

# CHRONICLE

## MARCH 1983

More than 200 workers at Alex Harvey Industries in Auckland struck on 4 March in support of the FOL's \$20-a-week claim. One-day rolling strikes were to continue at AHI's 15 divisions, but the Prime Minister intervened and threatened to withdraw from the tripartite wage policy talks unless the strikes ceased. AHI workers accepted a recommendation from the FOL National Executive to resume normal work, and the FOL also advised dairy workers not to go ahead with planned stoppages in support of the \$20 claim. When the wage talks resumed on 10 March, the parties agreed on terms of reference for 2 subcommittees: one (transitional) committee was charged with making recommendations on the "institutional arrangements to move out of the wage freeze", the "wage movement for the period immediately following the freeze", and measures necessary "to ensure the smooth functioning of wage bargaining prior to the introduction of more permanent changes". The other (long-term) committee was to review the entire system of wage determination and industrial relations, and to examine whether changes were needed to produce a more flexible approach, the role of the State, the role of the Arbitration Court and related institutions, and the relationship between wage determination and taxes and public spending in influencing the distribution of income.

A representative meeting of farmers, manufacturers, retailers, employers and chambers of commerce urged that restraints continue after the scheduled end of the freeze on 21 June. At the first meeting of the transitional subcommittee, on 25 March, the unions learned that the Government had definitely rejected the \$20-a-week claim, but they continued their campaign, with council workers in the Wellington region voting in favour of a 24-hour protest strike. The subcommittee on long-term reforms held its first meeting on 29 March, under the interim chairmanship of the Secretary to the Treasury. Both union and employer representatives called for an independent chairman, but this was opposed by the Government.

Discussing possible long-term options, the Minister of Labour referred to a system based primarily on a plant or company, where workers in more profitable industries would be paid more than workers in less profitable industries. In a speech to employers in Wellington on 9 March, the Minister threatened to increase fines for unions which breached agreements and to remove some of the "privileges and protection" which unions enjoyed. Mr R. Campbell of the Distribution Unions replied that he shared the Minister's concern, but claimed that breaches of industrial awards by unions were insignificant compared with breaches by employers. He quoted figures from the latest report of the Department of Labour, showing thousands of breaches by employers, and offered the co-operation of unions in stemming this "worrying trend towards disregard of the law".

Mr J. Banks, MP for Whangarei, told Auckland Young Nationals on 6 March that the FOL should be told by the Government that it had 2 years to reduce the number of unions to 12 industry-based groups. Fewer unions, he said, would mean less opportunity for political extremists to infiltrate unions. (In November 1981, the Minister of Labour had told Wellington employers that he did not think that the West German example of a few industry-based unions was relevant to New Zealand, and that in view of communist successes in FOL elections the consolidation of trade unions carried "a very identifiable risk"). Mr Banks also urged the introduction of voluntary unionism, and the meeting voted unanimously to ask the Government to deregister unions more readily.

The case of the dismissed airline steward, who Air New Zealand refused to reinstate after he had been acquitted in court of charges of theft of company property, came before



the Arbitration Court on 7 March. The Airline Stewards and Hostesses Union claimed that Air New Zealand had refused to re-employ the man because he was an active unionist. The company's own personnel manual, it argued, provided for reinstatement after acquittal, with payment of retrospective wages. The steward had been summoned from the court holding cells by a police officer and dismissed on the spot by company officials without being given an opportunity to explain. Among the items he was charged with stealing, of a total value of \$23, were such trivia as a plastic bag of balloons and six match envelopes. The Court ordered the man's reinstatement with retrospective wages, and awarded \$500 costs to the union. Following this case, Air New Zealand agreed to reinstate other stewards after acquittal in court, and the union anticipated no further problems in this regard.

Some 200 carpenters employed on the Marsden Point refinery extensions voted in a secret ballot on 16 March to hold a 48-hour strike, which was joined by labourers, scaffolders, boilermakers and concrete workers. The carpenters claimed that they wished to resolve differences by negotiations, but that the JVII consortium had adopted a negative attitude and had ignored them because they were a moderate union. At the same time the 400 strong workforce at the Glenbrook steel mill expansion site walked out in protest against the dismissal of 3 carpenters by Wilkins & Davies. Work resumed on 21 March, except for the carpenters at the centre of the dispute.

