

CHRONICLE

JULY 1987

The Labour Department issued a new voluntary Code of Practice for health and safety representatives and health and safety committees on 1 July. It provided for the election of workplace representatives who will be able to carry out inspections, report on health and safety issues and direct work to stop in case of serious hazard, pending a decision by an inspector of factories. The representatives will receive training at one of the 5 health and safety centres funded by the Accident Compensation Corporation.

Commenting on the forthcoming award round, Mr Knox stressed the need for significant wage increases to offset the record rise in the cost of living shown in the 18.9 percent inflation figure for the year ending 30 June, but Mr S Marshall, of the Employers Federation, replied that the inflation figure was of "absolutely no relevance" to the award round because workers had had the benefit of lower income taxes and higher welfare payments. Wage bargainers this year, said the Employers Federation, would meet in a tight economic environment characterised by intense competition and the inability to pass on costs. Some industries, it claimed, would not even be able to preserve existing levels of remuneration and employment.

Some 250 employers' representatives met in Rotorua on 14 and 15 July under the auspices of the Employers Federation to discuss their strategies in the wage round. They endorsed composite agreements covering individual companies or entire industries. Mr Marshall agreed that some employers would continue to seek the protection of traditional awards. According to an FOL executive member, Mr R Barker, who is secretary of the Hotel Workers Federation, site-by-site negotiations put workers in the weakest position by dividing the workforce, and were designed to minimise wage increases. Representatives of the Business Roundtable meanwhile continued their campaign against the "outmoded and restrictive" national award system and for changes in the Labour Relations Act.

The Clerical Workers Federation asked the Government to introduce legislation which would "clearly incorporate the principle of equal pay for work of equal value". The same request was made by the Northern Distribution Workers Union, which presented petitions to local Labour candidates, and in a joint position paper submitted to the tripartite wage conference by the FOL and CSU. Despite the introduction of equal pay legislation in the 1970s, they pointed out, "our wage structure still reflects discriminatory practices" and work done by women tended to be valued lower than similar work predominantly done by men. The Prime Minister told the Wellington Chamber of Commerce on 17 July that over-all women's earnings were about 78 percent of men's earnings. Discrimination against women in their working lives was unfair, said Mr Lange, but an improvement could probably be achieved only by the intervention of the Government. Such intervention, he assured his audience, would be done very carefully.

The FOL and the Australian Council of Trade Unions agreed to lift their ban on trade with Fiji from 20 July, but the Airline Stewards and Hostesses Union decided to continue its flight ban to Fiji on safety grounds.

The Northern Drivers Union's complaint over the dismissal of 11 drivers by the Shell Oil Co was settled out of court on 6 July, when the drivers decided to accept a cash payment just hours before the Arbitration Court was due to hear their case.

Cheap imports were given as the reason for a number of overseas-based cosmetic and pharmaceutical firms closing their Auckland factories. The Auckland Drug and Chemical Employees Union obtained good redundancy deals for the more than 250 laid-off workers, but it also resolved to organise a ban on the distribution of imported goods by firms in the industry which had dismissed workers.

The dispute over wage rates for Ansett catering staff was settled when the contractor agreed to pay the same rates as Air New Zealand. The contractor, Food Concepts, is a subsidiary of Crothalls, and Hotel Workers Union members employed by Crothalls at the Auckland and Whangarei hospitals had given notice of industrial action unless the Ansett dispute was settled satisfactorily.

Some 40 workers in middle management met in Auckland on 15 July and decided to register the Society of Technicians, Administrators, Managers and Supervisors (STAMS) under the new Labour Relations Act. Membership was to be voluntary. Potential membership was put as high as 60 000, and 13 existing unions which fell short of the new 1000 member minimum were said to have expressed interest in amalgamating with STAMS.

Pulp and paper workers at the Caxton mill, who had been on strike since June, voted to resume work on 30 July, after the intervention of the mayor of Kawerau, Mrs Lyn Hartley. The union received a tentative offer from the company and pay talks were to resume.

