The NATIONAL Meatworker

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Editor: B Crawford

LIVE EXPORT:

The ABC Four Corners programme exposed the live export industry for what it is

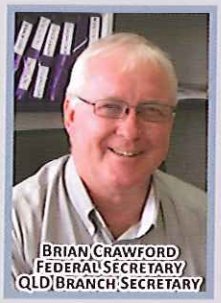
A VERY BLOODY BUSINESS

Photo courtesy of WSPA

Official Journal of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union (Federal Council)

Federal Secretary and Queensland Branch Secretary

Live Export - Impacting the consciousness of the Australian Public



The live export trade began in the 1970s. In all that time, I cannot recall a period where the industry has received as much public attention as the period since the airing of the Four Corners program "A Bloody Business" in late May 2011.

We've seen a huge public outcry, a suspension in the trade to Indonesia and two inquiries launched.

"...the barbaric practices aired on Four Corners in May 2011 were observed by this panel and duly reported to MLA/Livecorp and the Government."

"A Bloody Business"

The Australian public were shown the graphic horror of the live export industry for the first time when this story was aired on 30 May 2011. It is important to note the background to this program.

In May 2010, a report was produced by Meat and Livestock Australia ("MLA") and LiveCorp about general animal welfare outcomes in Indonesia. The study was partly funded by taxpayer's money. In this report there is an Appendix 1 prepared by a group of Vets and animal welfare experts who were escorted around Indonesia by MLA/LiveCorp.

The report indicates that in May 2010 the barbaric practices aired on Four Corners in May 2011 were observed by this panel and duly reported to MLA/Livecorp and the Government. In particular, even though the panel only observed 29 stock being slaughtered, they observed:

- the cruel "roping down" of animals in the traditional slaughter method;
- stock being tripped with ropes and attempting to regain their feet after being released from the dubious "restraining" boxes funded in part by Australian taxpayers;
- stock thrashing their heads about dangerously after being tripped with ropes onto their sides;
- eye gouging and tail breaking;
- slaughtermen (if you could call them that) taking up to 18 cuts to complete the bleeding out cut – while the animal was still fully conscious;
- buckets of water being thrown on already traumatized stock; and
- ineffective bleeding out processes leading to a slower prolonged death.

There is clear evidence that as at May 2010, MLA and LiveCorp were put clearly on notice as to the animal welfare issues that were demonstrated a year later on "A Bloody Business".

When this report was released publicly in December 2010, Animals Australia and the RSPCA detailed their concerns in writing and communicated with the Minister and the Industry. That got them nowhere. After several exchanges of correspondence it was clear the live export industry and the Government were sticking to the line that animal welfare outcomes in Indonesia were "generally good".

Frustrated with this, Animals Australia and the RSPCA went to Indonesia to film for themselves what was going on.

The Public Outcry

Following the airing of the program "A Bloody Business", a huge public outcry occurred. Over 200,000 Australians signed an online petition on the Getup website calling for the Prime Minister to stop the trade immediately. Politicians of all political shades were also bombarded by their constituents equally outraged that the Australian Government could allow this to occur.

The ALP Government response was to try the "minimalist" approach, only suspending the trade to the 11 abattoirs shown in the footage. Of course this was simply a tawdry attempt to paper over huge cracks to find a political solution to get the media and public off their backs. The outcry simply grew louder. There was no way the live export Industry or the Government could guarantee that the other 790 odd abattoirs in Indonesia that might be processing Australian stock

SYDNEY: This photo was taken at the Sydney Ban Live Export rally. Rallies were held Australia wide.
Photo Courtesy of: Animals Australia SYDNEY1-photo-by-James-Morgan-and-Nikki-To

weren't simply using the same methods. In fact the complete lack of a livestock supply traceability system meant the Government couldn't guarantee anything.

The Inquiries

Following the media and public outcry and eventual suspension of the trade, the ALP Government announced an "independent" review of animal welfare in Australia's live exports markets across the world. A former bureaucrat and Ambassador to Indonesia, Bill Farmer AO, was appointed to conduct the review.

Was this review really necessary to discover that there are major animal welfare problems in the Middle East? Not really. Animals Australia have produced several video pieces on the abuses that occur on a regular basis, including a September 2010 piece filmed during the Eid al Adha "festival of sacrifice" in the Middle East. It showed sheep being thrown in boots, being slaughtered in laneways in front of other stock and cruel handling methods. Four Corners featured this footage on their program in December 2010. The ALP Minister for Agriculture refused to be interviewed for the program and issued a statement indicating his support for the live export trade.

Bill Farmer provided his report to the Government on 30 August 2011. Despite the review being a public inquiry funded with taxpayer money, the Government is refusing to release it at this stage. They are obviously getting their "lines" in order and possibly patching up any major problems overseas.

The AMIEU lodged a freedom of information request for the report. It reflects woefully on the Government that it is going to secretive lengths to hide the animal welfare problems within the live export industry. Indeed the Government has wheeled the report into Cabinet so it is exempt from freedom of information disclosure.

The Senate Inquiry Debacle

Both Senator Xenophon (Independent) and Senator Siewart (Greens) introduced bills into the Senate respectively to immediately ban the live export trade or phase it out over a three year period.