In a reserved decision the Arbitration Court ruled that the NZ Motor Corporation had given adequate notice last November, when it dismissed 71 employees at its Petone plant. In response to a complaint from women members of the Cooks and Stewards Union, the Human Rights Commission found that both the union and the shipowners had contravened the Human Rights legislation by excluding stewardesses from employment on ocean-going ships. At present the 19 stewardesses are limited to the Cook Strait ferries, and the union has refused to include them on the roster for ocean-going duties until all ships have single berths and separate private facilities. The Commission said that each ship must be looked at separately: 14 out of 33 ships already have single cabins with attached ablution facilities, and 16 ships have single cabins with shared facilities.

Employees of the NZ Co-operative Dairy Co. at Waharoa, Te Awamutu and Frankton held a 24-hour strike on 4 March because 14 workers made superfluous through plant modernisation were not given the option of voluntary redundancy as against relocation. A stopwork meeting attended by some 700 dairy workers at Te Rapa on 17 March supported an immediate \$20-a-week pay claim and further industrial action against job cuts.

A mass meeting of Oringi freezing workers in the Dannevirke Town Hall on 10 March voted against a resumption of work and asked the Pacific Freezing Co. to honour its word and sign the mutton slaughterboard agreement which it had withdrawn after agreeing to it in November. The Minister of Labour set up talks chaired by conciliator Mr L. Fortune in Christchurch, but the company claimed it would have to close the works if it signed the document. After another mass meeting of workers addressed by Mr Fortune and company officials, negotiations resumed in Palmerston North and the dispute was settled on 28 March, when Oringi workers voted to accept an agreement which differed only slightly from the earlier document.

British riggers on the Marsden Point refinery extensions complained about their pay and living conditions and threatened to seek work elsewhere. The consortium denied that they were being paid less than New Zealand riggers. It also announced that it had temporarily deferred plans to bring in more riggers from overseas, because more New Zealanders had become available. Four months earlier, in December 1982, the consortium had argued before the Arbitration Court that the need to recruit 170 overseas riggers was urgent and that failure to import riggers would cause enormous and incalculable costs. On 24 March, 13 unemployed Auckland riggers staged a protest at the site, claiming that they had applied for work on the project a year ago but were still on the dole.

Negotiations for a new site agreement on the Clyde dam project broke down on 23 March, and unions imposed bans on the cartage of goods to the site.

An application for registration by APEX, (the NZ Association of Professional, Executive, Scientific and Management Staff) was rejected by the Arbitration Court on 7 March on the grounds that the proposed membership rule was too broad and lacked precision. The



application had been opposed by the FOL and by the bank officers, clerical workers and shop employees unions.

Unemployed ships' officers picketed the Dutch ship *Waalekerk* at Mt. Maunganui on 16 March. They demanded that the ship, "a typical cross trader", which traded out of New Zealand with New Zealand cargo, should use New Zealand seafarers. The picket was called off after 3 days, when the company agreed to hold talks with guild representatives in Rotterdam.

Groups of paper workers held short stoppages late in March because of lack of progress in their award negotiations. Their award, which expired in January 1982, was exempt from the wage freeze. The paper workers' union had accepted a 10 percent core wage rise in line with the increases agreed to by the other 12 unions at the mill, but it asked for increases in allowances which the company was not prepared to concede.

Feltex announced plans to close down the Reidrubber tyre plant in Auckland in June, making 440 employees redundant. An open-air meeting of workers outside the factory decided to launch an investigation into the financial aspects of the closure.

New Plymouth watersiders voted to strike on 21 March, following the breakdown of negotiations for a special agreement covering the handling of urea from the Kapuni plant. This was the first major dispute at the port since 1951. Work resumed on 29 March, after a settlement had been reached.