Auckland plumbers voted on 6 July to extend their strike from inner-city sites to the entire city, after two major plumbing firms dismissed 20 men for refusing to return to work. On 13 July the Arbitration Court referred the dispute to further talks before an industrial conciliator on 30 and 31 July, and ordered the striking plumbers to resume work. The two days of negotiations failed to produce a settlement.

The announcement that representatives of the Police Association would speak at meetings convened by the Coalition of Concerned Citizens brought a sharp reply from the Minister of Police. Mrs Hercus described the Coalition as a violently anti-Labour government and very rightwing fundamentalist group with close links with several National Party candidates. The Police Association, she warned, risked damaging the reputation of the police for serving any government in an even-handed way.

The Minister of State Services announced on 3 July that the Electricity and Airways Corporations had completed the transition to state-owned enterprises with no compulsory redundancies. Fourteen staff from the former New Zealand Forest Service, State Coal and the Department of Lands and Survey were still to be placed in alternative positions, but Mr Rodger doubted that any compulsory redundancies would be necessary as a result of the corporatisation programme. A breakdown of PSA members showed that 28 percent of the membership were now employed outside the core public service.

On 14 July Brugger Industries, an Auckland firm producing car seats and trimmings, suspended some 180 engineers and store workers who had imposed a load-out ban in support of a claim for equal pay with car assembly workers. As a result the Ford Motor Co suspended 100 workers on the trim and vinyl line of its Wiri plant on 20 July, claiming it had no work for them, but the remaining 250 production workers then walked out in sympathy with the suspended staff. Car production also came to a halt at the Nissan plant in Auckland and at the Subaru plant in Waitara in Taranaki. On 22 July Ford and Nissan filed a joint application for an Arbitration Court order to force a resumption of work at the Brugger plant. Nissan also announced that it was preparing claims for damages against the engineers and stores unions. Work resumed at Brugger Industries on 28 July, after the staff accepted pay rises.

The Arbitration Court dismissed an application by the Northern Stores Union for the reinstatement of 5 workers who had been dismissed by the Ford Motor Co last November in the aftermath of a strike. The company had refused to attend a personal grievance hearing, and the Court ruled that the men "by virtue of their own conduct lacked any status to present a personal grievance".

The Northern Distribution Workers Union, covering some 30 000 workers, was registered on 30 July. It replaces the northern drivers, store workers, butchers and grocers, and shop employees unions.

AUGUST 1987

The Labour Party's industrial relations policy, released shortly before the elections of 15 August which returned the Government with an increased majority, promised to set up industrial sector councils and to convene job and industry forums to consider problems facing the manufacturing industry. The Labour Party also promised to explore union representation on the boards of companies and public corporations. Mr Rowe, of the Employers Federation, described the compulsory appointment of unionists to company boards as "quite intolerable". He also attacked the concept of equal pay for work of equal value, claiming it would not do much for the women it was intended to assist, and he warned against the unions and the Government "ganging up" on the issue of occupational health and safety.

The Engineers Union announced that it intended to seek a 12 percent wage rise in the metal trades award, and the same pass-on to above-award rates. The claim, it said, was based on movements in the consumer price index and inflation, and took account of changes in taxation. To the Employers Federation however, two-digit wage claims were "unreal". The

figure could not be justified on present indicators, said Mr Marshall, and the Engineers Union should not be "playing silly games and should start talking realistically". Other unions however announced even higher claims: up to 13 percent in the case of the Clerical Workers Union, 15 percent by the Meat Workers Union, and as much as 40 percent by the Freezing and Related Industrial Clerical Officers Union.

The Central Clerical Workers Union reported that it was referring sexual harassment complaints to the Human Relations Commission rather than to industrial mediators who, it said, lacked sensitivity to the issue. In one incident the Equal Opportunities Tribunal awarded two women employees \$950 each for pecuniary loss and \$1500 each for humiliation, loss of dignity and injury to feelings. The defendant, a company director, had admitted sexual harassment and had dismissed one of the two women because she did not respond to his advances.