The Senate decided to refer the Bills to a Senate Committee for Public Inquiries, along with other terms of reference. The AMIEU was quite hopeful that with terms of reference allowing a genuine examination of the impact on local meat processing employment that the live trade has had, we would see a sensible examination of job losses, abattoir closures and lost opportunities due to the live export trade.

Three Australian sheep in boot in Kuwait for home sacrifice - Eid Nov 2010. Photo courtesy of Animals Australia

Regrettably, the Inquiry by the Senate Rural Affairs & Transport Committee has degenerated into a political farce.

The Inquiry has been hijacked by political supporters of the live trade, the most prominent being Senator Back (a former Vet to the live export trade) and Senator Heffernan (Farmer from NSW), with a circus of their Liberal/National party carpetbaggers along for the ride.

"The Inquiry has been hijacked by political supporters of the live trade..."

The "kid gloves" have been on for any of the live export live export industry figures appearing before the Inquiry. Not one searching question of any genuine kind has been asked, it's been all "there there, you poor dear, haven't you suffered" stuff.

Yet all of these political supporters of the live export trade have gone after animal welfare activists like they were criminals. A number of conspiracy theories have been pursued – Indonesian abattoir workers were paid to mistreat stock, footage was edited and sound of stock in distress was overlaid and the whole thing was an "ambush" and "setup".

And where have the ALP Senators been during all of this? Rolling over with all legs in the air playing dead. Only three of them have bothered to turn up so far to public hearings, with never more than two at a time, if you're lucky. The first thing out of the mouths of two of them at the Inquiry– Senator Sterle and Senator Gallacher- was that they supported the live export trade.

The ALP has already made their decision on the live export trade, it's obvious that it suits their purposes to let this farce of an Inquiry continue in the manner it has.

The Way Forward

As many times as the live export industry has been caught in animal welfare scandals, it has escaped any serious consequences. Political apologists from all sides of the fence – ALP, Liberal and National Party- have lined up to keep this cruel and economically destructive trade going.

The lesson from this most recent scandal is that only public pressure has any effect on politicians.

The AMIEU will continue to work closely with the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and the RSPCA and Animals Australia.

The Federal Executive has also recently approved the creation of a new AMIEU website to harness more public support for the cause. The website will focus on the damage the live export trade has done to the meat processing industry, particularly the job losses, abattoir closures and lost opportunities to generate more economic wealth by processing stock here in Australia.

The website is not yet operational – yet in the coming weeks I would urge all members of the AMIEU to keep checking the web address **www.exportmeatnotjobs.com.au**, join the site as a member when it is operational and get active in this campaign!

AMIEU Victoria - Branch Report

EBA Negotiations

The Victorian Branch has managed, after very lengthy negotiations, to reach agreement with JBS in Cobram. The new EBA has now been approved and provides workers with increases in wages for the next three years.

We have also finalised negotiations with Coles supermarkets in Victoria. Our negotiating committee did an excellent job, assisted by our Retail Organiser, Laurie Burley. Victorian meat room employees will benefit from the new EBA for the next three years and we are hopeful for a positive vote from the Victorian membership.

Contract for JBS Brooklyn

Coles have awarded JBS a major contract to produce lamb, which should boost job security at the Brooklyn site.

Closure of Don Smallgoods Altona

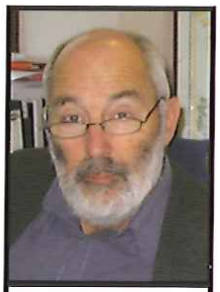
Don KRC have now transferred all their smallgoods production from the Altona plant to facilities at Castlemaine. Most of our 300 members had worked at Altona for many years, including Victorian Branch Vice President Michael Oravec and COM delegate Joe Marmara, and it was a sad day when the plant finally shut down.

Branch Executive Changes

Bob Savine, Retail Organiser, unfortunately suffered ill health this year and decided to retire. Bob was a valuable member of the Executive and worked hard on behalf of members in the retail sector. He was liked and respected by both members and employers. We wish him a long and happy retirement.

Organiser Collin Ross has also recently announced his resignation to pursue his own business venture. The Branch is in the process of appointing new organisers to fill the vacant positions.

Branch Secretary, Graham Bird, has also announced his intention to retire at the end of 2011. Graham leaves behind him a big pair of shoes to fill, as did former Secretary Wally Curran. Graham has done an excellent job for many years on the Executive and as the Secretary of the Branch since 1998, and has worked hard to improve pay and conditions for meatworkers in Victoria and to defend the rights of all workers.



Retiring Branch Secretary Graham Bird

I am very thankful in my role of Acting Secretary, that Graham and Wally are still only a phone call away.

Paul Conway
Acting Secretary
AMIEU Victorian Branch

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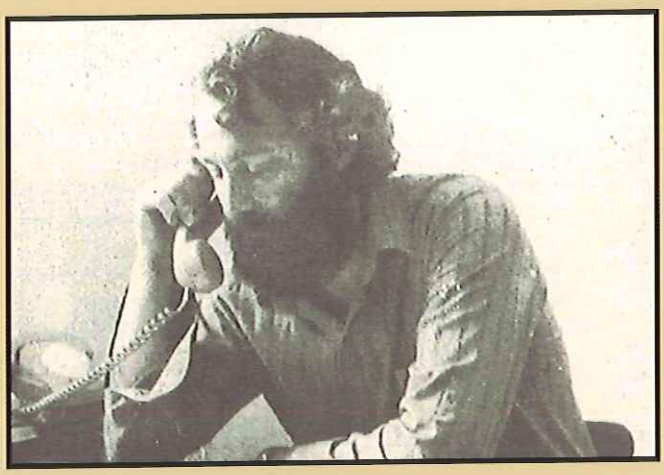
GRAHAM BIRD

By Paul Conway

It is with some sadness that I write to inform members of the resignation of Graham Bird, Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Union. Graham will be known to a number of our members past and present who would have met him over the past years.