## APRIL 1983

Speaking in the address-in-reply debate on 12 April, Mr J. Banks, MP urged legislative changes to abolish compulsory unionism and introduce compulsory secret ballots before strikes. He also called on unionists never to elect "card-carrying communists or other traitors" to positions of trust and responsibility.

At the tripartite wage talks on 15 April the Government tabled 2 proposals; either to continue the wage and price freeze for another 6 months, or to grant a general wage order of about 2 percent, continue the wage freeze for 6 months, but relax the price freeze to some extent to accommodate the wage order. The unions rejected the proposals as inadequate (2 percent is equivalent to \$6-a-week on the average wage packet, compared with the unions' \$20-a-week claim) and called for a complete lifting of the freeze. The Employers Federation, on 21 April, gave its qualified approval to a total continuation of the freeze, with taxation or welfare benefit relief to lower income earners, and opposed any general wage order. The Minister of Labour said he agreed with the employers' analysis of the situation.

Figures released by the Government Statistician showed that the real disposable income, after tax, of full-time wage and salary earners rose 0.8 percent between December 1981 and December 1982. Virtually the only beneficiaries however were the top fifth of earners, whose income rose 7.8 percent in this period. The next fifth had a tiny increase of 0.2 percent, while the remaining three fifths suffered a decline in their real incomes ranging from 3.3 percent to 4.6 percent in the case of the lowest paid. The rich had grown richer, while the poor had grown poorer. Figures supplied by the Department of Labour showed that 4 629 workers had been made redundant in the 10 months since the wage freeze began. This did not include employees with less than a full year's service, employees not covered by redundancy agreements, or employees of firms in liquidation or receivership and unable to pay redundancy. Wellington car assembly workers, cleaners, caretakers and hotel workers held a 24-hour strike on 26 April in support of the \$20 claim.

At the final tripartite talks on 28 April the Prime Minister produced a further option, to continue the freeze until the budget, with the prospect of taxation or other relief for lower-paid workers. Mr Knox agreed to put the Government proposals before the FOL conference in May but expressed doubt that delegates would surrender the \$20 claim. The Minister of Labour announced that legislation would be introduced providing for the inclusion of lower youth rates of pay in all awards which did not already contain them. He



claimed that in labouring-type awards in particular, lower rates would increase employment, but Labour Party spokesman argued that forcing youth rates into unskilled occupations would merely recycle unemployment by pushing older workers out of jobs.

The Electrical Workers Union conference in Taupo decided on 20 April to defer until 1984 the question of disaffiliation from the FOL. Last year union members had voted 2 463 to 1 434 in favour of a break, but a remit from the large Auckland branch opposed disaffiliation. Following an address by Labour MP F.M. Gerbic (himself a former official of the union) the conference postponed its decision. Mr Knox also addressed the conference and pleaded for unity.

The Engineers Union announced on 29 April that it intended to claim a 45 percent wage increase and 13 weeks holidays a year. Ice cream workers lodged a 27.5 percent pay claim. Mr Knox expressed surprise at the size of these claims, which had not been discussed with the FOL.

Firemen outside the Northern Industrial District voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action in a dispute concerning medical and accident insurance. They decided to fight fires in commercial buildings from the outside only, after they had protected any life at risk. The action was due to start on 16 April, but was called off when discussions with the Fire Services Commission reached agreement.

The joint consultative committee on the introduction of new technology in the meat industry met in Wellington on 28 April, but the talks ended in deadlock when the parties failed to agree on proposals for a retirement policy for workers made redundant.

Some 400 labourers at the Marsden Point refinery extension site decided to strike indefinitely from 8 April "until the company employs John Doran and rips up the blacklist". The JVII industrial relations manager said there was a vast difference between what was supposedly a blacklist and an employer's decision not to hire somebody. Riggers and scaffolders joined the strike on 11 April, and 32 storemen stopped work in an unrelated dispute. Boilermakers walked out because tea-making and toilet-cleaning had ceased on the site, and other workers were suspended as work ran out for them. The project came virtually to a standstill, but the consortium announced that it would not take back the strikers unless they first gave an assurance that they would abide by the disputes procedures in their agreement. Work resumed on 21 April, after the company had received verbal assurances from members of the Labourers Union. On 29 April Mr Knox met with JVII officials to discuss hiring policy. He announced afterwards that the consortium had agreed to reprocess applications already on file and to speed up the processing of new applications. There was no talk, he said, of bringing in more overseas riggers.

