



IWW Aotearoa AGM Report - Branch Secretary Treasurer

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

Over the last two years the Aotearoa branch has picked up excellent momentum and is starting to find its feet. Recently we had our second in-person AGM, which was held at Trades Hall in Tāmaki Makaurau. Members gathered from all around Aotearoa for a day of discussion, strategy, and planning the future of our organisation.

The 2026 AGM left us feeling energised and ready to continue to build up our branch! After formal proceedings we had an excellent Organiser Training 101 session run by a comrade from Australia. Our branch has built great relationships with members who are part of the wider Australasian regional organisation. This international solidarity and connection enables us to have sessions such as this, up-skilling our membership. After the training session, we had a detailed strategy session, discussing and planning our path forward in 2026. We outlined the focuses of our branch and how to build a more militant unionism in Aotearoa.

Our branch is still in its early stages, between our first in-person AGM in 2025 to now we have made significant steps forward. We have continued strategy discussions and agreed that our 2025 short term priority of setting up branch media, including a newsletter and social media was successful. We have since published the first issue of our newsletter the 'Industrial Unionist', which was named as a homage to the newspaper of the original IWW chapter in Aotearoa, first published in 1913. Social media accounts have been set up, we have a new functioning website, and a comrade

has made a great selection of posters which members have been putting up in their respective areas. Work on creating merch has begun. Stickers, badges and self made t-shirts have been produced and sent out to the membership.. Banners and flags are in the works. We hope this contributes to spreading the IWW message and will be bringing these physical items to give out at rallies and stalls this year.

We are excited for what 2026 holds for the branch. We aim to continue work on our media, planning the next stages of building our organisation, engaging in solidarity and building links with ongoing struggles. Thank you to all the members who attended and thank you to all our officers who have done great work over the last several years!

If you're interested in rebuilding the IWW, please join now!

IWW Aotearoa Branch Secretary Treasurer

The longtime motto of the IWW still motivates us today:

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



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The Scapegoating of Migrants

According to Network Waitangi Ōtautahi, the word Tangata Tiriti was coined by Sir Edward Taihakurei Durie at Waitangi in 1989. Tangata Tiriti was defined as “those who belong to this land by right of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi. He noted that without the Treaty, they would have no lawful presence in such numbers, nor any legitimate political role in this part of the Pacific. Put another way, in the Treaty there were Tangata Whenua – people of the land – and Tangata Tiriti – people of the Treaty. (Tangata Tiriti includes everyone who do not whakapapa to a Māori ancestor, not just white people from Britain, it is a political rather than an ethnic term).”

As an immigrant myself (I am a Puertorican who has been living here for 2 years) my first encounter with discriminatory attitudes in Aotearoa New Zealand was on my very first visit, right before coming back intending to settle over here. “I’m not racist but watch out for those Indians” is what the otherwise nice lady in the motel I stayed in told me. Ever since, that interaction, with all its particularities, have kept coming back to me as I observe this attitude is actually quite common.

In the era of relative digital anonymity, I have run across ample of these discriminatory attitudes, which seem to legitimise and normalise what were once fringe far-right views, like “The Great Replacement” theory. It echoes the content disseminated by far-right terrorists and other such propaganda actors. Nonetheless, I do not subscribe to the belief that online proliferation of certain content is necessarily representative of a given population. Rather, I perceive it as an indication of widespread misinformation and of already existing bigotry gaining traction as the working-class continues to face an ever demoralising economic recession with no signs of meaningful improvements except for the most privileged classes in our society. This is worrisome because there is a lack of unions and class solidarity. Everyone is fending for themselves rather than joining together collectively to improve conditions. When there is a lack of class solidarity and workers power there is a powerful vacuum for both ruling class and reactionary beliefs, like white supremacy and conspiracy theories.

Recent research on racial discrimination has expressed “grave concern over the 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch and was ‘especially concerned about the persistence of racist hate-speech by some politicians and public figures.’. The findings have also highlighted the frequency of racially motivated attacks on Māori, Pasifika and other ethnic and religious groups. It was relatively recently that a Sikh parade in South Auckland was disrupted by protesters linked to Brian Tamaki and Destiny Church.