After what Graham thought would be his employment future as a high school teacher, a job he was looking forward to in working with students in the industrial areas of Melbourne, he, along with others, left teaching disillusioned with the bureaucratic attitude of Principals and the Education Department towards progressive and current educational needs of the emerging work force in this area. Instead he found himself working in the meat industry in the western suburbs at the beef slaughtering abattoirs of Seigals Brooklyn.



Graham came to the AMIEU when the Victorian branch sought from the membership a financial member to take the position of Claims Officer to deal with matters relating to workers' compensation.

After the untimely death in 1986 of the Assistant Secretary Maurie McPike, Graham was elected by the AMIEU Branch Executive to become Assistant Secretary to then Secretary Wally Curran.

The Victoria Branch was extremely active in the industrial area and also in the political arena. Graham became responsible for organising the Branch's political activities and representation and was elected President of the Victorian ALP from 1987 to 1989 and served for a long period on the Executive of the Victorian Trades Hall Council.

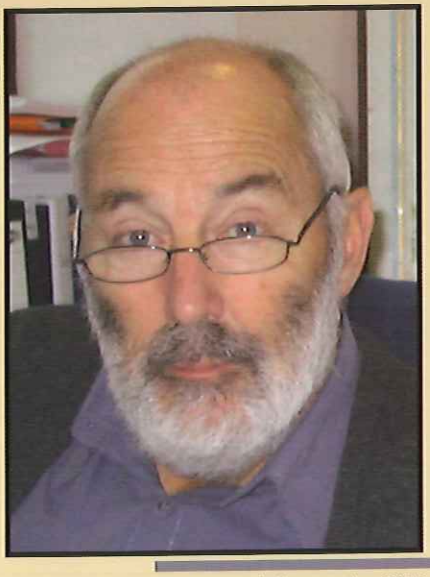
He was appointed to numerous Government committees such as the Accident Compensation Committee from 1985 to 1992 and worked hard to improve opportunities for injured workers. He was a member of the Federal Government enquiry into the meat industry in 1980 and visited all Australian states as well as New Zealand, Denmark, Germany & the USA.

Graham was part of the Superannuation campaign from the 1980's when the first seeds of thought were sown for Union members to have access to Superannuation as a legitimate industrial claim. He was part of the negotiating committee that finally, in 1981/82, succeeded in winning Super for ordinary workers.

Graham has played a large part in spreading the benefits of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Super Fund (MIESF), the first Industrial Super Fund in Australia achieved by a united industrial campaign; a campaign that was bitterly opposed by the employers at the time. It was fitting that Graham went on to be Secretary of that Fund in 1997.

In 2000 Graham became President of the AMIEU Federal Council and later became Federal Secretary.

It is with some sadness and good memories as Assistant Secretary of the Victorian Branch I say thanks for your friendship in the past and the educational advice you are always willing to provide. The members will remember your advocacy for MIESF at various work places. On behalf of the Victorian Branch and the membership I say thank you Graham, you certainly have left your mark and we wish you a good retirement and the benefit of the MIESF Pension Fund.



Time Warp

The AMIEU Queensland Branch has allowed the Federal Office access to archived Meatworker Journals. Here are two excerpts from journals printed in 1942 and 1943.

January 1942

What is a Union?

A Union is part of the Labor Movement, where the working-class come together to protect their interests against the sweater and those who would lower them to the level of a slave.

To understand the benefits of unionism one must be a student of past history dealing with the Martyrdom of Man, and if so, one knows the benefits of organisation. One must also realise that progress can only be obtained by co-operative action, and that intellectual class collaboration is the keystone of success.

Unionism to the working class is an insurance policy, as it means dividends to all unionists, in better conditions.

Many of the workers, in their ignorance of to-day, blame their organisation for what the present social system is responsible for; the lower their mentality the easier they fall victims to this common mistake. Many of them blame the other fellow for what they have helped to create; they would tear down instead of build up the very Movement that has given them the only benefit and protection that they have to-day.

This type of individual will take all the benefits that they can get from the collective effort of other, and only give abuse in return - instead of realising that one can do but little; but if each was to do that little, all would be done, and that insurance policies cannot be got for nothing.

Never say, "What has the union done?" but ask yourself: "What have you done?" Those who complain the most usually do the least.

The working-class must be taught and told that benefits and progress can only be obtained by being organised on correct lines, and the progress of the working class under the present social order can only be gauged by their intellectual understanding of the class struggle, and that class understanding must not be mistaken for class bigotry or class conceit.

Realise that is not so much what the unions have done, but how they have prevented the unscrupulous individual from taking a mean advantage of you.

Realise that anyone can tear down; but it takes intelligence to build up. Any fool can tell how things ought to be, but it is dealing with conditions as they are that counts.