Negotiations for a site agreement on the Clyde dam project resumed on 28 April and union bans were lifted.

Some 630 pulp and paper union members at the Tasman mill in Kawerau walked out indefinitely on 11 April, in a dispute over allowances. They included security and safety officers in the strike, but the company asked salaried staff to take over these duties. According to the company, acceptance of the paper union's claims would upset relativities with other unions in the mill, but the strikers argued that they were seeking wage relativity with workers in other paper mills. Newsprint and pulp production ceased at the plant, and the company warned that non-striking workers would have to be suspended. The Timber Workers Union asked the FOL to intervene and Mr Knox met company executives together with paper union officials on 27 April, but failed to effect a settlement. On 30 April the company sent individual letters to each striker, by-passing the union and offering 13 months' backpay to March 1982, instead of 9.5 months to July, which it had offered previously. "That was our very last position," said a company spokesman. "We have nothing more to offer."

Shipowners expressed concern at the growing cost of attendance payments to seamen laid up on the current recession. In discussions with the unions the Maritime Employers Association sought a reduction in the total national register of seamen and cooks and stewards and a reduction in manning levels. The 2 unions have about 2 000 members, 260 of whom are employed.



## MAY 1983

The annual conference of the FOL, which met in Wellington from 3 to 6 May, rejected the Government's wage proposals and reaffirmed the demand for a \$20-a-week interim increase. A delegation met the Prime Minister during the conference but failed to reach agreement and the FOL, with a few abstentions, then endorsed an executive recommendation to launch a "deliberate and controlled" campaign of action for the interim increase at a date not later than June. Activity was to embrace all appropriate forms, including go slows and stoppages of varying duration and on "a flexible and continuing basis", as decided by members. The conference also endorsed the concept of a NZ Council of Trade Unions and approved the report of the working party which is drafting a constitution for the new body.

In the election for vice-president Ms Sonja Davies (Shop Employees Union) won on the first ballot with 312 votes over Mr E. Ball (Engineers Union) with 229 votes and Mr A. Russ (Carpenters Union) with 35 votes. This was the first time a woman had gained such a high post in the FOL. The sitting executive members were re-elected, and Ms Davies's place on the executive went to Mr S. Jennings, of the Waterside Workers Federation. The conference reduced the secretary's term of office from 5 to 4 years, so that after 1984 the president and secretary will not face re-election in the same year.

The Minister of Works revealed on 10 May that the wage-price freeze would continue beyond its scheduled end in June. The Acting Prime Minister said the Government could reverse its decision to extend the freeze if the FOL produced acceptable wage-fixing alternatives. The FOL expressed interest, but it was then told that the freeze extension was definite and that the only subject open for discussion was tax relief for lower-paid workers. Employers welcomed the freeze extension, but Ms Davies commented that it would "anger workers and harden their resolve to take some form of industrial action". The FOL campaign got under way that week with stopwork meetings in many parts of the country. An editorial in the Catholic weekly *Tablet* denounced FOL policy as "indefensible and irresponsible", and argued that some strikes were of such a nature that to take part in them could be described as "sinful".

The President of the Auckland Trades Council, Mr Andersen, claimed on 17 May that some employers, including 6 quite big firms, had found ways round the wage freeze by reclassifying employees and paying bonuses and penal rates. Mr Bolger replied that unions were claiming increases in reimbursing allowances and that he was seeking to amend the regulations to "short-circuit" this challenge. Mr Andersen had not mentioned reimbursing allowances, which were not contrary to the freeze regulations. On 10 February the Prime Minister had confirmed in a letter to the FOL that "the Wage Freeze Regulations do not prevent employers from increasing any payment by way of expenses, refunds or allowances to meet expenditure already incurred", but on 23 May the Government amended the regulations to ban increases in reimbursing allowances, after freight forwarding companies had agreed to increase allowances to members of the storepersons' unions. The Prime Minister blamed members of the Socialist Unity Party who, he claimed, had decided to use the allowances to break the freeze.

