rates, shift allowances and shift holidays.

The Northern Chemical Workers Union continued its campaign for a 6 percent increase for members covered by the Paint, Varnish and Printing Inks Award. A total overtime ban remained in force, except at 8 firms which had agreed to a 5 percent rise, and on 1 November workers at major Auckland printing ink firms voted to start a 48-hour strike. On 9 November a union stopwork decided to strike again in protest against the employers' 3 percent pay offer. The award for some 1,000 drug and chemical workers represented by the same union was settled on 16 November with a 4 percent increase, and the union also signed a 3 percent settlement for its optical dispenser and technician members. On 22 November the paint varnish and printing inks employers "completely caved in" (in the words of the union secretary) and agreed to a 4 percent increase, after more than half their members had broken ranks and signed 5 percent documents. The agreement came after Morrison Printing Inks had been idle for 4 weeks and most other firms had been closed during the previous fortnight.

On his return from a meeting of the Public Service International in Berlin, PSA general secretary Colin Clark proposed the formation of a union for military personnel, as was the case in most non-communist European countries. A retired Chief of Defence Staff and former Defence Minister, Bob Tizard, expressed some guarded sympathy for the ideas though Tizard did not want the PSA with its "marxist views" to represent service personnel.

Employers in the electrical contracting industry and the Electrical Workers' Union set up a legal trust to provide compensation for redundant workers. Under the scheme, contractors agreed to pay \$2.20 a week for each employee on their books into a contingency fund which will meet redundancy claims,

The Japanese-owned automotive wiring firm, Yazaki-New Zealand Ltd, in Auckland announced that 182 of its largely female workforce of about 450 would be laid off on 25 January next.

Private hospital domestic workers and 4,000 staff of the Hancock and Co. hotel chain accepted a flat 2 percent pay rise with no changes in conditions.

The *Christchurch Star* laid off 90 of its 200 staff on 26 November after announcing losses of \$350,000 a month. The paper had already dismissed 84 staff in June and 59 in August. *Star* journalists stopped work on 27 November after being told that all holiday arrangements had been cancelled until late February, but they returned the next day when the editor assured them that the notice had been misinterpreted. *Star* printers negotiated a new document in which they surrendered their exclusive right to typeset advertisements and newspaper reports in return for an improved redundancy package.

Auckland building labourers stopped work on 20 November for the rest of the week over the breakdown of their award talks. The employers had offered either a flat 2 percent rise, or 2 percent plus another "2 percent or thereabouts" if the union was prepared to make concessions such as changes in working hours. The national Concrete Workers' Award was also at an impasse after the Labourers' Union rejected a 2 percent offer.

Auckland City Council drivers and labourers gained a 4.5 percent pay rise - core 2 percent plus 2.5 percent in recognition of efficiency gains. The unions accepted the need for a smaller workforce. The Auckland City Council offered to save about 300 jobs in its works and parks departments if the unions agreed to major concessions in working conditions. The Council had originally considered 834 job losses, while the unions supported an alternative plan with only 188 redundancies. On 9 November the Council announced that 442 workers would be laid off, but that some would be offered an opportunity to join a specialist works unit with an initial staff of 112, which would compete against the private sector for Council work. Prospective members of this new unit were warned by the chief executive "major increases are expected in productivity - this will generally mean working harder and longer."

Plunket nurses gained a 4 percent pay rise and Karitane nurses just over 11 percent. This was outside the 2 percent guideline because the previous agreement had expired 11

months ago. The Nurses' Union was still concerned about the excessive caseloads carried by Plunket staff.

Attempts to discuss an award for newspaper deliverers collapsed when the publishers refused to negotiate, saying that they preferred a code of practice.

Five months of negotiations to settle police pay also failed, with the department raising its initial 2 percent offer to 2.5 percent, while the Police Association made only, minor concessions to its original 10 percent claim. Police are debarred by law from taking strike action, but their association has access to "final offer" arbitration.

The Post Office Union negotiated a 3 percent pay rise for its 9,000 members employed by New Zealand Post.

The composite packaging award was also settled with a 3 percent increase, though about 1,000 lower-paid workers were to have their classifications reviewed, which would give them a further 2.5 percent rise. The unions' claim for an industry superannuation scheme was to be considered during the coming year. Also settled at 3 percent on 23 November was the Commercial Printers' Award, again with provision for the reclassification of workers in low and semiskilled jobs.