Realise that the members themselves are the union and that a union, to be successful, must be run by the rank and file, not by officials, as the officials are only servants to carry out instructions. If you desert them, don't blame them if they desert you, as they are like yourselves - only human. To err is human.

Don't lower yourself to the level of a miracle monger by expecting miracles from those who are only human.

Help your organisation to help you - which is much better than helping others to tear the union down.

D. McLAUGHLIN

September 1943

Dutch Labor Boycott Nazi Unions

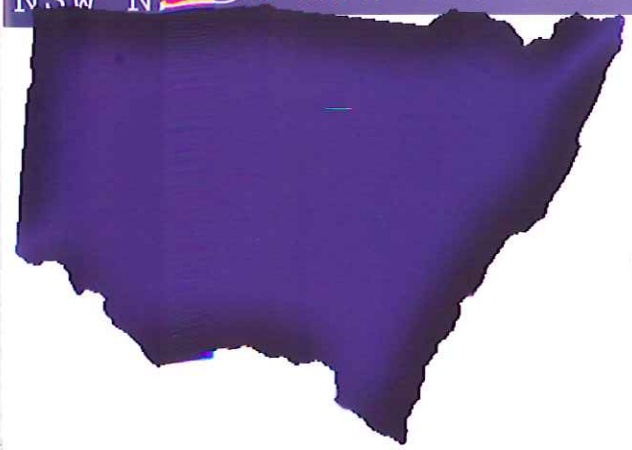
A London cable of the 2nd August reports that a member of the Netherlands Labor Movement recently espcaped from Holland revealed the interesting fact that the 700,000 members of the Trade Unions in Holland resigned their membership after the Nazis tried to take over control. At first, half a million left the unions, leaving 200,000 members only. As soon as the Nazi "Labor Front" was founded on a National-Socialistic base, that is, according to the German ideas of Socialism, all subscriptions which had gone into the funds of the unions were declared invalid by the Nazis and no longer insurance premiums against unemployment. Six weeks later the remaining 200,000 members resigned.

The Nazis thereupon tried to save their face and proclaimed a general pardon, at the same time uttering the threat that "those refusing to pay back-subscriptions would not be entitled to claim their rights under unemployment insurance". Subscriptions were suddenly again declared to be insurance premiums, and the Nazi "Labor Front" even went so far as to promise increased unemployment benefits. Nevertheless, the position of the "Labor Front" in no way improved. Moreover, only under the greatest of stress did workers venture to report that they were unemployed, as, by being unemployed, they ran the risk of being deported to Germany to work under compulsion for the German war effort.

"...by being unemployed, they ran the risk of being deported to Germany to work under compulsion for the German war effort."

In spite of all the efforts made by the Nazies, their "Labor Front" failed to obtain members, and therefore failed to receive subscriptions. They thereupon announced that "unemployment insurance is incompatible with National-Socialist principles". This means that all unemployed are now dependent on Poor Law relief as at the beginning of the century. In three years the Nazis have undone all the good which took the Labor Movement to attain in the course of the last 30 years. There is, however, one consolation: the stubborn resistance of the Dutch workers is driving the Nazis from one futile policy to another.

- Netherlands Indies Government Information Service



BARGAINING AGENTS & RIGHT OF ENTRY

SOME OF THE ISSUES WE ENCOUNTER

I wish to begin my report by referencing a dispute we had at Rivalea Pork Processing plant at Corowa in 2010. The Union was the sole bargaining agent.

We had an unusual situation where we had two separate agreements applying at one plant.

The processing section had a separate agreement to the boning room.

Negotiations for the processing section commenced first and after numerous meetings it was clear that the parties were not going to reach agreement.

The Union then filed an application for a protected action ballot with Fair Work Australia.

The Commission granted the application and the Electoral Commission conducted the ballot with a positive result of 96% of employees supporting the protected action ballot.

It must be remembered that only Union members were able to vote on the issues. There were a number of options as to the type of action the processing employees could choose from and they decided to take direct industrial action by stopping work for five (5) days.

When the men presented themselves for work on the sixth day, the company informed them that they were locking them out and that there would be no further work for them.

I must admit that even though we knew that once we took action the company had the right to lock us out, we did not expect the company to take that action.

To the employees' credit they did not let the company's action intimidate them and the company's action only hardened their resolve to see it through.

Two days later the company capitulated and the employees achieved a far better outcome than was initially being offered by the company.

As sole bargaining agents we were able to co-ordinate the negotiations and strike action for a good outcome, but given that the Fair Work Act allows for employees to nominate themselves or other persons to act as their bargaining agent, had this been the case at Corowa we may not have achieved the result we did.

That brings me to our latest situation where we have a number of agreements being currently negotiated.

At one of those sites a number of employees have nominated another Union as their bargaining agent, which in itself raises a number of issues that you do not normally have to deal with, when you are the sole bargaining agent such as:

- The approach to be taken by the bargaining agents in the negotiations with the company
- What will be the makeup of the negotiating committee
- Will there be one or multiple logs of claims
- If there is industrial action, how will they co-ordinate the application for protected action ballot

These are just some of the issues that you have to face when there are multiple bargaining agents involved in the negotiations

Another issue we must be mindful of when negotiating new agreements is the trend by some employers to circumvent their obligation under the agreement by not employing their own casual labour, who as an employee of the employer, would be subject to the terms of the agreement. Whereas labour supplied by an employment agency who are directly employed by that agency, are therefore not subject to the terms of their agreement.

