

INDUSTRIAL



UNIONIST #1

Newsletter of Aotearoa Industrial Workers of the World October 2025

Welcome to the IWW

Kia ora koutou katoa readers! Welcome to the first issue of Industrial Unionist, the new publication of the Aotearoa branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

Several years ago a group of disgruntled workers and students from all over Aotearoa came together to form our branch. We were frustrated and alienated by the failed and bankrupt strategies of slow reformism and acceptance of the status quo by the Labour Party and the mainstream service unions. This was compounded by the lack of democracy and the top down direction of these strategies, we felt it was time to do things differently, and help revive militant grassroots unionism in Aotearoa!

In the face of the existential threats of environmental collapse and the re-emergence of fascism, as well as the current economic and cost of living crises, we can no longer rely on politicians and union bureaucrats. We must take action ourselves, as workers, and get organised. The Labour Party tells us to wait, to vote and to look to them as our saviours, when they have failed to stop the current crises and have allowed the rich to get richer while the rest of us are worse off.

Currently we are witnessing one of the biggest working class mobilisations in decades with workers urging their unions to strike over poor pay and worse conditions. We urge workers to demand more of their unions. The IWW believes in building collective power and then using it through direct action. Withholding our labour in a strike should be more than symbolic, more than a 1 hour stop work, it should be the way in which we win our demands.

The IWW wants to rebuild a militant union movement. We believe if we act together in solidarity, we can achieve

real gains. This moment in time calls for collective direct action to secure not only short term improvements but long term transformational change for all workers.

Solidarity between industries, private and public, and having a maximum impact on the operation of industry and government is the cornerstone of our philosophy. Hitting the employers where it hurts.

This is how we can defend and improve our pay, terms and conditions of employment. This is how we can build a better future. Political democracy is (at least) severely limited without democracy within the economy, within industry. The production and distribution of goods and services is the real power that shapes our society.

In the hands of the few, our employers, this power benefits the few. In the hands of all working people it could benefit everyone. Who else but us, working people, produce and distribute all the world's goods and services? We make the world turn yet see little of the wealth and make few of the decisions.

The longtime motto of the IWW still motivates us today:

“AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!”



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A Union of Unions - by Luke B

Laws in Aotearoa lay out strict restrictions for strikes. This creates difficulties for striking in solidarity, as well as strikes outside of collective bargaining. This makes larger mobilisations such as general strikes more difficult. This setup weakens workers by forcing each group to fight alone, even though they face similar issues; long hours, unsafe conditions, and the rising cost of living. When unions act separately, it's easier for politicians and the media to turn public opinion against them, especially in jobs where strikes are framed as dangerous or selfish.

But the idea behind solidarity is simple: the more workers stand together, the harder it becomes for employers or the government to ignore them. Unions like the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) show how connecting workers across different trades and industries can strengthen everyone. Workers can be active both within their specific unions and in the I.W.W., planning together, sharing resources, and increasing collective power without giving up their existing organizations.

Cost of Living - by TB

Collective direct action is needed against the cost-of-living crisis

We're hurting. Our living costs continue to soar. Wages aren't keeping up. Jobs are being shed by their thousands. We are in a deep and long-term recession the likes we haven't seen since the early 1990s.

The media has reduced this crisis to a few stories about the ludicrous cost of butter. What they don't mention is how that absurd price shows how capitalism operates today. The country's main export is dairy yet the average block of butter costs a whopping \$9 or so. A few business owners are raking in massive profits while we wage-slaves are getting hammered. Working-class people are taking most of the hit of the recession. That's a deliberate choice of both business people and politicians. We tighten our belts while the wealth we produce floods upwards.

The media has also pushed individual methods to cope with the cost-of-living crisis – like how to cut costs by shopping around. But most of us lack time and money to do that. We need to go beyond individual survival tactics. Collective action is needed to increase wages and reduce our living costs. Direct action against bosses on the job is a time honoured and effective tactic.

Nurses and teachers, among others, are showing the way ahead with their national strikes. We are currently in a mini-strike wave. The Council of Trade Unions is actually trying to mobilise workers against savage government spending cuts, especially in pay equity, and also the blatant marginalisation of Māori. The CTU called a national day of solidarity, Rā Whakamana, on 28 October that's jointly organised with the Iwi Chairs Forum.