Electricorp appeared in the Labour Court on 23 November seeking the removal of the PSA ban on entry to certain areas of the Meremere power station where asbestos was present. The company claimed that the ban was industrially motivated and not a matter of health and safety. During a Court recess on 24 November both sides reached agreement on lifting the ban, after Electricorp undertook to bring forward by 3 months its asbestos removal programme. The government announced an official investigation of the use and effect of asbestos in the workplace.

The Railways Corporation announced its intention to close the Wanganui and Christchurch workshops in December, with the loss of up to 121 jobs.

The first fully integrated ship, the Milburn Carrier, completed its voyage from Westport to Onehunga on 1 November. With manning reduced from 18 to 13, there was no demarcation among the crew, able-bodied seamen helped out in the engine-room and all the crews including the master, shared the dining facilities.

In talks for the renewal of the national grocery and supermarket award, which covers some 25,000 workers, the Distribution Workers' Federation claimed a core 2 percent plus 2 percent for productivity. The employers offered a 2 percent rise but conditional on the elimination of night and weekend penal rates, except for Sunday work paid at time and a half. According to the Federation, this would mean wage cuts of at least 10 percent for most workers, rising to 50 percent for already low-paid junior workers who predominated at weekends. The award was settled on 6 November with a flat 2 percent increase. The national Butchers' Award was also settled at this figure, but in talks on the Retail Non-Food Award the employers made a 2 percent increase conditional on the reduction of Saturday morning penal rates from double time to time and a half. The Employers' Federation and the Hotel Association supported retailers in their opposition to penal rates; the Distribution Workers' Federation initiated picketing of stores and threatened a consumer boycott during the Christmas shopping period.

The 43 dismissed Hydra bacon workers in Auckland continued picketing the factory, while their union organized a consumer boycott of Hydra products. The dispute had its origin in the firm's refusal to sign a redundancy agreement, after the workers learned that lay-offs were imminent. There were scuffles at the plant gates when picketers tried to bar access to strike-breakers and the police made several arrests. On 15 November the National Australia Bank confirmed that it had placed the Hydra Cold Storage Co. into receivership. The bank-appointed receiver then opened negotiations with the Northern Distribution Union and agreement was reached on 21 November. Fewer than half the original workers were to be taken back initially, with the hope that more would be employed before Christmas. In return, the union withdrew the picket and called off the boycott. It also shelved its claim for a redundancy package.

The Northern Distribution Union stepped up its campaign for a 4 percent rise in the stores award with selective 1-day strikes, load-out and supply bans. It succeeded in signing documents providing 4 percent and even higher increases with more than 100 companies, but the award was settled on 30 November with a 3 percent rise plus a \$1.20 a week service allowance.

A stopwork of Wellington City Council staff on 14 November lifted the threat of strikes by accepting a redundancy agreement.

Waterfront workers voted to affiliate with the CTU, which they had refused to join at its formation in 1987.

DECEMBER 1990

The government introduced the Labour Relations Amendment Bill (No.2) on 6 December, which repealed the pay equity legislation, which the National Party had promised to abolish, and also, more unexpectedly, repealed provision for "backstop arbitration" of awards unsettled after 2 years. This was the first bill brought before Parliament by the new government. Labour Minister Birch claimed that his government stood for choice in the workplace and did not want official agencies to impose their rulings, but former Labour Minister Helen Clark called the bill "sad and sick". New Labour leader Jim Anderton, however, said Labour's Employment Equity Act had been a "hollow fraud" and "a blatant and cheap attempt to try to win women's votes without doing anything practical for them." There were noisy and colourful protests by the public during debates on the Bill.

According to the CTU, the workers most affected by the repeal of backstop arbitration will be employees of video shops and some 30,000 young people working as newspaper deliverers, whose employers had refused to enter award negotiations. Parliament passed the legislation on 21 December but one government M.P., Hamish McIntyre, crossed the floor to vote with the opposition. Several unions, among them the Nurses' Union and the Service Workers' Federation, had already lodged claims for pay equity. These now lapsed, but Birch said he had already set up a working party and the government would bring in legislation next year to achieve equity by other means.