RIGHT OF ENTRY

We still have some work sites where Union Officials are not being granted access to the site lunch room but are stuck away in some small office with very limited access to our members, which makes it very difficult to properly represent our members.

We have an absurd situation at one of our sites where the Union has been nominated by the employees as their bargaining agent for a new agreement but the employer will not allow us access to the lunch room to report on the progress of those negotiations. The Organiser has to try to organise meetings before or after work to keep the members informed.

Reasonable access should include access to employees in their meal time and in their meal area.

The Federal Government needs to address these and other shortcomings of their Fair Work Legislation.

Changing Landscape of Meat Processing in NSW

Teys Bros have now moved into New South Wales through their merger with the Cargill Meat Processing plants at Wagga Wagga and Tamworth.

West Australian Meat Marketing Co-Operative (WAMMC) has taken over the operation of Southern Meats plant at Goulburn.

THE FAIR WORK ACT – TWO YEARS ON

The Your Rights at Work Campaign organised by the trade union movement was responsible for ensuring the downfall of the Howard government in 2007. The newly elected Labor government removed Howard's WorkChoices laws, and replaced them with the Fair Work Act. Well, the Fair Work Act has now been in place for more than two years, and we have been able to see how those laws are being applied in practice. I thought members might appreciate an update about the good and bad aspects of the new legislation, about what is working and what is not, and what areas we still need to pressure governments for more reform.

Awards

Under the new industrial relations system, all old awards (both Federal and State awards) have been replaced by a small number of "Modern Awards."

Workers in the meat industry are now covered by the modern Meat Industry Award 2010 (or by the General Retail Industry Award 2010 if they work in the meat department of a supermarket).

Although the awards are supposed to be "modern" they really are not that different from the old Federal awards.

Replacing awards has been a massive task, and it will be some time before the full impact of the new awards is understood. It is probably too early to tell whether the new awards will be a significant improvement on what we had before.

However, increases to wage rates in awards are no longer being decided by a government appointed panel (the "Fair Pay" Commission under WorkChoices, which decided one year that we didn't deserve a wage rise at all). Under the new system, award wage increases are being decided by Fair Work Australia (the new name for the Australian Industrial Relations Commission) and that is a positive thing.

Enterprise Agreements

One area where there have been some real improvements in the last couple of years has been with enterprise agreements.

Individual contracts - the "AWAs" that employers used for years to force workers to give up award wages, penalty rates, redundancy pay and other hard-won conditions - have been abolished under the Fair Work Act, and the few that remain are rapidly dying out.

Agreements have to be (collective) enterprise agreements, and Fair Work Australia has to be satisfied that workers covered by the agreement will be "better off overall" when compared with the award conditions.

Some of the old restrictions on what can be included in an agreement have also been removed. So we are gradually seeing provisions about payroll deductions of union fees, union induction sessions, and various types of union leave getting back into EBAs.

Employers and unions bargaining for an EBA are required to bargain "in good faith"

Bargaining

The Fair Work Act introduced some important changes about bargaining for EBAs. Some of these are quite new concepts to industrial relations in Australia (but are similar in many ways to the laws about collective bargaining in the United States).

Employers and unions bargaining for an EBA are required to bargain "in good faith". The laws allow the Union to go to Fair Work Australia if it believes an employer is not bargaining in good faith. For example, the union could apply for orders requiring an employer to meet with the union, or to provide information or a response to a log of claims, or to stop an employer putting an agreement to a vote until it meets its good faith obligations. Many in the union movement thought this would be a positive development, but I think in practice, these laws have been a disappointment. Shrewd employers with good legal advice find it pretty easy to go through the motions, and only pay lip service to "good faith" bargaining.

Two changes to the bargaining laws have produced beneficial results for our members, however.

Firstly, if an employer wants to bargain with its employees for an agreement, the employer has to negotiate with the union if any of the employees are union members. This has given the Union a seat at the bargaining table even at those establishments which previously refused to bargain with the union and did non-union agreements directly with their employees. It also means that supermarket chains which have previously refused to bargain with the AMIEU (and negotiate exclusively with the shop assistant's union, the SDA) are now required to allow the AMIEU a seat at the bargaining table.

Secondly, the law now requires employers to bargain for an agreement if a majority of employees want to do so. The AMIEU has been able to use this law effectively in a few situations where employers have simply refused to bargain at all, saying they do not want to do an EBA. This has mostly arisen at smaller establishments, but the change to the law has meant that some members have been able to get an EBA at sheds where they have never had an EBA before (or sheds that have not had an EBA in a long time because the employer put everyone on AWAs).

Unfair Dismissals

WorkChoices eliminated the right to take an unfair dismissal claim for workers if their employer employed 100 or fewer people. While our members in medium and large plants still had some protection, many of our members lost all protection from being dismissed unfairly. Now, unfair dismissal rights have been restored, and that is a welcome development.

One of the major problems with unfair dismissals that still remains is that the Commission is reluctant to reinstate workers, even if they are successful in proving they have been sacked unfairly. It is rare for workers to actually get their jobs back. Some do, but in most cases, the Commission decides it is too much trouble to give the worker his or her job back, and only orders the employer to pay some

Continued from page 8...