As fellow neighbours we must reach out to the most vulnerable in our society to join arms with them and fight capitalist exploitation along with its deflection methods. The methods that aim to crush hope, alienate, distract

and segregate us. It should go without much elaboration, yet it is always the case that immigrants constitute a large portion of low-waged workers, often not fluent in the most used language of their host country. Among other obstacles it makes them especially prone to be exploited. This is contrary to the very common yet ill-informed understanding of the “Schrödinger Immigrant” that is depicted as simultaneously incompetent yet is “stealing the jobs of every Kiwi”. Although strict and classist immigrant policies of Aotearoa allows for the encouraging of what they term “skilled migrants” to have an easier time settling here. Opponents of mass immigration both exaggerate and radically distort how immigration plays out. More than anything else this advocates and leads to the ostracising and the scapegoating of immigrants for problems that do not originate from them.

These problems are systemic in character and are a direct product of the Capitalist mode of production that demands labour to be as cheap as possible in order to maximise profits. As a result, it is both minorities and immigrants who get affected the most by these neoliberal economic reforms that seek to “make the rich richer” at the price of trampling over the rights of workers. At a time where we are not organised the field is open for them to do as they please without any consequences. They have the threat of unemployment to pacify workers. Therefore we cannot attack our fellow migrant workers for deteriorating standards, nobody wants to work for less if they had the choice.

Here in the IWW we strongly believe in ALL workers’ rights, including migrant workers, as we all struggle together. We believe that everybody is united by one thing and that is class. We all come from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds but class remains a constant across the world. We are all workers that have to sell our labour to survive. Our future, now more than ever, depends on how we rise up to this challenge. Only together can we ever hope to affect meaningful changes and, consequently, improve our living conditions and that’s precisely what the IWW is trying to achieve when we say we want “One Big Union”. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of our country. The only way to honour it as Tangata Tiriti is to challenge the marginalisation and dismantling of its’ promises. The treaty itself was found torn and chewed by rats in a basement, we mustn’t let Capitalism continue tearing and chewing what it means in practice. Only by abolishing Capitalism can we truly decolonise and secure the future for everyone.



The IWW and the 1913 Great Strike

Most workers in Aotearoa are unfamiliar with the 1913 Great Strike. Growing up in Wellington it was an event I heard referenced several times in passing. But it wasn't until I started exploring the historical labour movement in Aotearoa that I learnt about the significance of this event, its radical roots and how the IWW and its ideas laid out the groundwork for it. This history is important as our society is still deeply divided by class. Informing ourselves of past struggles can inspire and inform how we act today.

The 1913 Great Strike was one of the few attempts at a "General Strike" in our history. The General Strike has long been the goal of the IWW. It aims to align all unions and workers in a particular geographical region to bring production to a halt. This tactic is not only used to improve conditions for workers, it also has the explicit goal of bankrupting the owning class and replacing bosses with democratic control in all workplaces.

In 1894 the government introduced the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration (IC&A) Act. This outlawed the strongest tool that workers have; strikes. The act forced disgruntled workers to resolve industrial disputes with the owning class through a third party (in this case the government). Thus Aotearoa became known as "the land without strikes", an idea propagated by the government that implied a labour relation where conditions were immaculate for workers. This was an outright lie. In reality it was a calculated move to try to dispossess the radical currents of our labour movement that threatened the rich. There was little opposition to it at the time as militant unions had been defeated in the 1890 Maritime strikes, the sectarian craft unions that remained welcomed the act. However as time progressed workers were left unsatisfied with biased outcomes, the state being inclined to side with the owning class as it is itself composed of it.

In 1908 in Blackball miners demonstrated striking was an option again, this can be seen as the beginning of a new era of militancy. These radical miners went on to form the New Zealand Federation of Labour or Red Feds, who proceeded to help organise the biggest labour upheavals of the era.

The Red Feds were heavily inspired by the IWW and other syndicalist unions across the world. In fact, several members of the IWW from the U.S. that had immigrated here helped found the Red Feds. Structurally the Red Feds wanted one big alliance of unions so they could fight the bosses with more power. The federation urged unions to deregister from the arbitration courts and instead take up direct action with their bosses. It even adopted a preamble similar to ours in the IWW constitution.

Later in 1912 workers saw a huge upheaval at Waihi. The lengthy strike was started by the Waihi Trade Union of Miners, a member of the Red Feds. When they deregistered from the arbitration courts the company,

fearing the power of direct action, formed a separate union loyal to the company. In protest of this the miners went on strike. In the end the strike was brought down through scab labour, violence, displacement and killing on behalf of both the company and the government. A taste of what was to come.