Meanwhile, the government on 19 December introduced a sweeping Employment Contracts Bill, which is to come into force on 1 May 1991 and which will replace awards with legally binding individual or collective contracts negotiated in direct, decentralized bargaining between workers (or their bargaining agents) and employers. Strikes are to be permitted only in support of negotiations when contracts expire or over health and safety issues. Employers are to have the choice of who they will bargain with and whether to conclude individual or collective contracts. The Bill will abolish compulsory union membership and unions' blanket coverage but it does not include the promised minimum code of wages and conditions. Birch argued that the Bill opened a radical new era in industrial legislation, while Helen Clark described it as "a kick in the teeth for unions" and "a recipe for chaos". The CTU attacked the Bill as "massively anti-union and anti-worker", but the general manager of the Auckland Employers' Association hailed it as "a very liberating piece of legislation". The MP for Tarawera, Max Bradford, a former advocate for the Employers' Federation, was to chair select committee hearings on the Bill early next year.

Figures released by the Labour Department on 13 December showed that total registered unemployed, including students seeking holiday work and people on subsidised work schemes, had passed the 200,000 mark for the first time. According to economic historian Keith Rankin, true unemployment was now between 15 and 20 percent of the potential workforce, compared with a rate of between 25 and 30 percent in the depression of the early 1930s.

Industrial mediator Colleen Hicks ruled that Air New Zealand could not cut cabin staff by reducing the number of attendants on B747-400 planes from 17 to 14, on B747-200s from 16 to 14, and on B767 planes from 9 to 7. The staff union had negotiated an award which specified the crew complement for each aircraft, but Air New Zealand planned to appeal the ruling to the Labour Court.

A planned 48-hour strike by some 50 aircraft refuellers from 10 December was averted at the last minute, when the Engineers Union reached agreement with the oil companies on a new allowance. In a separate dispute Air New Zealand maintenance engineers and baggage handlers held 2-hour stopwork meetings throughout the country on 14 December, following the breakdown of their award talks. The meetings voted overwhelmingly in favour of a 48-hour stoppage from 16 December, but this strike too was averted in last-minute negotiations with the Engineers' Unions. The Bakers' Union signed agreements on 3 December covering in-house bakery staff at the Woolworth and Big Fresh supermarket chains. In return for a 4.5 percent rise backdated to 9 April and followed by a further 3 percent from 1 February, the union conceded an extended definition of the working week which will reduce the cost to the companies of weekend opening. Biscuit and confectionery workers in the northern district won a 3.5 percent pay rise for a 14-month term.

The national Cleaners' Award was settled with a 2.5 percent rise for a 12-month term from 1 January. The Labour Court, on the order of the Court of Appeal, reversed its earlier ruling ordering the reinstatement of a Petone cleaner who had been replaced by a contract cleaner. In what the Employers' Federation described as a landmark decision, the Court of Appeal had ruled that a worker did not have a right to continued employment if the business could be run more efficiently without him. The Labour Court, however, ordered the company to pay lost wages and \$5,000 compensation for the way the dismissal had been effected.

The national Clerical Award, covering some 25,000 workers, was settled on 5 December with a 2 percent pay rise from 9 February.

Auckland Readymix concrete drivers went on strike on 4 December because the employers insisted on linking a 3 percent pay offer to bringing forward the start of the ordinary-time working day from 7 am to 6.30 am. The workers voted on 13 December to remain on strike, but they resumed work on 17 December to allow negotiations to continue. These talks were adjourned until 23 January, when the employers refused to write into the award an undertaking not to introduce individual contracts.

The national Electronics Award, covering some 3000 workers, was settled with a 2 percent pay rise, to be followed by a further 2 percent rise next April.

New Zealand Steel's Glenbrook mill announced 500 voluntary redundancies among salaried and production workers, amounting to close to a quarter of its total staff. The Engineers' Union warned of possible stopworks and strikes at the Yazaki plant in Mangere, where massive lay-offs had been announced without any offer of redundancy payments. On 18 December the union revealed that Yazaki had decided to lift the dismissal notices after reportedly reallocating the work among its network of Asian and Australian factories. The Ford-Mazda joint car assembly venture laid off a further 80 staff on 10 December, blaming uncontrolled imports of Japanese cars and economic conditions. The Labour Court ruled that Ford-Mazda had been justified in dismissing a production worker who had misrepresented his employment record when applying for work at the plant and who had taken a leading part during a 4-week strike in May 1990. The Court was satisfied that "on the balance of probabilities" misrepresentation was the sole reason for the dismissal, "even if the motive for originally investigating the matter may have been involvement in union activities."