AMIEU organisers now have the right to enter any meat industry workplace to hold discussions with members...

monetary compensation.

Some of the changes brought in by the Fair Work Act led us to hope that the Commission would have to reinstate more people to their old jobs, but it has not happened. This is an area where we need to demand further changes to ensure that unfair dismissal laws provide more effective protection than they do at present.

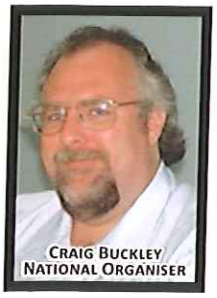
Right of Entry

Right of entry has been perhaps the biggest problem with the new laws, and is a subject which I have written about in the Meatworker on quite a few occasions.

The Fair Work Act did make some improvements. AMIEU organisers now have the right to enter any meat industry workplace to hold discussions with members or to recruit new members to the Union. Under WorkChoices, union organisers did not have the right to go and hold discussions at a workplace that had AWAs or non-union agreements.

So, the new right of entry laws should have been an opportunity for the AMIEU and other unions to get back into sites where we have not been able to recruit effectively for a long time. However, while the new laws get us in the front gate, they do not get us into the lunch room or canteen. The employer still gets to act as a gate keeper, sending organisers to training rooms where they cannot approach workers. Several unions, including the AMIEU, have run legal cases challenging employers who stop us from entering lunch rooms (and the AMIEU has another case going through the Federal Court in the near future).

However, the legal cases have, for the most part, gone against unions, and only demonstrate that there are still major weaknesses in the right of entry laws. The AMIEU regards this as a fundamental issue. No industrial relations system will be truly fair without proper right of entry for union officials. Laws conferring rights on workers are meaningless unless unions are able to speak to workers to inform them of those rights, and help them organise to make use of those rights.



CRAIG BUCKLEY
NATIONAL ORGANISER

RETURN OF WORKCHOICES

Former Workplace Relations Minister in the HOWARD government, Peter Reith, has told Tony Abbott he must make industrial relations reform a major issue for the next election.

Members are right to criticise the Federal Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Gillard. The Federal Government has turned its back on meatworkers by continuing to allow the exportation of live cattle from Australia which has resulted and will continue to result in the exportation of Australian meatworkers' jobs.

BUT be alarmed! What would happen if the coalition were to win Government?

> ...be alarmed! What would happen if the coalition were to win Government?

Speaking at a recent National Press Club, Mr Reith commented that changes to Labor's Fair Work Act were needed to lift productivity and boost employment. He said "I think the coalition needs to do more to highlight some of the problems." He said that the coalition had "spooked itself" over WorkChoices.

In my view the "spooking" has only come about because of the huge success of the ACTU organised Your Rights at Work campaign. A campaign that the AMIEU worked hard to achieve.

Of course, Peter Reith sees the dumped WorkChoices legislation as his baby. This legislation saw workers' right across Australia lose penalty rates, shift allowances and hard fought for wages and conditions of employment.

At the same time, salaries for executive staff increased to never seen before proportions!

Who benefited most?

The coalition has never been the workers' friend, but Tony Abbott puts across his message on a daily basis that he stands up for all working people in Australia.

Mr Reith says that the coalition needed to do more to demonstrate the issues with the Fair Work Act. Mr Reith called for the creation of a backbench committee to highlight issues with the Fair Work Act and urged the Opposition Leader to become an active participant in a wider debate for IR reform.

"In the next election, he needs to have a mandate," Mr Reith said. "And you only have a mandate if you tell the people well in advance what the problems are".

Tony Abbott would have us believe that WorkChoices is dead. Once supported by the Liberal Party, but no more!

Mr Abbott recently ruled out a return to individual contracts under a coalition government, saying he was focusing on "practical problems" with the current legislation. "We don't support statutory individual contracts", he told the ABC's 7:30 program. "We did once. We don't now".

Mr Abbott said his aim would be to implement greater flexibility within the Government's Fair Work legislation. We know what that means for workers! Reduce workers' pay to line the pockets of executives.

In the current tumultuous political climate we can never be sure when the next federal election will be. As workers, what we must be certain of, is that we continue to adamantly oppose any move to reduce workers' wages and conditions.

The Fair Work Act, whilst not all that the AMIEU expected it to be, provides a most welcome opportunity for workers to participate in collective bargaining with the right to have Union representation. This right was only introduced by the Labor Government.

Whenever we next present at the polls, remember, Tony Abbott is a wolf in sheep's clothing. He is not and never has been a worker's friend.

Kath Evans
AMIEU Newcastle and Northern Branch Secretary

AMALGAMATION MATTERS

I am pleased to be able to report to members that the amalgamation of the South Australian and Western Australian branches continues smoothly, with steady progress being made in both States.

The formation of a combined South and Western Australian branch has allowed us some greater efficiency in the way we allocate resources and focus our efforts. One result of this benefit has been the decision to employ an organiser dedicated to the south-west area of Western Australia. A new organiser was initially employed to fill that role, but he has since left to take up other employment. Consequently, the Union has recently employed another new organiser, Jenny Georgatas. Many of our steadily growing number of members south of Perth will have already met her.

Dedicating an organiser to south-west WA has also allowed our other officials based in Western Australia to focus their efforts, and membership in the branch is steadily rising.