On 24 May Mr Bolger in a speech to Auckland Federated Farmers suggested adding a fourth member to the Arbitration Court in the person of a qualified economist, such as the Secretary to the Treasury. He also suggested that decisions of the Court should have to be unanimous.

The FOL set 7 June as the starting date for the national campaign against the Government's wage policy, but in Auckland the campaign was launched on 23 May. The Prime Minister told Jaycees in Christchurch that New Zealand was threatened by a few union leaders who were "drunk with power", the Social Credit Deputy Leader told a meeting in Auckland that his party would "take a firm grip" on the union issue and legislate to end industrial disruption and strikes, and the Labour Party's industrial relations spokesman said impending disruption over the \$20-a-week campaign should be averted before it happened.

At the Tiwai Point aluminium smelter workers struck on 9 May after 13 men were



suspended for refusing to handle new equipment. Work resumed a week later, but negotiations continued on unresolved issues. The unions and the company agreed to submit a joint application for an exemption from the freeze regulations because of the introduction of new technology.

The dismissal of an Engineers Union delegate at the Marsden Point refinery extensions on 10 May caused a strike by 33 radiographers and trades assistants employed by a subcontractor, Chicago Bridge & Iron. The union claimed that the company was using the dispute to obtain an extension of time because it had struck welding trouble in constructing 2 tanks, but this was denied. When the men refused to resume work unless the delegate was reinstated, the company referred the issue to the Arbitration Court.

Meat industry unions met the FOL on 25 May to discuss the breakdown of the talks on new technology. They decided to seek a resumption of the talks with broader terms of reference and to ask for a moratorium meanwhile on the installation of new technology. A Whakatu freezing worker who had been expelled by the union for refusing to pay a \$10-a-week strike levy in support of Islington freezing workers, applied to the Court of Appeal for reinstatement. The national meat workers' union instructed the Hawke's Bay branch to reinstate the man. The branch reversed its decision, but when the man appeared for work on 18 May, his fellow workers downed tools and the company had to send him home. Three subsequent attempts to start work ended in the same way.

Talks on hiring policy at Marsden Point between the JVII consortium and the Labourers Union took place in Auckland on 13 May, in the presence of 8 men whose applications had been rejected. The company said that about 100 more riggers would be required between now and September, but it refused to engage the 8 men. The Labourers Union decided to take the issue to the Arbitration Court. In the case of 2 of the men, the company had cited past industrial activity as part of its reasons, which in the union's view confirmed the existence of a blacklist.

A paper workers' meeting at Kawerau on 2 May rejected the company's "last-ditch" offer and voted to continue the strike. The men wanted backpay to January 1982, when their previous agreement expired, as well as certain increased allowances. The chief executive of Tasman on 10 May threatened to close the mill indefinitely unless the strikers accepted the company's final offer. The company also launched an extensive advertising campaign, with huge display advertisements in newspapers and talkback and hotline programmes on Radio Whakatane, to put its side of the dispute. A welfare committee was formed at Murupara where 200 timber workers were suspended, and in response to a call from the 13 unions at Kawerau the FOL agreed to set up a nationwide welfare fund to aid Tasman workers.

The Government refused to intervene in the dispute, despite pleas from Kawerau civic and business leaders, but the FOL convened joint talks in Wellington on 18 May. A further meeting in Rotorua on 26 May under the chairmanship of Mr K.D. Douglas, brought a settlement to the 46-day long dispute, the longest in the mill's history. The strikers were to receive the same increases as the other unions at the mill, backdated to January 1982. The allowances claims were to be referred to a joint committee chaired by an industrial conciliator, Mr W. Grills. The paper workers also undertook to return to combined union negotiations with the company. This had been agreed to after the 1978 strike, but the arrangement had broken down in 1981. Engine-drivers who had earlier settled for backpay to March only, were to receive the additional backpay to January, but the company refused to make any payments to non-striking workers who had been suspended during the dispute. Maritime unions lifted the bans they had imposed on the importation of newsprint.