Come spring of 1913 Wellington waterfront workers and Huntly coal miners started work stoppages that set loose a wave of solidarity strikes across the country. Both parties had grievances with their hierarchical unions that were forced to negotiate under the arbitration act. Their demands ranged from reinstating sacked workers, an increase in their low wages and being provided work transport. The strike spread to most ports and mining settlements. Striking professions included but were not limited to waterside workers, miners, construction labourers, drivers and seamen.

The IWW formally came to Aotearoa shortly before the formation of the Red Feds. Throughout and in the years leading up to the Great Strike there were fellow workers from the local IWW branches who were spreading propaganda through lectures and leaflets. Propagating the ideas of a "general strike", "direct action" and "sabotage" to bankrupt the employing class and create a new society that abolished the wage system. During the strike itself members of the IWW participated and the branch in Auckland published Industrial Unionist multiple times a week to disseminate news and strategy. They included fiery quotes from themselves and striking workers and proclaimed "Labour is now engaged in a struggle, a life and death struggle with Organised Capital; with the powers of oppression, of industrial tyranny."

In Wellington towards the end of October and during November thousands of workers were involved in various clashes with the police after they had brought in heavily armed "mounted constables" to intimidate workers and break the pickets. Eventually these clashes died down and the strike ceased. The government was arresting strike leaders and militants. Scabbing workers and ballot-box orientated unions cooperated with the government and returned to work taking the jobs of some striking. Later an amendment to the ICA&A dealt a heavy blow, it forbade unions from paying striking workers.

In the aftermath of the defeat of the strike some workers believed that change was best made through parliament and went on to form the Labour Party. Time has proven those inclined in putting their faith in the ballot box wrong. Energy spent organising the Labour Party, and engaging in reformist tactics has co-opted the radical politics of the workers who founded it. Over a hundred years have passed and we are even further away from democracy in the workplace.

Under current conditions a general strike is difficult. Solidarity or sympathy strikes are outlawed but with enough preparation this intimidation can be overcome. Recently we have seen cross-industry strikes take place, workers are starting to realise that they cannot fight alone. We must engage in the uphill task of raising class consciousness in Aotearoa. The Great Strike showed that when workers are militant in key industrial sectors only a small percentage of the working class needs to act to bring the country to a halt. At the time our country had a population of approximately a million and only around 14,000-16,000 workers were actively striking.

Next time we need to be more prepared. We cannot expect the bosses to give up without a fight. Through solidarity we must prepare self-sufficient strike networks that can feed and house striking workers. Workers need to be trained in necessary self-defence tactics to ward off the government's violent goons. If we do the mahi now, we can seize future moments afforded to us. Only then can we "abolish the wage system and create the new society

within the shell of the old". It is the historical mission of the working class to do away with capitalism, if we are serious about this goal we must dedicate ourselves to it, in honour of those in the past that put themselves on the line to try and make this a reality.



Scene of striking workers in Wellington

#DireEmergency 2: It just keeps getting worse - Asbjrna

As 2025 draws to a close, and 2026 begins, many of us are no doubt reminiscing on the past year and looking forward to a better year. Unfortunately for our firefighters, there is no light at the end of the tunnel. In my previous article I highlighted the multiple instances of equipment failure, including a couple that occurred at major fires which left firefighters in danger. Unfortunately, the situation has in no way, shape nor form, improved. As per the last article, I will highlight some key issues and some general comments about the recent local strikes.

In November, Waiuku residents awoke to a massive rubbish fire which not only released toxic chemicals into the air, but also drained the town's water reservoir to around 3%. Once again the responding appliances suffered critical failures. The first career brigade to arrive was Papakura, who found themselves fighting the fire alone without backup from the other responding brigades for a shocking amount of time. This being the result of one of the appliances suffering a



Scenes from the 19/12/25 strike

failure en route. When backup finally arrived, one of the responding aerials proceeded to fail at the scene. This necessitated scrambling backup from Te Atatū and Parnell brigades, who are an hour away on a good day. It takes less than one hour for a house to burn down, and in this case the fire was an active threat to public health. However, this was seemingly justified as FENZ once again ignored the union and refused to negotiate.

The year ended with AUCKLAND207, the central city's front-line pumper, blew a head gasket and was replaced by a 30 year old Scania. The Scania then suffered an incident, and left Pitt St without a pumper. For the uninitiated, a select number of brigades carry life-saving equipment such as the jaws of life. With 207 out of service, the nearest stations able to provide this equipment were Avondale and Takapuna. Suffice it to say, the last thing a fire service needs on one of the busier periods of the year, is a broken down appliance and delayed response times.

