

Improvement of the real wage of the average worker will depend on improvements in the efficiency with which we use the resources available to us. I think you will all agree that far too little attention is given to what could be done to effect such improvements, not only in workplaces and in bargaining between employers and unions but also in discussion about national policy.

The Planning Council has a great deal to say about what could be done to improve efficiency. Rather than use up all the available time in lecturing to you about what we've said, I'd prefer to assume that some, I hope many of you have read the report and might like to spend the rest of the period in discussing how improvements might be made. Present attitudes and practices by industry and unions set up major obstacles to the sorts of changes which it seems to us New Zealand must make if we are to find a satisfactory solution to present problems. For example — this solution requires more attention to how we might use new and existing capital more efficiently; an improvement in present margins for skill and responsibility, through changes in pay and tax scales; marked improvement in present systems of training of both managers and workers, including a reassessment of our present systems of apprenticeship; more flexible working hours and patterns of work, with special attention to the requirements of women and minority groups if they are to make the contribution to our development of which they are capable. We must also more actively promote a competitive market and seek to break down regulations and private restrictive practices which protect inefficiency and impede improvements of value to New Zealand as a whole.

It is a real challenge to those involved in industrial relations to help in working out means of achieving these sorts of changes, while preserving reasonable security for the individual worker and assisting him, where this is necessary, to move to the areas of work which should expand in the national interest.

May I finish by quoting the last two paragraphs of Planning Perspectives:

"In times of difficulty, it is easy to conjure up a pessimistic view of the future. The Council is basically optimistic that New Zealand can overcome present

difficulties, given its relatively generous endowment of climate and resources and the capacity of its people to develop the necessary skills. The key questions are whether we are willing to make the necessary changes in old institutions and practices and whether we can sink sectional differences sufficiently to work together with some sense of national pride and purpose.

"In our search for security, we may have stifled innovation, flexibility, and the capacity to work together — these are qualities which are badly needed in the next phase of our development. It should now be evident that to lose these is to miss the road to real security. If we wish to preserve the best features of our way of life — social, cultural, and economic — we must be ready to alter institutions, policies, and attitudes which are no longer appropriate to the rapidly changing world in which we live. This must be the central focus of our strategy in the next few years." ⊙

VIEWPOINT

(2) BASTION POINT AND THE TRADE UNIONS

* SYD. JACKSON

There is no doubt that Trade Union support was vital to the Ngati Whatua people during their 500 day occupation of Bastion Point.

The involvement of Trade Unions in areas of social concern such as Bastion Point, which are outside the scope of 'bread and butter' issues has been a matter of deep concern to some people.

These critics take a very narrow view of industrial relations. They perceive industrial relations as comprising only of those matters which relate to wages or conditions of employment. On that basis, they see the need to restrict Trade Unions to those areas which are, in their opinion, the proper concern of Unions. The proponents of this narrow viewpoint are in accord with politicians in the National Party who believe that it is possible to separate political and social matters from industrial matters.

* SYD JACKSON is Industrial Officer of the Auckland Clerical Workers' Union, a member of the Auckland Trades Council and of Nga Tamatoa.

These views are totally at variance with the Federation of Labour's Constitution and the Registered Rules of most Trade Unions. The Federation of Labour's Constitution provides that it is pledged to the task of promoting the interests of working people, and pledges solidarity with, and support to all working people deprived of their rights as workers and human beings.

The Rules of Unions affiliated to the Federation of Labour invariably contain similar provisions. It is, therefore, inevitable that if Unions are to operate in accordance with their own rules, they shall be in conflict with those who wish them not to be so involved. There has been opposition over Trade Union actions on Bastion Point, sporting contacts with South Africa, the War in Vietnam and Nuclear Testing, to mention just a few.

Although the Federation of Labour has had firm policies on these international issues, a clear policy on Maori Land Disputes was not agreed upon until the 1977 Federation of Labour Conference. A resolution from the Northern Drivers' Union was passed unanimously. The decision of Conference made it clear that requests from Maori Land Owners to Affiliates and Trades Councils for support in their struggles would be acted upon. The Auckland Trades Council and the Wellington Trades Council had taken action at Bastion Point and Kaumanga Point before the Federation of Labour Conference Decision.

In Auckland, the Trades Council became involved at Bastion Point because the Orakei Maori Action Committee, Nga Tamatoa, Conservation Groups and local community groups requested Trades Council support. These groups specifically requested the Trades Council to help them prevent Government plans to subdivide Bastion Point.

The land at Bastion Point was vested as a Crown Reserve, and the Orakei Action Committee had three days earlier moved on to Bastion Point to prevent the bulldozers commencing work.

Trades Council actions were clear and decisive. They decided that a green ban should be placed on the whole of Bastion Point, and individual Unions informed contractors of this decision. This had the desired effect of halting development work.

Six weeks later, members of the Orakei Maori Action Committee addressed the Trades Council. They said their aims were to ensure that there would be no subdivision at Bastion Point, and to see the land returned to Ngati-Whatua. The Council resolved unanimously to continue the green ban, and fully supported title to the land being restored to the Maori people.

The Council further resolved to send a Deputation to the Auckland City Council, and the Minister of Lands. In submissions to the Minister, the Trades Council said that they believed the Ngati-Whatua people had given enough of their land to the City of Auckland, and had the right to ownership of this last piece of their ancestral land. The Council also stated that Ngati-Whatua had the right to determine how that land should be utilised. The Minister was informed that the actions decided on by the Council would remain in effect until proposals to subdivide Bastion Point were stopped and title to the land was vested in Ngati-Whatua.

In the months that followed, the Trades Council met on many occasions with the Orakei Action Committee. Individual Unions donated money, and many jobs stopped work and gave their physical support on the various occasions that it seemed the evictions were to take place. Trade Unionists were amongst those arrested when the combined forces of the State — Police, Army and Air Force — moved in to evict people from Bastion Point.

There has been criticism of Unions on two aspects of their involvement at Bastion Point. On the one hand, there have been those who have criticised the Trade Union Movement for being involved in a 'non-industrial' matter. On the other hand, there have been those involved in the struggle at Bastion Point who have criticised Trade Unions, and Trade Union leaders in particular, for not doing enough. It must be stated, however, that the Trade Union Movement gave more tangible support to Ngati-Whatua than any other group.

As the just struggle of Ngati-Whatua enters a new phase, they will find the support of the Trade Union Movement to be just as vital. They will find too, that they can depend on that support. ☉