The newly established Equine Workers' Association negotiated a first award for thousands of stablehands and studworkers, but the agreed scales were only marginally above the minimum adult wage, with no penal or overtime rates except on statutory holidays.

Some 2,500 chartered club workers settled their award on 21 December with a 5 percent pay rise for full time staff and rises of between 2 and 5 percent for part timers. The employers had originally offered a 13.29 percent rise in return for cuts to weekend penal rates. In the final settlement the union accepted a reduction in Sunday penal rates from double time to time and a half.

The Finance Sector Union, FinSec, published a report, *At risk*, on women's career prospects in the insurance industry. The report, based on a survey of 2,000 union members by Victoria University Industrial Relations Centre staff, found that the industry discriminated against women, who were concentrated in the lowest paid grades and were less likely than men to receive above-award payments

The Auckland City Council announced that it will retain 280 of the 573 workers covered by the drivers' and labourers' unions. A redundancy agreement reached with the Labourers Union provided for an 8 plus 2 package plus 4 weeks' pay as a job search allowance.

The Nurses' Union reached agreement for settlement of the national Private Hospital Nurses' Award, with a 2 percent pay rise and a roll-over of conditions.

The police pay dispute was to go before the Arbitration Commission early next year, to be resolved by final offer arbitration.

Negotiators on the Retail Non-Food Award agreed on 6 December to resume discussions next year on the issue of Saturday morning penal rates. The unions cancelled pre-Christmas stopwork meetings but will hold on-site meetings early in 1991 to seek members' opinions. The employers meanwhile undertook to ask retailers to raise pay rates by 2 percent from when the current award expired on 21 December. The national Retail Pharmacists' Award, covering some 5,000 workers, was settled on 7 December with a 2 percent rise without changes to penal rate provisions.

The Labour Court ordered the Northern Distribution Union and 4 workers to pay \$850 legal costs to the pharmaceutical company Wellcome New Zealand Ltd. The men had imposed a load-out ban on 30 October as part of the union's campaign for a 4 percent pay rise, and had refused to exempt life-saving medicines.

JANUARY 1991

Labour Minister Birch told the *New Zealand Herald* on 21 January that the government's proposed industrial legislation would "raise productivity, wages and create jobs". Individual workers would be free to negotiate their own deals with their employers and unions would no longer be able to "jack up" wages by exploiting their monopoly coverage. Competition in the labour market, he wrote, should be between employers for workers and between workers for jobs. CTU president Douglas, however told journalists on 28 January that the "crunch time" had come for the union movement. There were people in New Zealand, he said, who could not look after themselves, and he denounced the Employment Contracts Bill as "a demolition job on union recognition". The Employers' Federation, in draft submissions to the select committee considering the Bill, called for the replacement of the Labour Court by a division of the High Court, the corporatization of the Labour Department's Mediation Service, and the abolition of the Trade Union Education Authority and of paid education leave for trade unionists.

The Minister of Employment released a list of 29 industrial awards with a base take-home pay lower than the unemployment benefit rate of \$223.22 for a married couple with no children. This, he claimed, backed up his contention that there should be a gap between what people could earn and what they could get on benefits, The Minister apparently was arguing for a further cut in benefits rather than appealing to employers to lift minimum award rates. CTU vice-president Angela Foulkes pointed out in reply that few people would be getting the rates quoted, which were entry level rates for appointees without experience or qualifications, that farm workers (whose award rates were the

lowest) often received housing on top of their pay, and that the bulk of the unemployed were young and single, with a benefit rate of \$108.17 after tax, well below the quoted award minima.

Fourteen chemical process workers at the Chemby Vinyl plant in Onehunga, who had been on strike for a week in December, resumed their strike and picketing on 16 January. The dispute was over a company attempt to cut wages by 25 percent. Management claimed that profitability had fallen to unacceptable levels, but a spokesman for the Northern Chemical Workers' Union replied that the company's Australian owners had declared a half-year profit of about \$350 million. The award had expired, but staff would not return before a new document was negotiated, said the union; Chemby Vinyl, said their manager, was prepared to weather a lengthy period of industrial action.