Some middle management staff previously exempted from membership joined the Clerical Workers Union after the Labour Relations Act came into force, to gain access to personal grievance procedures and to the Labour Court. The Clerical Workers Union also promoted the formation of a separate NZ Office, Administrative, Secretarial and Executive Staff Association (OASES), which lodged an application for registration on 4 August. If registration is granted, the society will have 2 years to build up its membership to the required 1000 minimum.

About 300 employees of Marsden Pt refinery subcontractors, including maintenance tradesmen, cleaners and catering staff, went on strike on 15 July because the contractors refused to negotiate a registered composite site agreement. The strikers maintained a picket at the plant gates, but when the NZ Refining Co sought an injunction in the Labour Court, they withdrew the picket and gave assurances that they would not re-establish it. On 28 August the workers voted to end the strike, without having achieved their object, but they are to meet the employers again early next year.

At the Otahuhu engineering plant of Rex Consolidated 230 workers went on strike on 10 August, after rejecting the company's redundancy pay offer to 17 laid-off employees, of 6 weeks pay for the first year of service and 2 weeks for each subsequent year. The unions (engineers and store workers) claimed a 10+2 settlement, plus another 2 weeks' pay for job search. Work resumed on 25 August, when the staff accepted the company's 6+2 proposal, but with further concessions, such as preference for re-employment for laid-off workers and leave on full pay before their notice period expired.

Car assembly workers at Nissan's Wiri plant rejected a Japanese-style work agreement on 17 August, by 130 votes to 39. The deal involved a change-over to a system of teams of about 10 "manufacturing employees", whose promotion and pay rises would be dependent on an annual "performance appraisal". A similar scheme is in force at Nissan's British plant in Sunderland. The company had flown the Engineers Union assistant secretary, Mr P Denny, to Britain to investigate the scheme and he supported its introduction at Wiri, but the union's two plant delegates opposed it, as did the Northern Distribution Workers Union.

The repeal of the Fishing Industry (Union Coverage) Act of 1979 opened the way for the organisation of fishing industry employees, and several unions expressed interest in moving into this area. The Sharefishermen's Association, with more than 700 members, applied for registration as the Fishing Industry Union but, to avoid demarcation disputes, the Federation of Labour called a conference of interested unions to discuss coverage of the industry.

Forty five processors at the Onehunga factory of NZ Starch Products went on strike on 29 July in a dispute over an operations allowance. The company, which is part of Wattie Industries, sought an interim injunction in the Labour Court to force a return to work, and it also announced its intention to sue the United Food and Chemical Workers Union for more than \$3 million damages for loss of profits and production during the strike. The workers voted on 5 August to ignore their union's return to work recommendation, but they reversed this vote on the following day and work resumed. The company however obtained a court order against the two union delegates at the plant, restraining them from taking any action in breach of their award or of the Labour Relations Act, and it dismissed 9 workers who walked out on 9 August in protest against this action against the delegates. On 26 August the company reinstated the 9 men, but gave them a final warning.

The Hotel and Hospital Workers Federation lodged an application for the amalgamation of 3 national awards covering domestic workers in rest homes, public and private hospitals. At present different rates are prescribed for similar work, with a kitchen hand earning \$7.53 an hour in a public hospital, \$7.25 in a private hospital, and \$6.54 in a rest home. The Federation also decided to merge with the Caretakers and Cleaners Association to form the Service

Workers Federation of Aotearoa, with a combined membership in excess of 69 000 workers.

A police prosecution of Mr R Bianchi, the assistant secretary of the Northern Labourers Union, on a charge of assault during the recent plumbers' dispute, was dismissed in the Auckland District Court on 27 August because of lack of evidence. The police, said Mr Bianchi afterwards, had wasted 3 days of his time, which could have been better spent organising union matters, and they should keep out of industrial disputes.

Speaking at the PSA annual conference, which met in the second week of August, the president, Mr C Hicks, strongly criticised the Government's restructuring policies which had caused the loss of 5000 state workers' jobs. The conference rejected a proposal to make membership of the association compulsory. It approved a separate tiered structure for Maori members, based on 10 district runanga, and with the right of representation on the PSA executive council, advisory council and executive committee. A 20-strong working group was to look at ways of establishing similar structures to meet women's needs within the association and to convene a women's conference next year.

