



Company

Annual Report

April 23-October 31, 2013



Annual Report 2013

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the first six months of activity in our new Movement, Living Wage Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2013 the debate about wages began to change to reflect the growing concern about poverty in working families in New Zealand. The idea of a wage based on need rather than a product of the market gained momentum with the Living Wage campaign, which launched in Auckland in May 2012 and Wellington in November 2012. The establishment of an incorporated society on April 23, 2013 was designed to ensure some national consistency around the objectives and practices of the campaign, a mechanism for sourcing grants, and a formal identity beyond the initiating organisation, the Service and Food Workers Union Nga Ring Tota. Critical impetus was given to the campaign by the independent research into the Living Wage rate, announced in February 2013. This provided an objective benchmark for a decent and yet fair wage.

This report will focus on three important developments in 2013: building a broad-based community coalition; changing the debate around wages; and, establishing a credible framework for employer accreditation.



Wellington network presentation to Wellington Council

Building a broad-based coalition

The emerging Movement was based on a set of principles that have underpinned international campaigns of this kind around the world: local organisation, political neutrality and community ownership. The rules of the organisation ensured joint ownership by establishing three membership streams within the decision-making structures of the organisation for secular/community groups, faith-based religious groups and union groups.

A transition Management Committee was set up for the six months to the first AGM when elections take place for a new governing body. That transition Management Committee has made interim policy decisions and authorised the employer accreditation logo, applications for funds and significant expenditure. These people enabled the society to be established in a timely and considered way: John Ryall (SFWU), Rev. Dr Margaret Mayman (St Andrew's on the Terrace), Rev. Clay Nelson (St Matthew-in-the-City), David Hall (Anglican Diocese of Auckland Social Justice Council), Agnes Granada (Migrant Action Trust), Robert Reid (FIRST Union), Peter Conway (NZCTU), Rory McCourt (Victoria University Students Association), and Leonie Morris (Auckland Women's Centre).

Coalitions have blossomed in Auckland and Wellington with interest building also in Christchurch, Hamilton, Dunedin and Blackball. Council elections have stimulated activity, particularly in Auckland and Wellington. Three forums were hosted in the capital city by South Wellington Pacific churches, St Peter's on Willis church and Victoria University students and these focused on securing the support of the two leading mayoral candidates to ensure progress toward implementation was maintained after the election. In Auckland eight forums were co-hosted by communities within the Living Wage coalition with each calling for endorsement of the Living Wage and other issues of importance to the hosting communities. Between 80 and 170 people attended the forums co-hosted by West Auckland and South Auckland communities, unions, migrant and former refugees, women's groups, students, and faith groups. There was also a forum to challenge DHB candidates to support equal pay and a Living Wage, attended by nearly 70 health workers.

These forums helped to deepen relationships between participant groups, build greater understanding about the Living Wage and draw the links between wages and other facets of people's lives, such as social housing and employment opportunities. New councillors were elected and among them candidates who endorsed the Living Wage proposition from across the political spectrum. In both centres a new model of candidate meeting centered attention on the hosting communities rather than the politicians through the testimonies of community leaders and workers. Further, candidates were pinned down to endorse specific statements that they could be held accountable for following their election to office.



Tuvaluan performers at the West Auckland forum



Auckland Women's forum poster

The coordination of the activities of the coalition has been possible through the paid staff of the SFWU (Annie Newman, Fala Haulangi, Lyndy McIntyre and James Sleep), a fixed term contract for 25 hours per week for Sam Gribben in Wellington (through the contributions of a number of unions) and the work of our volunteer, Diana Yukich (of Opticmix) for two days per week to coordinate the employer accreditation process. The overheads have been met by the SFWU and for the eight weeks of Sam's employment, by the CTU. In Christchurch, Anglican Care has backed Jolyon White and Kate Alexander-Day to initiate a campaign, supported also by Chas Muir of the SFWU. This financial support made it possible to progress quickly to establish a credible voice across the many communities of our Movement.

The number of members of Living Wage Aotearoa, NZ has been growing over the six months with 25 member groups at the time of the AGM. Organisations joining have chosen the subscription rate (from a proposed subscription structure) they consider appropriate, sometimes based on previous commitments to funding resources or paid staff.



Auckland Living Wage network

Changing the Debate

Independent research by the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit, under the guidance of Charles Waldegrave, established a rate of \$18.40 for the 2013 Living Wage. This research was largely uncontested, received a great deal of support from across the political spectrum and captured the media imagination. The communications expertise of Lyndy McIntyre (SFWU) played no small part in this. The Living Wage has arguably entered the lexicon of public debate in a remarkably short time.