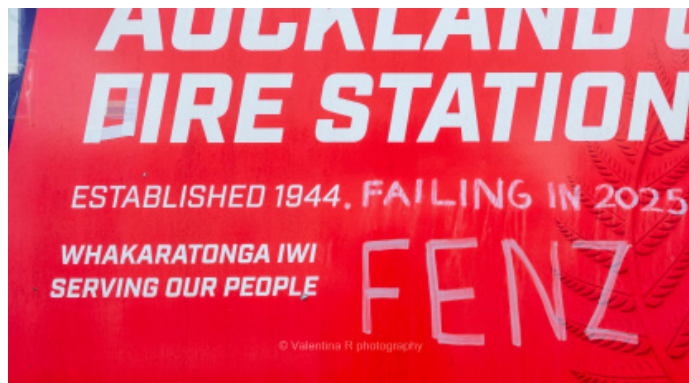


A close-up of AUCK207 reading "Kerry has misMANaged"

Surely though, I hear you ask, surely though FENZ have had a change of heart in 2026? The answer, unfortunately, is no. In early January, a fire broke out in Pakūranga, East Auckland during the 9th of January strike. FENZ, and the government, used this terrible incident to blame the union. Naturally this ignores the fact that the union has been trying for 18 months to reach a settlement with FENZ and that it has been 560+ days, and counting of firefighters working under an expired contract. January has also seen three of our cities be deprived of important equipment, namely their aerial appliances. Hamilton, Dunedin and Christchurch have been without their aerals for a couple of weeks now. FENZ managed to quickly get CHRISTCHURCH215 back online on 14/01, but as of writing neither Dunedin or Hamilton have any functioning aerial appliances.



Scenes from the 19/12/25 strike. Ordinarily I would be with my local brigade elsewhere, but as I had business in the city, I opted to join City brigade



The welcome sign at Auckland City. NZPFU members have 'updated' the sign to read "[Established 1944]. Failing in 2025" and "FENZ Lies, Trucks Breaking

Furthermore, between 2025/6 FENZ has pushed through the 'new' MAN pumpers and the new English built Scania pumpers. Whilst this may seem like a good thing, the MANs are insufficiently large enough to actually carry the basic equipment used by firefighters on any given call-out, and the Scantias cost far more than was necessary owing to the shipping costs between the UK and Aotearoa. Not to mention that FENZ seems reticent to employ local labour, preferring instead to line the pockets of our former colonial master.

Perhaps the biggest issue that has just arisen is that FENZ has allegedly been spying on striking firefighters, and members of the general public in support, using Auckland Transport owned CCTV cameras. To be blunt, there are not enough words to describe how much of a violation of our civil liberties this is, supposing it turns out to be true. That FENZ believes that they can violate striking workers' right to privacy shows that they have no intention of engaging in a fair discussion with the NZPFU. It is equally damning to see that the ruling coalition in Parliament are quite happy to keep quiet on the issue. We await the investigation of the Privacy Commissioner.

With all that in mind, I will comment briefly on the recent strikes. Having attended a variety of strikes now with my local brigade, and once with city brigade, I believe I am qualified to provide some insights as to them.

The NZPFU strategy for strikes is quite simple, but appears to engender the general public to them. The striking brigades meet at the biggest stations (City, Counties Manukau, East Coast Bays, Ōtāhuhu etc.) and jointly march to the busiest intersection in the area armed with various slogans and attempt to encourage the general public to show their support by honking their horns. So far, I have found it to be very effective, as the striking firefighters become impossible to miss or ignore. However, I do believe that nothing short of a total work stoppage for 24 hours will see any results. Of course this is an extremely dire tactic, as it leaves the country vulnerable for a full day. But seeing as nothing else seems to have worked, perhaps a dire strategy is needed. Overall though, it is the opinion of your author that the current strategy is not all bad. Though FENZ's continued unwillingness to negotiate might suggest otherwise, I remind readers that firefighters have very limited options in terms of striking and that FENZ are going to have to crack under this mounting pressure. Lest a high value building burns to the ground.



On the corner of Pitt St and K' Rd is a quintet of creatively dressed firefighters, with slogans matching their costumes.

All in all, the 2025/6 period has continued to see massive pressure mounted on a surprisingly unyielding FENZ. Despite that however, the union remains equally as unyielding and I sincerely hope that this year is the year FENZ finally gets a shake up. With that in mind I leave you dear readers with some photos taken in 2025. Stay tuned for the next issue, where I will go into further analytical depth.

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.



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