Meetings of racecourse workers voted to form a new union called the NZ Stablehands and Studworkers Society. At a conference in Wellington on 13 August delegates elected officers and decided to apply for provisional registration. The new union, with 260 initial members, has the support of the employers.

The former Farm Workers Association, now the farm workers' section of the NZ Workers Union, reached agreement with the employers on a new award covering some 10 000 farm workers. Wages increased by 7 percent, while maximum fortnightly hours for workers on beef, sheep and arable farms were reduced from 90 to 85, and for workers on dairy farmers from 108 to 100 hours.

Addressing the annual conference of the Post-Primary Teachers Association, the new Minister of Education, Mr Lange, proposed remuneration based on individual performance, differential pay rates for different subjects, and short-term contracts of employment. The president of the PPTA, Mr P Allen, said teachers had to reject free market theories that would undo 110 years of progress achieved by the state system. The conference opposed differential pay rates and decided to seek a 13 percent pay rise. Auckland school principals promoted a breakaway from the PPTA, to be called the NZ Secondary School Principals Association, which gained the initial support of 87 of the country's 300 principals.

The Waterside Workers Federation agreed to further cuts in gang manning levels, which were expected to save 12 percent of the number of man-days worked on the wharves. Talks on reducing manning levels on container ships were continuing.

SEPTEMBER 1987

The final meeting of this year's tripartite wage conference took place on 3 September, without achieving any joint position. The employers called for very moderate wage settlements, while Mr K Douglas stressed that workers expected a fair share of the "huge wealth being generated out there in the community right now". Mr Rodger also called for moderation and predicted that the great range of settlements would be in single figures. The annual wage round, which Mr S Marshall described as "disruptive" and "unreal", opened on 7 September with negotiations on the metal trades award, which covers some 34 000 workers.

The Engineers Union tabled a policy statement which proposed a total restructuring of the award by splitting it into industry-specific documents. The employers sought an adjournment to the next day to consider their response, and both parties then imposed a 36 hour media blackout to continue their discussions in private. On 9 September, after only 3 days of talks, they announced that they had agreed on a 7 percent wage rise and a 7 percent pass-on to above-award rates. A joint working party was to consider restructuring the award in the coming year. The union's original claim had been for a 12 percent rise, but the engineers' national secretary, Mr R Jones, described the agreement as a "victory for common sense". It was also welcomed by the Employers Federation, economists, government and opposition spokesmen as "very constructive", "nicely balanced", "positive" and "relatively modest".

The Northern Distribution Workers Union announced that it too intended to work towards industry-specific documents, though it would seek to retain the existing national awards in the current year. Other major unions, such as clerical and hotel workers, expressed similar views, but the claims lodged were well above the 7 percent accepted by the engineers. Butchers sought a rise of 12.75 percent, clothing workers 15 percent, drivers "not less than" 12 percent, electrical

workers 18.9 percent, retail employees from 12 to 25 percent, and store workers 12 percent.

The second major award scheduled for negotiation was the general drivers' award, covering some 8000 workers. Talks were due to start in Wellington on 14 September, but the employers refused to negotiate "under duress", because 19 drivers employed by Winstones in Auckland were on strike in support of a \$1.07 an hour industry allowance. On 16 September the Winstone drivers agreed to withdraw their demand, for the time being, and the award talks started, with the union presenting a range of claims with an \$8 an hour minimum, plus the \$1.07 an hour allowance. On 21 September the talks were adjourned to 5 October, without any counter-offer from the employers. Drivers' stopwork meetings throughout the country decided on direct action to press their claims, and early stoppages took place in Invercargill and Wellington.