The Railway Officers Institute filed proceedings in the High Court seeking to restrain the Railways Corporation from appointing an outsider to the position of general manager. The Corporation, after studying applications received, decided to make an appointment from within the service.

Mr B. Townshend, MP for Kaimai, presented to Parliament a petition from more than 2 000 Bay of Plenty kiwifruit orchard workers, calling for an end to compulsory union membership for casual horticultural workers.



The Union Steam Ship Co. reached agreement with the 4 maritime unions to reduce manning levels on its ships by up to 20 percent. The company expressed disappointment that the unions had not agreed to greater reductions.

## JUNE 1983

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference in Geneva elected Mr Bolger as chairman, despite a letter of objection from the FOL on the grounds that the National Government had "consistently attacked the trade union movement in New Zealand and shows every sign of increasing its attacks." Mr Knox told the conference that the FOL's concern was "that the New Zealand Government does not seem to understand the fundamental spirit of the ILO."

Speaking to a Young Nationals conference on 5 June, Mr G. Thompson, MP, Chairman of the Government caucus committee on employment, revealed plans to replace lump sum redundancy payments by weekly payments which would cease as soon as the employee found a new job. "This idea," he said, "eases the pain from the employers' point of view." Mr E. Isbey, MP, for the Labour Party, commented that the only way to avoid heavy redundancy payments was to set up a redundancy fund financed by a levy on all employers, as had been proposed in an unsuccessful private member's bill introduced in 1982 by Mr D. Butcher, MP.

The campaign for a \$20-a-week pay increase gathered momentum, particularly in Auckland. A spokesman for the Combined Unions Information Service on 3 June claimed stopwork action at more than 200 Auckland jobs. "We've had more people involved in industrial activity in the past 2 weeks," he said, "than in the one-day stoppage in 1979. It is probably the greatest industrial activity in New Zealand history." A week later a list showed 92 industries, companies and jobs in Auckland where workers had voted to take some form of industrial action, such as brief stoppages, overtime and export bans and work-to-rules. A resolution of the FOL national executive on 9 June described the campaign as the most important undertaken by the trade union movement in recent times, adding, "The campaign has turned from one of economic need to one of survival for the trade union movement." Auckland newspapers named employers who had written to either the Employers Federation or to the Minister of Labour in support of union claims.

Sir Tom Skinner, on the other hand, commented that the \$20 campaign would solve none of New Zealand's major problems, and that the main concern of the union movement should be to look after those people who had no jobs at all. The Prime Minister too urged unions to drop the campaign, and to look instead realistically at the type and amount of wage increase that would be allowed at the end of the freeze. The Manufacturers Federation however, voiced its total opposition on 15 June to any general wage order at the end of the freeze which, it said, would simply start the old wage-inflation cycle off again. Mr Muldoon claimed that the great bulk of moderate unionists accepted the freeze as being in their best interests. He was supported by a Heylen poll, taken on 28 May, which showed that half those polled approved the continuation of the freeze with tax relief for low-income workers, while only 14 percent supported a general wage order of \$20-a-week. The FOL denounced the poll as "statistical nonsense", because it did not allow for the alternative options proposed by the unions.

On 17 June Mr Muldoon ordered the Department of Labour to investigate a charge made in a letter he had received from a Christchurch security guard, Mr R.D. House, that he had been ordered by his union to strike on a certain day, without having had an opportunity to vote on the issue. Mr House refused to take part in the strike, but he said afterwards that it might have been a human error on the part of the union in failing to notify many security guards of the meeting.

Watersiders started a nationwide 48-hour strike on 16 June in protest against the freeze and the denial of free wage bargaining. Auckland drivers blocked deliveries from the Chelsea sugar refinery as well as cement supplies, and Auckland paint and varnish workers



imposed a short-lived ban on the delivery of printing ink to the New Zealand Herald which, they claimed, had shown bias in its coverage of the FOL campaign. Auckland railwaymen struck on 20 June. To mark the anniversary of the freeze, Auckland unionists picketed the Employers Association building on 23 June and presented a 5-point proposal, which included demands for a joint approach to the Government to ask for an immediate wage increase and the restoration of food subsidies, the immediate opening of award negotiations, and withdrawal of earlier employer proposals for wage-fixing reform.