However, amalgamations are not just a matter of changing a name or changing words in the union rulebook. More importantly, and vital, is the cultural change needed to our thinking. At the beginning of the amalgamation it was only natural to think of ourselves as two branches joining to work together. I hope that I will be able to foster and encourage a culture that will enable us to think of ourselves not as two different States that have been joined together, but in terms of a single unit, a single group, that just happens to cover two large States. Such an attitude cannot spring up overnight, but will necessarily take time to develop. However, the cooperative attitude of our organisers and committee members gives me confidence that we are rapidly developing that unified purpose.

One area of difference between the two States that I have noticed is the rather archaic attitudes of some Western Australian employers. In South Australia (although of course it only happened over time), employers have come to accept that union organisers visiting a processing plant should be allowed to speak with workers (members and non-members who wish to hear the benefits of union membership) in the workers' lunch room or canteen. In Western Australia we are encountering employers who insist that union organisers not go to the meal rooms, and instead require them to use training rooms to hold discussions with members.

This is usually an attempt to discourage employees from speaking with the Union. They hope that employees will feel too intimidated to go and speak to the Union, concerned that they will be easily identified by management if they have to walk past (or through) the main office area to go to a training room or meeting room. Such employer attitudes belong to a past era, and it is a disgrace that the Federal Government has failed to change this leftover from Howard's workplace laws and restore to workers the rights they once had.

It is important to remember that when we are discussing union right of entry and getting to the mealroom, we are not just speaking about the rights of union organisers. We are speaking about the rights of all workers. We are speaking about the right of workers to receive information about their rights and entitlements, without their employer looking over their shoulder. It is all very well for Governments to pass laws giving rights to workers, but those rights are meaningless unless someone is prepared to enforce them. For workers, that "someone" is the Union - it is mostly unions that enforce workers rights in the courts and in Fair Work Australia. Demanding that union officials be able to enter the meal room and canteen is not about making the organiser's job easier - it is about keeping your employer honest and making sure that you receive advice about your proper rights and entitlements that you can trust.

From the net.....

The Gainesville City Commission - the Chicken Capital of the World - adopted an ordinance in 1961 as a publicity stunt that banned the eating of fried chicken within the city limits with anything but one's fingers.

One punishment for an adulterous wife in medieval France was to make her chase a chicken through town naked.

Cows can detect odors up to five miles away.

Old cows in India have their own nursing homes

Bloke walks into a butcher's. Butcher says, "Bet you a tenner that you can't jump up and touch the meat that's hung up on the ceiling with your hand."

Bloke says, "No thanks."

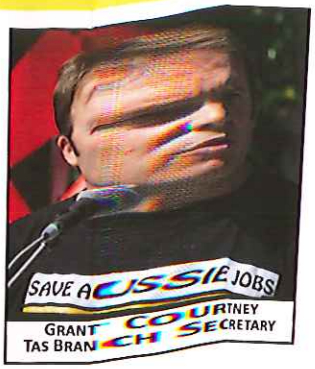
Butcher says, "OK, bet you twenty quid that you can't jump up and hit the meat that's hung up on the ceiling."

Bloke says, "No thanks mate."

Butcher says, "OK, OK, I'll give you a hundred quid if you can do it."

Bloke says, "No thanks mate, the steaks are too high."

You have probably heard that a cow has four stomachs. Not true. A cow has only one stomach which contains four digestive compartments: the rumen, reticulum, omasum and abomasum.



Public holidays - "your rights"

Public holidays have been enjoyed by Australian workers for many years. However, some employers have recently been trying to convince some of our members that they are required to work on public holidays.

In some cases we have dealt with bosses who have tried to impose rostered public holiday work on members without consent. Some members have been told "if you don't accept work on public holidays you should find another job".

The National Retailers Association (the bosses union) is presently running a fully funded campaign to strip penalties for weekend and public holiday work as they blame the cost of penalty payments to retail workers for their businesses poor performance over the last 12 months. The Liberal and National parties are right behind this rejuvenated WORKCHOICES strategy.

The facts are:

The National Employment Standards was introduced by the Labor Government in 2009 and contains the minimum standard in respect to requesting and refusing to work on public holidays.

If the request is reasonable, an employer may ask their employees to work on a public holiday.

The employer must consider the factors listed below when asking an employee to work on a public holiday:

- the nature of the business (including its operational requirements)
- the nature of the work performed by employees
- employees' personal circumstances, including family responsibilities
- whether employees could reasonably expect their employer might request them to work on the public holiday (for example, the business is open each year on the same public holiday)
- whether employees are entitled to receive overtime payments, penalty rates or other compensation for work on the public holiday
- employees' type of employment (for example, whether they are full-time, part-time, casual or a shift worker)
- the amount of notice given to employees in advance about working on the public holiday
- any other relevant matter.

The employer cannot rely on one single factor, but needs to consider all of the relevant circumstances.

An employee may refuse a request to work if they have reasonable grounds.

This standard is the new minimum requirement when determining public holiday work, it overrides inferior conditions which may be in existing agreements and other contracts of employment. If existing agreements have superior conditions to the new STANDARD then they continue to apply for the life of the agreement.