Next up were the Northern, Hawke's Bay, Canterbury and Westland store workers' unions, which tabled a claim for a 12 percent rise for their 6000 members, when award talks opened in Auckland on 28 September. They also asked for a pass-on to above-award rates, which were enjoyed by about 80 percent of their members, and for a 10 month term of the award so that it would expire in October 1988, at the same time as the metal trades award. This would make it possible to negotiate industry-specific awards next year covering both engineers and store workers. The employers counter-offer was for a 7 percent rise and a 12-month term. The talks were adjourned on the third day, and the unions decided to call stopwork meetings to consider future action.

Figures released by the Statistics Department showed that the weekly wage rates index rose by 7.5 percent in the year ending 30 June, but that the standard of living (real disposable incomes) of full-time wage and salary earners fell by 0.8 percent in the second quarter of 1987. Over the whole year to 30 June, those in the lowest group, with annual incomes below \$15 000, were 1.2 percent behind. The number of work stoppages and of workers involved in stoppages declined significantly in the first 6 months of this year, when compared with the same period last year, even after subtracting last year's major national meat workers' strike.

The managing director of Ceramco Corporation, Mr C R Bidwill, told shareholders on 21 September that the Labour Relations Act was demonstrably the worst piece of legislation enacted by the present government. "In the case of our wage-earning workers", he complained, "we have no control over how much they should be paid, nor how they should be employed". Next day the Asian-Pacific secretary of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations, Mr Ma Wei Pin, who was visiting New Zealand, commented that the present Business Roundtable attack on the Labour Relations Act was a local example of an anti-union campaign being waged by major companies worldwide. "The employer assault", he said, "doesn't stop at the shores of New Zealand".

The Minister of Labour, Mr Rodger, announced on 30 September that he intended to implement Labour's election pledges of industrial democracy by appointing union representatives to statutory boards and corporations and by promoting union representation on the boards of companies.

Air New Zealand pilots decided to continue the ban on flights to Fiji until a stable government was in control. After the second Fiji coup waterfront unions reimposed the ban on shipping and cargo to that country from 1 October.

An internal wrangle in the Northern Clerical Workers Union, which became public when 6 executive members resigned in April, was resolved, for the time being at least, in September when members voted in support of their officials. The executive members had alleged financial mismanagement and had called for an official inquiry by the Registrar of Industrial Unions. That inquiry found only minor irregularities and no evidence of misappropriation of funds, but the dissidents then launched a petition seeking a ballot for the removal of the secretary and deputy secretary. In a low turnout, 76 percent of those who voted backed the two officials.

The Auckland Hotel Workers Union claimed that exploitation was widespread in ethnic restaurants, which brought cooks to New Zealand on temporary visas and paid them below award rates. The union decided to use the provisions of the new Labour Relations Act to check wage books, and to interview staff in their own languages, and it found that of more than 40 restaurants visited only 8 were meeting their obligations on wages and conditions. At the Waterloo Hotel in Wellington, 50 hotel and clerical staff went on strike over complaints of abuse by management, unjustified dismissals and other grievances. Lion Breweries, which owns the hotel, sought a return to work order from the Labour Court but the Court refused to issue an order and the company was forced to make concessions. After 5 weeks on strike the staff voted to return to work.

Members of the Northern Labourers Union set up a picket in Dargaville on 17 September.

where 18 workers were building a bridge across the Northern Wairoa River. The union claimed that the Rangiora-based contractor employed non-union labour and that he worked contrary to award provisions. Local citizens held a meeting to protest against union interference, but by cutting off cement supplies the union brought the project to a halt.

Four workers employed at the Standard Optical Co in Auckland went on strike to protest against the dismissal of the job delegate. When the company dismissed the strikers, they mounted a picket with the support of the Drug and Chemical Employees Union and the Auckland Trades Council. Their own union, the small Northern Optical Workers Union, had earlier voted in favour of voluntary membership. After 3 weeks on picket, the 5 dismissed workers decided to take personal grievance claims to the Labour Court.

Interisland ferry masters and officers sought a 22 percent pay rise to gain parity with the rest of the maritime industry. Their claim, which was still unresolved from last year's wage round, was referred for settlement to the new Arbitration Commission.