Auckland employers' spokesmen warned that court injunctions could be used if the bans continued, and denounced the union campaign as a Socialist Unity Party plot to turn New Zealand communist. The Employers Federation did however withdraw a proposal it had put forward in February, that no employer should be covered by an award unless he had consented to be cited as a party to it, and presented new revised proposals to the tripartite wage reform talks which resumed on 27 June. On that day the Minister of Labour announced that he was planning to review compulsory union membership and related issues.

The ban on Auckland sugar deliveries ceased on 24 June, and the ban on cement deliveries was called off on 29 June, after the cement companies undertook to renegotiate their house agreements at the expiry of the freeze. The Employers Federation claimed on 28 June that south of Auckland the FOL campaign had been "remarkably unsuccessful"; in reply, the President of the Otago Trades Council listed activity in his area, but he agreed that "most of the battles are won on the Auckland turf. Anyone who says otherwise is crazy."

The results of X-rays of 353 Auckland asbestos workers, which had been sent to New York for analysis, became available on 6 June. They showed lung abnormalities in 52 workers. Fitters at the factory banned work on plant and machinery which used asbestos in the manufacture of building products.

Tiwai Point aluminium smelter workers gained exemption from the wage freeze for an agreement on the handling of new technology. In demarcation disputes between the engineers' and labourers' unions over the coverage of riggers at the Marsden Point refinery extension and at the Glenbrook steel mill expansion project, the Arbitration Court ruled that neither union had exclusive coverage. The decision pleased neither unions nor employers.

At the Marsden Point refinery extensions the entire 1700-strong workforce walked out indefinitely on 16 June, following an explosion which put 4 men into hospital with severe burns. One man had complained about the smell of gas on the morning of the fire, but had been overruled by his foreman. The combined site committee wanted assurances about improved safety measures before sanctioning a return to work. Discussions with the consortium and with Department of Labour safety inspectors continued for more than a fortnight and work did not resume until 4 July.

Six Whakatu freezing workers, who had refused to pay the Islington strike levy, were stood down by the company on 27 June, after other workers had refused to work with them. An industrial conciliator failed to solve the dispute, which may also be considered by the Human Rights Commission.

The Merchant Service Guild placed a ban late in May on the new alumina carrier *TNT Alltrans* in a dispute over manning. The other carrier, *Bulknes*, was covered by a composite New Zealand-Australian manning agreement, but on the *TNT Alltrans*, which is to replace the *Bulknes*, all the officers were Australians, though the seamen and cooks and stewards were drawn half and half from Australia and New Zealand. NZ Aluminium Smelters warned that the Tiwai Point smelter would have to shut down by 19 June, unless the alumina was discharged at Bluff. Urgent negotiations in Wellington brought a temporary lifting of the ban on 6 June. The Minister of Transport flew to Sydney for a special meeting with his Australian counterpart which succeeded in breaking the deadlock: the Merchant Service Guild dropped its claim in return for an offer from Comalco of 10 jobs on a ship carrying finished aluminium from New Zealand to Japan.

The Government put forward proposals to change the way State pay rates were fixed in relation to private sector rates. Adjustments were to be made every second year instead of annually, and based on a revised formula. The Combined State Unions called meetings



of members throughout the country to consider these changes, which they saw as a threat to the traditional principle of fair relativity. Auckland meat inspectors who attended the local lunch-hour meeting on 7 June, had their pay docked when they were late returning to work. In protest they walked off their jobs next day, causing a large quantity of meat to be declared unfit for human consumption. The Government caucus approved the proposed pay changes on 16 June.

The seamen's and cooks and stewards' unions launched a campaign on 28 June, aimed at getting more jobs for unemployed local seamen by picketing foreign-owned vessels which regularly visit New Zealand. Their first target was the West German Columbus Line.

Herbert Roth