Recent events in Aotearoa demonstrate how much this unity is needed. Teachers, nurses, and public service workers have all gone on strike in recent years, demanding fair pay and safe working conditions. These struggles often echo one another, but if one union isn't in their bargaining period while another isn't, they can't use the key weapon that workers have: collective strikes. When these efforts are coordinated across different industries, such as healthcare, education, transport, retail, and construction, like the recent Mega-Strike, workers could build a movement strong enough to win lasting change for all working people. We believe the momentum from the Mega-Strike must be carried forward using the energy and mahi already put in.

Whether through the I.W.W. or wider union alliances, the goal remains the same: one united movement, many trades, all standing together for fair conditions and real power for workers in Aotearoa.



The main message at these rallies, like the 'Women's Day of Action' on 20 September against massive pay equity cuts to women workers of around \$13 billion, has been to vote Labour. This political dope is disempowering. I reckon Labour are a centrist if not right-wing party of the managerial middle-class. At best, if they somehow win in 2026, they won't change much as they've said they will keep most of the policies of the current vicious Tory government. Meanwhile, wage-slaves will continue to bear the burden of the present crisis. The CTU will stop its temporary burst of activity and tell us to shut up and support Labour.

If we are going to fightback successfully, the answer comes from us, and not politicians or union bureaucrats. It comes from workers organising themselves collectively at the grassroots. What's needed are things like successful direct action by workers, collective mobilisation explicitly based on defending workers' living standards, spreading strikes from the public sector to the private sector, and organising the unorganised.

#DireEmergency

The end of the 2023 Professional Fire Fighters Union (NZPFU) strike was heralded as being the end of the many problems being faced by career fire brigades. On paper Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) had agreed to look into and deal with issues such as: constant breakdowns, lack of pay, and poor access to mental health services. Unfortunately, in 2025 not one of these problems has been addressed, owing to government austerity policies.



MĀNGERE351 seen with pro-union slogans during the 2023 strike.



AKLDRELIEF407 with more union slogans, 2023.

Beginning in 2025 the NZPFU began to express concerns about Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland's frontline fleet. Alleging that the fleet was poorly maintained and very close to failure. They further argued that a number of stations were understaffed and lacked up to date maps. In February, a devastating house fire in Milldale on the North Shore began to prove these statements. Although equipment failure did not occur, the local station (Hibiscus Coast) was unable to respond quickly enough due to a lack of staff and appropriate maps. Equipment failure did happen in April, during the North Shore scrapyard fire. The result of which was that two fire-fighters were forced to issue a mayday call as the heavy aerial on scene had broken down, with two fire-fighters in the basket, right above the fire. The next few months saw further equipment failures and inadequate replacements. Earlier in March Hamilton had their HAZMAT unit replaced with a ute and by May the NZPFU had declared Auckland's relief turntable ladder black after it suffered a total hydraulic failure.



Slogans from the 2025 strike on THORNDON235 (Relieving as PARNELL255)

Local readers will recall the New World Victoria Park fire on 17/06/25 which caused significant damage to the supermarket. Without the relief turntable ladder and the primary unit, AUCKLAND205, both out of service simultaneously. Hamilton City Station was instead asked to reassemble their aerial, which is coincidentally the same make and model as the relief unit, that was also out of service for its annual maintenance checks. Despite this however, HAMILTON415 was unable to attend, leading to a critical equipment shortage.

This still leaves us with one question though: What has the NZPFU and FENZ done to try and fix the problem? The NZPFU has repeatedly attempted to negotiate with FENZ, however as of writing nothing has come of this. In fact FENZ walked away from the negotiating table earlier this year during the first round of bargaining. As of writing there has been no update concerning the negotiations that occurred in early September. The only significant update has been a promise of 'new' trucks, which are in fact from 2017 and have been in open-air storage in Wiri for years. Although the NZPFU attempted to negotiate with FENZ prior to October 17th, FENZ refused to negotiate. Choosing instead to ignore the union. The result of which was the NZPFU going on a 1 hour nationwide strike on the 17th of October.

Your author attended this strike with her local brigade, where we were joined by the nurses union and the MPs for Māngere and Panmure-Ōtāhuhu. It is important to note that the NZPFU has turned up in support of both the nurses and the teachers unions. A clear act of solidarity, which hasn't been seen in this country for quite some time. With the joint strike on the 25th the NZPFU likewise pledged its support. The hope is that the various striking unions will have better chances of negotiating by virtue of having sheer strength of numbers. Whether or not these unions will be successful remains to be seen, but we cannot overstate the importance of inter-union solidarity in the fight against the bourgeoisie and we wish the unions the best of luck.

WHAT IS THE IWW?