When Colortron Carpets, a Feltex subsidiary, announced the forthcoming closure of the former Kensington carpet factory in Auckland, 125 workers went on strike on 8 September because the redundancy pay offered was less than what had been paid at other Feltex-owned carpet plants. Two weeks later they were joined on strike by some 700 other workers at Feltex carpet and wool manufacturing plants in Auckland, Foxton, Lower Hutt and Christchurch, who demanded a company-wide redundancy agreement. The company offered to negotiate a national deal if the staff returned to work, but the Woollen Workers Union wanted prior assurances that an improved package would be offered. On 21 September the staff returned to work and 3 days later a new national agreement was signed.

OCTOBER 1987

The inaugural conference of the NZ Council of Trades Unions met in Wellington from 19 to 21 October, with more than 300 delegates from 70 unions representing 530 000 workers. Mr K Douglas, the secretary of the FOL, was elected president and Mr R Burgess, of the Post Office Union, secretary, both unopposed. The post of vice-president, for which there were two nominations, will be decided later by postal ballot of affiliated unions. In the election of the executive, representatives of 5 of the 6 occupational groupings were returned unopposed, but in the grouping containing the Service Workers Federation there were 5 nominations for 3 posts and this election too will be decided by postal ballot. The establishment of the Council, which unites private and public sector unions, was hailed by Mr Douglas as an historic and important development for the union movement. "Having painfully and laboriously constructed our barrow", he said, "it is now up to us to push it". Mr Knox, who left his sick bed to attend on the final day, received a standing ovation. He was not walking away from the struggle, he assured delegates. "I will always be in the struggle. It's been my life."

The wage round continued and by mid-October 8 awards had been settled at 7 percent, the figure set in the metal trades award. They included small groups such as shipwrights, glove workers, cycle workers, farm machinery and cannery workers, but also some major groups such as the dairy workers, who accepted a 7 percent rise for an 11 month term on 16 October. The highest settlement was in the insurance workers' award, with an 8 percent increase agreed after 3 days of negotiations. Mr J Fisher, the secretary of the Electrical Workers Union, accused employers of trying to destroy the award bargaining system by their "dinosaur" policy of maintaining strict relativity. By sticking to a 7 percent wage path, he charged, the Employers Federation sought to encourage workers to abandon awards and negotiate separate workplace agreements.

The Clerical Workers Union accepted a 7 percent increase in wages and allowances in its main award on 2 October, but deferred discussion of other claims. Last year the employers had ceased to make qualification payments, and the union launched a "How mean can you be!" campaign in support of recognition of educational achievements. In further negotiations on 22 October, the employers agreed to the restoration of qualification payments to school leavers.

Drivers held further stopwork meetings early in October. The employers tabled a 7 percent across-the-board offer and the union lowered its claim by incorporating the \$8 rate with the industry allowance. When the employers refused to raise their offer, the talks adjourned indefinitely on 14 October. Nelson drivers went on strike on 15 October, while meetings in other centres voted in favour of a national 48 hour stoppage. "Drivers cannot support their families on their extremely low wages", said their advocate, Mr J Smith. The 2 day strike by

some 12 000 drivers started at midnight on 26 October.

Negotiations on the electrical contractors' award opened on 12 October. The union claimed an 18.9 percent rise, and the talks adjourned on 19 October, after the union rejected the employers' 7 percent offer.

In the stationary engine-drivers' award the union claimed an 11 percent increase, while the employers offered 7 percent. Negotiations broke down on the first day, 13 October, when the employers refused a compulsory pass-on to above-award rates. The union had exempted the bulk of its membership in the northern industrial district from the award, as it proposed to continue with separate house agreements for these men. It planned to hold a series of stopwork meetings to discuss the award deadlock.

In meat works too, most workers were covered by separate works agreements. Talks on a new award opened on 14 October, but broke down after 1½ days. The union claimed a 15 percent increase, while the employers offered 7 percent, subject to conditions. The unions also wanted in-house productivity agreements appended to the award.

