



TELSTRA WORKERS DESERVE YOUR SUPPORT!

Currently Telstra workers are engaged in a landmark dispute with the company for a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA). However this is not just another EBA dispute.

Telstra workers are fighting for the right to a union negotiated agreement, the right to compulsory arbitration, to push back "WorkChoices" AWAs and they are fighting against a relentless management campaign to de-unionise the workforce.

Campaign spanning two years

Telstra workers have been campaigning for a union negotiated EBA for nearly 12 months, and if you include time preparing for the campaign, (the planning, the tactical considerations, the membership meetings, the policy development, etc), then the campaign has gone on for over two years.

Telstra workers have won many EBAs over the years, and on a number of occasions they have had to resort to industrial action to secure a good agreement. However, this EBA campaign was destined to be nothing like anything they have ever witnessed before. Why is this so.?

Relentless campaign of destruction By Management

This is their first EBA under the WorkChoices laws of the Howard Government. Their first EBA in a fully privatised Telstra and the first EBA under the US Corporate Management "crash through" style of CEO Sol Trujillo and his "amigos".

Worse still, the Telstra workers have had to fight in conditions made enormously difficult by over 12 years of Howard Government, reactionary, oppressive, anti worker legislation, and a fundamentalist anti-union corporate management, absolutely committed over that whole period, to the deunionisation of a highly unionised corporation.

What have Telstra workers been through over that period? To summarise:

- * Over 50 thousand Telstra workers have been made redundant
- * Two thirds of the workforce is on individual Australian Workplace Agreements. Most of them have been forced/tricked/deceived on to these agreements.
- * Many of their experienced workplace representatives (shop stewards, delegates etc), have been made redundant and/or otherwise forced out by targeted bullying and victimisation.
- * Through devices like an unregulated performance management regime and the threat of mass job losses, employees have been working in a climate of fear and intimidation.
- * Approximately 20,000 of their jobs have been outsourced to contracting companies and sub contractors who the employer uses as a bypass workforce to undermine and drive down Telstra workers wages and conditions.

Refusal to negotiate – Telstra Management

As if all of this wasn't enough Telstra's corporate management has refused to negotiate an EBA with the union, because the union has steadfastly refused to accept what is known as Telstra's "Part A/Part B" model of a non-negotiated collective agreement.

The Part A/Part B model establishes two classes of workers in the company: Part A for current employees and part B for all new employees and employees coming off individual AWA contracts in the future and wishing to move to the award and union-negotiated collective agreement.

Part B contains inferior conditions and replicates AWA conditions (e.g. no guaranteed annual pay increases, performance pay, weekly hours averaged over 12 months etc).

This is Telstra's strategy for getting around the Rudd Governments laws outlawing new AWAs. The CEPU cannot accept such an unfair, unacceptable proposal without a fight.

The drive to finish unionisation in Telstra

As a result of Telstra's continuing refusal to negotiate a new EBA, Telstra workers voted overwhelmingly (by over 90.2%) to implement an industrial/strike campaign to win a decent agreement. That campaign began on the 13th of December 2008. Since then, except for a couple of weeks over the Xmas/new year break period, Telstra workers have been applying strike action ranging from 4, 24, 48 hour and indefinite stoppages rolling from work group to work group, and various bans and limitations of work.

Not all Telstra workers can have a major impact on Telstra's operations quickly, so those workers, apart from taking some limited action, are contributing to a fighting fund to help sustain their workmates who are taking more substantial strike and other industrial action.

Telecommunications is automated and therefore Telstra workers are taking targeted action in key and strategic parts of the business. Some of them have been, and will be, out on strike indefinitely. The struggle could be long and difficult.

If that wasn't enough, at the same time Telstra's anti-union ideologues in Management, are working feverishly to try to roll out non-union collective agreements to Telstra employees in small and large parts of the business. Telstra has been attempting to pressure, bribe, and deceive employees into their Part A/Part B so called employee collective agreements, (ECA), for over 12 months, with only limited success. However they hope, by offering 4.5%, 4% and 4% over 3 years, and by holding out from agreeing to a union negotiated agreement, that they can eventually break the Telstra workers resistance and pick up Management's third rate, non-union agreement.

This is an epic struggle

Telstra workers are fighting an epic struggle. As we said at the outset, the issues at the centre of their struggles are issues fundamental to all Australian workers. Those issues are:

- the right to a union negotiated agreement
- the right to be properly represented by a union
- the right to compulsory arbitration so the employer is no longer the judge, jury and executioner
- to push back "WorkChoices" AWAs, by workers having the right to transfer from the AWA, to the Award/EBA, before their AWAs expire. (In most cases in Telstra that expiry date is 2012)
- the traditional struggle to protect current conditions of employment, a reasonable wage increase, and to improve their workplace rights, much eroded during the life of the Howard Government.

Telstra workers deserve your support, for in fighting for their own collective interests, they are fighting for the interests of all workers. Please consider a donation to the CEPU Welfare Fund which supports members in these difficult times:

- * **Direct debit** through your financial institution **or EFT to: CEPU Welfare Fund. BSB: 063262 Acct No: 10454772**
- * **Cheque or money order** made out to **CEPU Welfare Fund**. Postal address: : CEPU Welfare Fund, 1/139 Queensberry Street, Carlton South 3053.
- * **Credit Card** over the phone to the Branch – Sharon Benson 03 9349 4411
- * **There is no BPAY facility at this stage**



Authorised by **LEN COOPER**, Branch Secretary Communications Union (CEPU), 1/139 Queensberry St, Carlton South