University cleaners and caretakers held "preemptive" stopwork meetings to discuss employer claims which would reduce their income by about 20 percent through lost overtime, penal rates and allowances. The government, said the union advocate, was following up recent benefit cuts by picking off what it perceived as the weakest group of workers in the state sector. The staff voted in favour of industrial action, but a State Services Commission spokesperson accused the cleaners of "grandstanding" in advance of award talks.

Dairy workers responded to a union call to donate an hour's pay by raising enough money to send 5 tons of milk powder to Soviet children.

Auckland Readymix concrete drivers won an undertaking from their employers not to introduce individual contracts during the 1-year term of their new agreement. In return, the drivers agreed to start half an hour earlier on ordinary pay rates. Employers in the Northern Ancillary Drivers' Award, however, while accepting a union claim for a 2 percent increase plus \$5 a week, rejected a demand for a clause banning individual contracts. Their award talks were adjourned pending a drivers' stopwork meeting.

Mataura meatworkers were told on 7 January that the plant would close for the season within a week unless they agreed to pay cuts of up to 30 percent. "The per head cost factor is too high," said the plant manager, "compared with other Alliance plants and those of the opposition." The Meat Workers Union threatened to take industrial action and workers at other Alliance plants promised support, but on 11 January the 800 Mataura staff decided in a secret ballot to accept the company ultimatum. Only 1 worker cast a vote in favour, while the other 799 abstained.

Auckland hospital orderlies voted in favour of a total work ban from 8 January because a proposed roster change would have reduced their pay by an average \$30 a week. They withdrew the strike threat when the hospital authorities agreed to consider alternative cost-cutting proposals.

Talks to renew the Northern Laundry, Dyers and Drycleaners' Award were adjourned indefinitely when the employers insisted on extending the definition of an ordinary working day, when overtime was not payable, by 5 hours to any time between 6 am and 9 pm, and paying time and a half instead of double time after 11 hours' work or after midday on Saturdays.

Orchard and vineyard workers won a 2.5 percent pay increase from 1 February. Northern and Hawkes Bay storeworkers employed by the Apple and Pear Marketing Board won a 4 percent pay rise in a single enterprise agreement, compared with a 3.25 percent rise for other storeworkers in the northern fruit industry.

Fifteen Tauranga watersiders made redundant in the wake of the port restructuring, sued 3 stevedoring companies on the grounds that the dismissals were due to the men's union and political activities and to the dislikes of supervisors. The men failed to gain reinstatement in the Labour Court, which awarded \$21,850 costs against them.

FEBRUARY 1991

The Ministers of Labour and Women's Affairs on 7 February released the report of a working party on equity in employment, entitled *Breaking down the barriers*. The report contained 42 recommendations, with particular emphasis on improved childcare facilities, and proposed legislation requiring employers to develop, implement and monitor equal opportunity programmes. The Employers' Federation expressed qualified support but the CTU dismissed the report as a "thoroughly useless document" which "ignored women's unfairly low pay".

The government set up a subcommittee to review the Occupational Health and Safety Bill introduced last July by the Labour government. The National Party had not opposed the introduction of the Bill, but it now wanted to have another look at it.

The CTU convened a 2-day conference of affiliates on 21 and 22 February to discuss a union response to the Employment Contracts Bill. The conference decided on a protest campaign, including a week of action and media publicity costing \$150,000. The aim, according to the CTU, was not to defeat the Bill but to achieve radical changes and major modifications. "The bottom line position," said CTU president Douglas, "is the requirement of legal recognition of the role of unions." The Auckland CTU District Council had already started delegate meetings to prepare protests and primary and secondary teachers' unions hold stopwork meetings to discuss the implications of the Bill.

Prime Minister Bolger in a speech at Te Kuiti on 22 February blamed trade unions for the parlous state of the country's economy. "Years of featherbedding, over-manning, resistance to new technology, poor work practices and union demarcation disputes have inflicted huge additional costs on producers," he claimed. Union leaders "with their stubborn refusal to face realities" had helped to destroy jobs and to bring New Zealand to its present depressed state.

