

March 2019

On 15th March 2019, Muslim New Zealanders, at peaceful prayer in Mosques in Christchurch, including members of the families of those we work alongside were gunned down, killed or injured. This has sent a shock wave through our little country and not least our Meat Workers Union community. Muslim workers, whether Halal Butchers or other workers have faced the unspeakable loss. Meat Workers have responded with love with tributes at work, contributions and poetry.

Jason Carruthers, MWU shed official at SFF Finegand wrote this poem after the loss of a Muslim workmate, who was killed in a car crash after he had been to visit whanau in Christchurch.

On the 15th of March in Christchurch
We watched 50 New Zealanders fall
That came here to live in harmony
Until that evil call
We are brothers and sisters of Aotearoa
Whatever race that you may be
New Zealand now scarred with racism
For all the world to see
Our love and prayers are with the Families
Who witnessed that horrific day
Have we all become so laid back?
And to think we were too far away.
This shit happens everywhere else
And never to imagine it here
As we mourn the loss of Kiwis
As we wipe away a tear.
New Zealand is a peaceful place
And a lot more to be said
Our beautiful mountains - and rolling green
pastures
Have now been tinged with red.
Brace each other for this ride
Because the bomb shell has been hurled
With that horrific act of evil
We have caught up, with the rest of the world
We will all get through this together
And with all those families in mind
To show the world how strong we are
As one we'll do this with time.



MWU mourns with Muslim members

Halal and other Muslim workers are a critical and important part of the Meat Industry and our Meat Workers Union community, says Graham Cooke, National Secretary.

SPM has 16 halal butchers at its factory in Burnham. Two of those workers were inside a mosque when the shooting started, but escaped serious injury. Some of them went to work the day after the attack.

Silver Fern Farms have over 60 Halal Butchers working across their sites, as does Alliance and in total there around 250 Halal butchers across New Zealand.

"Meat Workers have reached out to our Muslim communities, at work, in the community and with contributions" says Graham.



Update March 2019

Cleaners Rights in Contracting out

From time to time, Meat Companies decide to contract out their cleaners to third party contractors. Most meat companies directly employ their cleaners, and some like the Alliance Group have agreed with the MWU there will be no contracting out during the term of their collective agreement.

However, Taylor Preston Ltd recently contracted out long serving and loyal cleaners to CleanMaster. It took union intervention to ensure these workers were accorded their rights, which are different to many other workers under the Employment Relations Act (ERA).

Part 6A of the ERA is a special provision relating to "vulnerable workers", including cleaners, that was introduced by Labour in the early 2000s. Vulnerable workers are those most exposed to competitive tendering when companies try to cut costs.

Thanks to Part 6A, 30 Taylor Preston cleaners are now employed on the same terms and conditions as they were before. However, this doesn't mean there aren't problems. Reports are that there are already difficulties in the way these workers are treated which is one of the reasons MWU is opposed to contracting out.

All workers who work in our industry are important. Contracting out separates one group of workers from another and is deliberately designed to save money for your company. Be vigilant and report any moves to contract out to your union shed leaders or paid official.

Labour Hire workers

Another form of casualisation in the meat industry is "Labour Hire".

You may be working alongside workers who do the same job as you, but who are employed by someone completely different. They get paid less than you do and have no right to join your union collective agreement.

Sometimes, you won't even know until you ask them to join our union and you are told by the company they can't because they work for a different employer.

These are called "Labour Hire" workers. Some Meat Companies have decided that it's a cheaper way of getting workers. And it is. Whatever you get paid for doing your job, Labour Hire workers will most likely be paid less. Whatever your rights under your collective agreement, theirs are likely to be less. Many are migrant workers, brought here by the Labour Hire company on fixed term 12 month visas.

MWU has been organising around this ; for example insisting that Labour Hire workers should become employees of the company after a certain period. We are looking closely at Te Kuiti Meats, Crusader Meats, Waitara and Brinks Chicken.

The most important thing you can do is report any examples of Labour Hire workers to the MWU and help us ensure that they are not being exploited.

"Sometimes, at work, we just need to turn to our workmates and say "how's it going"?" They may look different to you, they may have a different culture, but in the end, we are all workers together, united in a common cause for everyone."

Ivan Hughes. Te Kuiti Meats.



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