The Industrial Workers of the World is a revolutionary global union, fighting for better conditions today and economic democracy tomorrow. We are united in struggle by our hostility to the capitalist system, and the various forms of social oppression it creates. We aim to unite all workers, regardless of craft, trade, industry, or identity, into “One Big Union” as the foundation for a new society.

- We believe that ordinary working class people are best placed to lead and create change, both at work and in society. We believe in putting our members in charge, training each and every one to build and lead their workplace unions, organise their own campaigns and take the action that wins.
- We're not here to provide a service; we're here to build a movement, winning bigger and better victories for working people as our movement grows in strength and confidence.
- Industrial unionism is a core principle and a fundamental aspect of our approach to labour organising. We seek to establish "One Big Union" that unites workers across industries, transcending traditional craft divisions. By organising ourselves as workers on an industry-wide basis, we aim to build collective power, promote solidarity, and address systemic issues that affect workers across the entire economy.
- "Solidarity unionism" is the guiding strategic principle of the IWW, differentiating it from "Business Unionism." It prioritises building worker strength without relying on government or employer recognition. This approach doesn't rely solely on traditional collective agreements and instead focuses on gaining power through direct action tactics, resisting concessionary bargaining and restrictive clauses. Solidarity Unionism is the IWW's innovative organising strategy for building worker power and fostering solidarity.
- The business unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers. The IWW offers a different vision.



The Aotearoa Branch

Originally formed in 1905, the IWW has a rich and proud history, organising workers into revolutionary 'industrial unions' across the entire industry, both in production and distribution. In Aotearoa the first IWW branch was founded in 1907 and went on to have significant influence in some of the most significant labour struggles of the era.

Our branch, the IWW Aotearoa, is a general membership branch of the international IWW. It's the first branch of the IWW to operate in Aotearoa since the 1990s. We operate within the Australasian regional committee, and have strong connections to branches in Australia and the wider region. We are not here as a historical recreation society, we are here to rebuild a union that adapts to the modern conditions we face.

Membership in the Aotearoa New Zealand Branch of the IWW is open to all workers, regardless of occupation, industry, or employment status. We believe that being divided into separate and often competing unions only pits workers against each other instead of building solidarity. The IWW operates on the principles of inclusivity, grassroots democracy, and direct action. By joining the branch, workers gain access to a supportive network, resources, and a platform to actively participate in shaping the direction of the union and building working class power.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Branch of the IWW welcomes individuals who are committed to fighting against all forms of oppression, building worker solidarity, and working towards a more just and equitable society. Join and help us rebuild militant unionism today!

The historical preamble to the constitution of the IWW is just as relevant today as it was 100 years ago. Here is it reprinted in full:

Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

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We are:

- A radical labour union in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Empowering workers to build solidarity and take collective and direct action
- Challenging oppression, fighting discrimination, advocating for better working conditions, and creating transformation change

We are not:

- A traditional business union focused solely on incremental reforms, or on providing services to individual members
- Hierarchical or centralised; decision-making power resides with the workers themselves
- Limited to specific industries or occupations; we aim to unite workers from all sectors into one big union
- A historical recreation society

Who is the IWW for?

- All workers in Aotearoa New Zealand, regardless of occupation, industry, or employment status
- Those who believe in collective action, solidarity, and challenging oppressive labour practices
- We are for workers who seek to build a more just and equitable society through grassroots organising and direct action



Join now: delegate@iww.org.nz
For media: comms@iww.org.nz

In 5 Easy Steps:

Learn about the IWW:

- Familiarise yourself with the principles and goals of the IWW, including its focus on solidarity, direct action, and grassroots democracy.
- Explore our website, read and engage with our resources, and get in touch if you have any further questions. iww.org.nz

Attend meetings and events:

- Join us at our meetings, workshops, and events to connect with like-minded individuals and learn more about ongoing campaigns and organising efforts.
- Check our website or social media platforms for updates on upcoming activities.

Become a member:

- Consider becoming a member of the Aotearoa New Zealand Branch of the IWW.
- Membership provides you with opportunities for active participation, decision-making, and access to further resources and support within the union.
- Reach out to us to learn more about the membership process.

Volunteer and contribute:

- Offer your skills, time, and energy to support the union's activities.
- Volunteer for organising initiatives, assist with outreach efforts, contribute to publications, or offer your expertise in areas such as graphic design, legal support, or event coordination.

Spread the word:

- Help raise awareness about the IWW and its work. Share information through social media, talk to friends and colleagues about the benefits of joining a union, and invite others to attend meetings or events.
- By spreading the word, you can help grow our collective strength and impact.



iww.org.nz

IWW.ORG.NZ