

Howard is history

History has a very clear message, in that social upheavals, and indeed revolutions, come about because of the arrogance and excesses of abuse of those in power.

The Howard Government's industrial relations legislation is a shameful example of this abuse. This legislation is designed to break workers' ability to secure better conditions by pitting worker against worker.

In the light of workers' solidarity this miserable attempt is doomed and may even end in the collapse of the present government.

When I first entered the building industry as a carpenter apprentice, aged 14, the working conditions were:

- A 10-hour working day without smoko or rest break;
- No annual holidays;
- No paid public holidays;
- No sick leave;
- No wet weather or follow-the-job loadings;
- No long service leave;
- No workers compensation or accident pay; and
- No superannuation etc.

When workers set about changing this dismal situation through their unions, the employers collectively, through the Master Builders Association, the Employers Federation, the Chamber of Manufacturers and others, vigorously opposed every one of the changes.

Jack Tarlington

Cook Islander case prompts donation

I was really upset by the story on the young Cook Islander which recently aired on A Current Affair – i.e. apprenticed on trust then bashed by his boss over a period until he lost sight in one eye, hearing and teeth, also paid \$50 a week. The CFMEU was taking a collection.

My son is a trainee facial surgeon at Sydney's Westmead Hospital and he said it is a shocking case. I would like to make a donation to the young man's rehab. I feel so sad about this sort of inhumanity – the boss capitalising on his worker's non-resident status and his parents', fellow Cook Islanders', trust.

Pieter Moeskops

Thanks for a job well done

I would like to extend my congratulations to the CFMEU and its members for the recent completion of the Parramatta Transport

Interchange almost 10 months ahead of schedule.

The co-operation of the CFMEU and its members ensured an effective transition process following the collapse of the Walter Construction Group early last year, minimising costs and delays to the project and perhaps more importantly, minimising costs to subcontractors and loss of income to employees.

It is a great credit to all of the workers who simply got on with the job despite these difficulties and I thank them for their efforts.

John Watkins
Deputy Premier
Transport Minister

Christmas feast a winner

My husband Walter Felsch from Wardell has asked me to convey our sincere thanks to you and the CFMEU for inviting us to the Retired Members Christmas Party in December.

We travelled to Sydney from our home on the North Coast and enjoyed the function very much. This was made even more special by meeting the great people that we were fortunate enough to share our table with.

We wish you and the Union all the best for 2006 and continue on with your special and untiring work.

Sue Felsch for Walter.

Help inspires a lifetime of loyalty

As the mother of Stephen Pemberton, one of the young men being supported by the CFMEU in regards to the non-payment of wages and unfair contract by JAL Landscape and Construction I want to take this opportunity to thank the CFMEU for giving the boys support in this matter.

The situation has become more and more stressful for both families and the support we have received from the union, particularly Rohan Tobler and Tim Vollmer, has been a great relief to all of us.

I am sure the boys, from this experience, will remain loyal members and supporters of the union throughout their working years.

Paula Pemberton

Public needs to blacklist boss

I am a retired aged pensioner, but was a unionist for all my working life.

I know these are dark days for Australian workers who are now having their wages and working conditions slashed by this incorrigible government.

But I am disgusted by the actions of JAL Landscaping and Construction in denying

fair wages to its apprentices. These boys are being used as slaves. How on earth will they be able to save, let alone even eke out an existence for themselves, on the miserable pittance that their unscrupulous, selfish employers are paying them? They will have no possible chance of buying a home, of providing for a family, of enjoying a full life – the fruit of their own labour, on this slave labour “wage” of \$3.30 per hour.

This firm should be blackballed – not officially now of course – but word of mouth must surely be used to bring the facts of this practice to all workers and to the general public. The actions of JAL are absolutely disgraceful.

Alan Florance

Boeing workers still full of fight

Our members employed by Boeing at the Williamstown RAAF base have returned to work after their 265-day strike and lockout. The return to work on February 20 was at the recommendation of both NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca and the Full Bench of the NSW IRC.

The recommendation for a return to work came when the Full Bench published its report into whether the NSW IRC could deal with the dispute by arbitration. Its report really exposed Boeing as being an industrial relations bully.

Boeing successfully overturned the NSW IRC decision on appeal to the AIRC, effectively leaving the AWU nowhere to go.

Boeing has won round one and that was possible with its massive resources, total support of the Federal Government and the Workplace Relations Act 1996 which gave the federal commission no powers to arbitrate the matter.

This is a round 15 fight and the AWU and its members at Boeing are not going to give up on achieving a collective agreement.

On behalf of the AWU and its Boeing member, I would like to thank the CFMEU and its members for their terrific financial support as well as the great moral support given through the visits of your officials and members to the picket line.

If we did not have these we would not have been able to fight as long and as hard as we did.

Kevin Maher

AWU

**Newcastle Branch Secretary
State President**

For more information on the NSW IRC report see the workers' website at www.williamstown.org.au