Resources have been produced through contributions from unions and faith organisations and have served our purposes well. This includes an Information Kit consisting of 8 information sheets, a flier in four languages for migrant groups, an ecumenical leaflet and an outreach kit with a module and powerpoint presentation.

Research has supplemented the resources, including an analysis of the costs and benefits of a Living Wage to Auckland Council, prepared by Ed Miller (FIRST Union). A special edition of the Industrial Relations Journal will be produced by AUT in 2014 with articles arising out of the February symposium: *Precarious Employment and the Living Wage in Our Communities*.

This will include papers on the Living Wage campaign in New Zealand, by Annie Newman, and the Living Wage from an international perspective, by Deborah Littman (Metro Vancouver Alliance). A survey was conducted and written up as part of a conference paper delivered to the Public Health Association conference incorporating the views of 12 participant organisations about their involvement in this broad-based coalition. This paper *The Living Wage Campaign: Collaboration in Practice* by Eileen Brown (CTU), Muriel Tunoho (Health Care Aotearoa) and Annie Newman (SFWU) provides a helpful benchmark for the evaluation of progress of our coalition down the track.

Many presentation and education opportunities have been undertaken at conferences and meetings of unions and faith-based religious groups, universities and community groups. This has resulted in a wide range of materials being available and a growing commitment to endorsing the founding statement on the Living Wage and, more recently, to membership of the society.

We were successful in our application for a grant for \$30,000 from the JR McKenzie Trust for leadership training and by the end of 2013 we will have held two residential programmes in Wellington and Auckland called *Building Power in Our Communities*. This will bring together leaders from unions, community groups and faith-based organisations based in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch to learn about community organisation and building a coalition of diverse groups that have power to make a difference. The training will be led by Deborah Littman (Metro Vancouver Alliance) and Sister Maribeth Larkin (LAOne) of the global Industrial Areas Foundation. Annie Newman will be a trainee in this course as part of our commitment to the funder to build local capacity in community leadership training.



Migrant and former refugee groups forum organising group

The employer accreditation framework

Hard work has gone into creating a simple yet credible system to license Living Wage Employers. An Employer Accreditation Project was set up to develop a plan, test a system, and ensure brand protection. This group consisted of Annie Newman, David Hall, Ed Miller, Gareth Bezett (Wellington Anglican Diocese), and Diana Yukich. The London Living Wage Foundation shared its experience and templates and we secured pro bono legal work to draw up the licence and guide us through the registration of the two logos (for the community coalition and the Living Wage Employer brand). Each logo will have a different market and role: the red and black logo is the symbol of our community coalition and is liberally used by many

people, even somewhat controversially, politicians; the orange and blue logo is available under license to Living Wage Employers and will be reserved solely for that purpose. Three organisations were guinea pigs for the accreditation application process, which will probably have a further two iterations before the launch. The logos are currently in the process of being registered and should be available by Christmas. This has delayed the launch of the Living Wage Employer Accreditation System, which is likely to take place in February 2014. The delay means that the first Living Wage Employers will also be required to adopt the newly calculated rate for 2014, which is expected to be released one year after the 2013 announcement of \$18.40 p/hr. The announcement of the new rate and the launch of the accreditation process will take place at the same time.

The project to establish the accreditation system will cease to exist after the final testing of the application process. Following the AGM the Accreditation Board will be appointed, including each of the three streams and one employer representative, to take over the management of employer accreditation applications. Currently there are a potential of 20 employers ready for accreditation.

Conclusion

In six months the organisation has progressed from an idea to a fully functioning body providing oversight of an emerging community coalition, an employer accreditation system, and a vibrant public debate about the Living Wage. The next year must focus on a successful launch of the accredited employer programme; deepening the engagement with community partners; capability-building among our community leaders; and, the first phase of implementation of a sustainable business plan for the ongoing viability of Living Wage Aotearoa NZ. There are many challenges ahead including a general election that will present new opportunities to address inequality but also risks of a backlash from those threatened by the message we are articulating. Our task is to build an organisation that is robust, that is grounded of sound principles, and that establishes clear boundaries for our activity. At the same time we want an organisation that enables and inspires the creative energy necessary for the new and exciting concept of the Living Wage to become a reality.

Annie Newman

Convenor, Living Wage Aotearoa NZ



Wellington Living Wage network