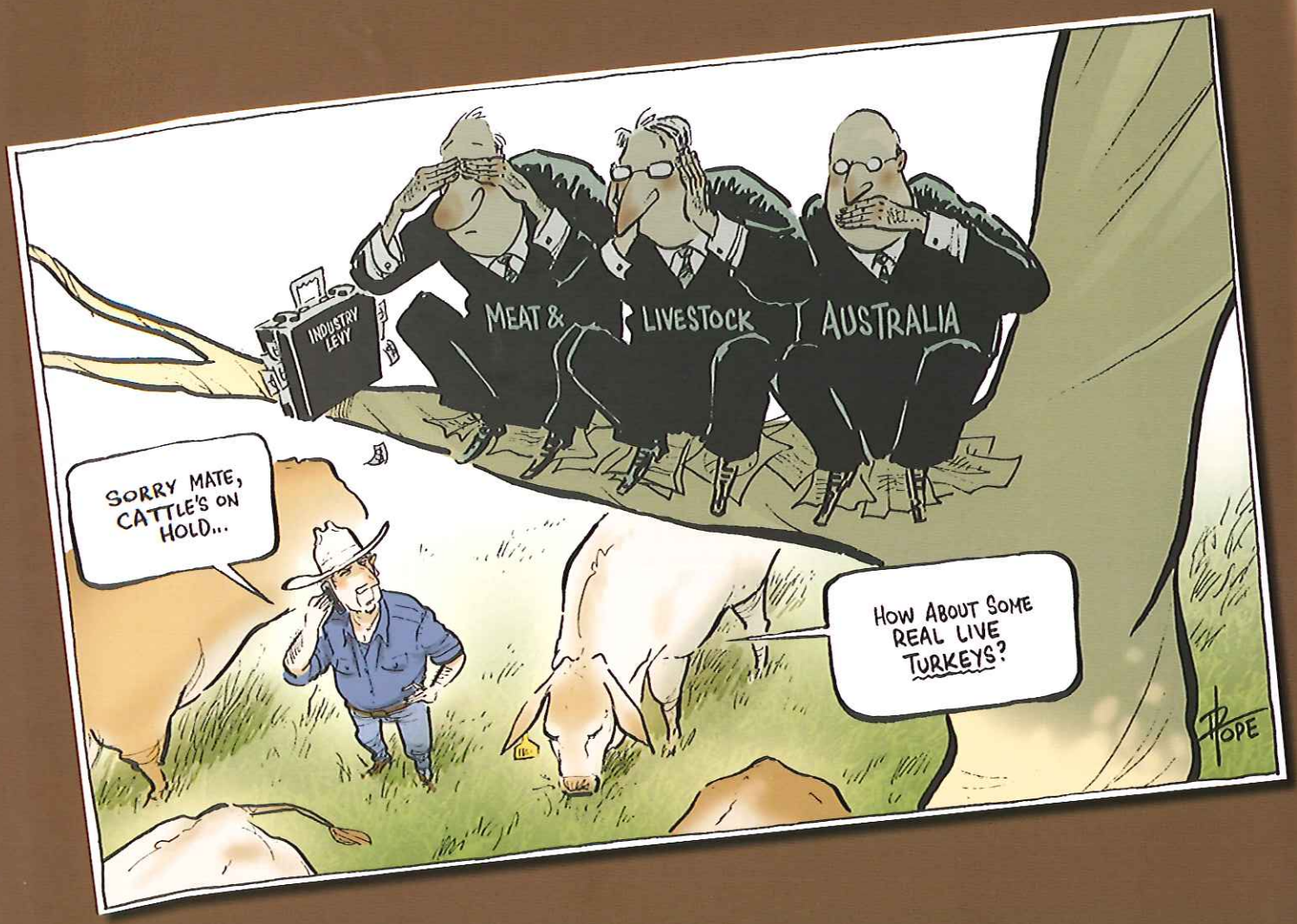
Seek advice from your AMIEU Official if you are being harassed or threatened by your employer.

There has been a recent decision from FWA which found an employer who terminated one of his employees for not working on Christmas Day, was in breach of the FWA. The employee received considerable compensation. For further info on this case log on to the web and enter Steven Pietraszek v Transpacific Industries (2011)FWA 3698. There is no doubt further cases will be listed with Fair Work Australia. We will keep members up to date as future cases progress.

As per the requirements of Fair Work Australia the Tasmanian Branch of the AMIEU has provided full financial statements for the 2010/2011 financial year on our website http://tas.amieu.net. All members who wish to receive a hard copy of the 2010/2011 financial statements please contact the office.

Why should I be a member of the Union?

PROTECTION, SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE, ADVICE, STRENGTH, UNITY, representation, wages and conditions, collective bargaining, PROTECTION, SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE, ADVICE, STRENGTH, UNITY, representation, wages and conditions, collective bargaining, PROTECTION, SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE, ADVICE, STRENGTH, UNITY, representation, wages and conditions, collective bargaining, representation, PROTECTION, SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE, ADVICE, STRENGTH, UNITY, representation, wages and conditions, collective bargaining, representation, PROTECTION, SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE, ADVICE, STRENGTH, UNITY


MEAT &
LIVESTOCK
AUSTRALIA
INDUSTRY LEVY
SORRY MATE, CATTLE'S ON HOLD...
HOW ABOUT SOME REAL LIVE TURKEYS?
POPE