The parliamentary select committee, which had received more than 400 submissions by mid-February, began hearings on the Employment Contracts Bill in Christchurch later in the month. Most submissions opposed the bill, but a manufacturer told the committee that the government's legislation did not go far enough, because it retained the Trade Union Education Authority and did not abolish minimum paid leave holidays, accident compensation levies, sickness and maternity leave, long service leave, redundancy payments, personal grievance procedures and "bad attitudes" to employers.

The Statistics Department announced that surveys in the last 3 months of 1990 found 228,400 people - 13.4 percent of the workforce - officially unemployed or looking for jobs. According to the director general of the Manufacturers' Federation, employment in manufacturing had declined from 330,000 jobs in 1986 to 244,400 full and part timers last November.

The Bank Officers' Award was settled with a 2 percent pay rise, the Wine and Distillery Workers' Award with a 2.5 percent rise, and the Soft Drink Workers' Award with a 3 percent rise for a 58-week term, subject to an extension of ordinary working hours. In negotiations on the Building Trades Award the employers offered a 2 percent rise conditional on concessions, such as the abolition of travelling time payments. Otago and Southland childcare workers gained a 1.5 percent pay rise, but negotiations for the national Childcare Workers' Award ended in a stalemate.

In negotiations on the University Cleaners' and Caretakers' Award the State Services Commission dropped its claim for clawbacks and agreed to a flat \$5.50 a week payment, equivalent to an increase of between 1.5 and 1.7 percent. The Service Workers' Federation claimed that this settlement broke a government move to freeze public sector wages.

Ford and Mazda laid off another 120 workers at their joint venture assembly plants in Auckland, bringing total dismissals at the 2 plants and at Ford's wholly owned wheels factory to 355 since last September. The assembly workers rejected a proposal to take

days off on half-pay in order to reduce the number of redundancies, because the companies could not rule out further job cuts. Once the government's new Finance Bill came into force, workers made redundant would not be eligible for unemployment benefits for a period of 26 weeks.

Job applicants at Weddel's Feilding beef processing plant, which reopened after 5 years, were required to sign a 23-page contract accompanied by a 43-page code of conduct. The documents listed 25 separate conditions for warnings and 33 misdemeanours which could lead to dismissals. Employees, for instance, were not to discuss the company with any unauthorised person during their employment or at any time afterwards. The president of the Meat Workers' Union labelled the form and content of the documents "abhorrent".

Negotiations for a national Hotel and Tavern Award, covering some 15,000 workers, were adjourned on 19 February. The employers accepted a union claim for a 2 percent rise, but demanded concessions, such as the abolition of weekend penal rates for new employees and youth rates ranging from 65 percent of the adult wage for 15-year-olds to 75 percent for 16-year-olds and 85 percent for 17-year-olds. Stopwork meetings authorised the union negotiators to resume talks with the employers and seek the best conditions possible.

Builders' labourers rejected employer attempts to make their award more "flexible". An Auckland stopwork on 19 February accepted that the award would not be renewed and proposed to seek collective agreements with individual employers.

Negotiations on a new Laundry Workers' Award were adjourned indefinitely when the employers sought a 5-hour extension of the definition of an ordinary working day. Occupational health nurses and some 2,000 medical practice nurses renewed their awards with a 2 percent pay rise.

Following the breakdown of award talks, the Seafarers' Union gave notice of an indefinite strike from 18 February on vessels serving the Maui gas platform off Taranaki. The union claimed a 4 percent pay rise in the first year, followed by a 3 percent rise in the second year, against an employer offer of 2.5 percent. Last minute negotiations averted the strike, with agreement on a 3 percent rise now, with a further 2 percent next year.

The Distribution Workers' Federation proposed to begin talks on the Non-Food Retail Award in April, but the employers replied that they saw no need to settle this award, "Things are going very smoothly without it," said their representative.

A grievance committee chairman ruled that 43 Hydra bacon workers had been unjustifiably dismissed last October and awarded compensation of \$46,552,24, equal to 3 weeks lost wages. Since the company was now in receivership, there was no immediate pay-out because the sum awarded merely ranked as an unsecured debt. The Hydra bacon factory ceased operations on 1 March.

Herbert Roth