Negotiations on a domestic workers' award broke down on 14 October, when the employers walked out as soon as the union tabled its proposal for an amalgamation of the three awards covering domestic staff in public hospitals, private hospitals and rest homes. On 27 October some 200 hospital workers marched to Parliament to demand equal pay for all groups of domestic workers. The union sought an interim injunction from the Labour Court to prevent separate award talks covering public hospital domestic staff only.

Talks on the printing and packaging award opened on 7 October. The union claimed a 13.9 percent increase, while the employers offered 7 percent conditional on union acceptance of flexible working hours. The talks were adjourned on the third day. Talks on the commercial printers' award, which opened on 14 October, with the same claims and counter-offer tabled, adjourned on the following day. The printing union decided to hold a series of stopwork meetings.

The Public Service Association began negotiations on its first award under the Labour Relations Act with a state-owned enterprise, the Airways Corporation. Proposals to increase the standard working hours of air traffic controllers brought a threat of strike action by that group, and on 21 October the PSA gave notice of two stopwork meetings by controllers on 6 and 9 November, which would disrupt domestic and international flights.

Negotiations on the non-food retail award adjourned on the third day, 29 October, without settlement. The union was willing to concede extended opening hours, but it claimed a revised pay scale, with special increases for junior and senior workers, and an increased night allowance. The employers allowed a 7 percent rise, but sought a lifting of restrictions on the number of junior workers employed, and a reduction of sick leave for part-time workers.

On 22 October meat workers' officials met representatives of dairy, food and chemical, sugar, ice cream and woollen mill workers for further discussions on the formation of a combined food and textile union, with head office in Christchurch or Wellington, and full time secretarial, legal, research and publicity staff.

Nelson harbour workers resumed work on 15 October, after a 22 day strike over a redundancy issue. Auckland and Onehunga harbour workers walked out on 20 October in protest against new work practices introduced by the Auckland Harbour Board without prior negotiations with the union. The Harbour Board sought a compliance order from the Labour Court. It obtained an interim *ex parte* order, without the union's presence in court, on 21 October and work resumed the following morning, but later that day in an urgent hearing in Wellington the chief Labour Court judge delayed the return to work order until a further court hearing the following week. The harbour workers continued at work, except in disrupted areas, and the Port Conciliation Committee, despite Harbour Board protests, directed the Board to employ staff under the earlier work practices. The Labour Court refused to grant the Harbour Board an extension of the compliance order, pending a further hearing on 13 November.

The contractor of the Dargaville bridge job obtained a compliance order from the Labour Court on 12 October, which instructed the Northern Labourers Union to admit the contractor's staff as members. The union withdrew its picket, and the Cement Workers Union lifted the ban on cement supplies to the job.

The Public Service Association gave notice of major power cuts, starting on 2 November, after lengthy negotiations on Electricorp's decision to shed 828 workers early next year collapsed on 16 October. On 29 October Electricorp placed full-page advertisements in daily newspapers telling readers its side of the dispute and warning of the consequences of power cuts.

The Nissan Company sought compliance orders from the Labour Court against store

workers employed at its Wiri plant, who had imposed an overtime ban in response to staff cutbacks. The union claimed that the company was trying to use the Court to pressure its workers into accepting the controversial Japanese-style work arrangements rejected earlier.

Auckland waterfront unions began to work a Fijian ship after the Labour Court had granted the owners an *ex parte* interim injunction. A full hearing of the application began on 20 October in what is a test case on the legality of political bans and strikes. Because of the importance of the issue, the FOL asked to be a party to the hearing. Under a review of manning levels carried out by the Waterfront Industry Commission, watersiders' jobs are to be cut by 435, from 3311 to 2876 nationwide.

Union leaders warned that the frequent applications for compliance orders to the new Labour Court were likely to erupt in a major industrial confrontation. Mr Douglas particularly criticised the "almost indecent haste" with which the court granted *ex parte* injunctions, when the new laws made provision for urgent hearings within 24 hours of an application being lodged. An Auckland Employers Association Official, Mr G Pollak, on the other hand, described compliance orders as "a vast improvement in our system". They made a mediator's decision in disputes much more meaningful, he said.

Herbert Roth