

When workers rights are under attack Stand Up Fight Back!

The rights of every worker in this country are under attack. The National Government has just announced a number of significant changes to the Employment Relations Act. There are five major changes:

- 1:** The 90 day legislation will be extended to workplaces with less than 50 staff, and probably to all workplaces soon afterwards. These laws let the boss fire you for whatever reason he likes in the first 90 days, and you can't take out a personal grievance. Basically, you can get fired for nothing and there's nothing you can do.
- 2:** The right of union organisers to access the workplace will be severely restricted on unionised sites. And on sites that do not already have a well established trade union, the boss may be able to prevent the union from even coming through the doors. This is an authoritarian and undemocratic move which will make it much harder for workers to organise and fight for their rights.
- 3:** EREL Education and Training Leave for Delegates and Members is to be abolished. This prevents union members from coming together and planning with each other how to win a better deal for everybody. Union members will now be punished for taking part in union conferences, with the new laws forcing them to take time out of the few weeks of annual leave they get.
- 4:** The Holidays Act is to be changed, with the fourth weeks holiday being sold. This leaves workers with very little time in the year to enjoy time off work with their families, or to travel or just relax. The politicians will try and justify this by saying workers are offered a choice, but in practice what this means is that the boss can pick and choose whether to allow more than three weeks holiday, and if you don't

like it? Well, you'll be fired within 90 days! This will be especially true on non-unionised sites where workers have no protection.

- 5: Bargaining Agents will be able to take the place of Unions in Collective Contract Negotiations. This will give more power to "yellow" company unions and will allow bosses to exclude unions entirely in favour of professional corporate law firms.

John Key announced this attack at a meeting of the richest people in New Zealand. CEOs of multimillion dollar businesses that pay their workers peanuts, gathering together to give their lapdog Prime Minister his orders. He talked about the 90 day no rights laws, and said that "the results of that have been stunning". This is true – but only for the bosses. For the working class, it's just another kick in the teeth.

Throughout the 1980s, the capitalist Labour Party viciously attacked the working class with privatisations, GST and everything else that came with Rogernomics. The National Party governments of the 1990s finished the job. The Employment Contracts Act of 1991 dealt the union movement a blow it still hasn't recovered from. In 1991, we didn't fight back and the bosses were able to ride over us and kick us all into place. This time round, we can't let them get away with it.

Organise your workplace. Talk to your workmates and the people in your community. Spread the word that these attacks on working people are unacceptable, and encourage people to resist them.

The rights we have were not given to us from on high. They were won by struggle from below. From the eight hour day to the weekend, maternity leave to the basic right to join a union, working people fought hard to win them. The bosses are always trying to roll these rights back, so if we want to keep them and if we want to build a society in which workers have real power and respect, we need to join together in unions and fight for a better deal. And we need to start questioning whether this capitalist system, this system of rich and powerful bosses and poor and powerless workers, is the best option on the table. We need to start asking ourselves if this society could be replaced by a society radically different, where ordinary working people are in control – a free and equal socialist society. This can't be as good as it gets.

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