

UNION NEWS

WHY THE NEED TO HAVE TIME OFF WORK

Bosses call it "absenteeism".

A meat worker is no different to the Chief Executive who can 'nick off' anytime of the day from the office to do the following:

Many meat plants are situated well away from city centre's and in remote rural areas. It is reasonable to have time off work to do legitimate business in your nearest town or city.

Meat workers need time off work to.....

- visit the family doctor, dentist, physiotherapist, specialist, acupuncture, audiologist etc.
- see lawyers, jury service, children's school needs, marriage issues, study and training, emergency leave such as - someone dies or has a bad accident, have the family car fixed & play top level sport.
- sickness, work or home accidents, parental leave (if you have a child under 5 or disabled child under 18), maternity leave (14 weeks paid - up to 52 weeks unpaid), paternity leave (father of a new born baby), public holidays, annual holidays and long service leave.

Meat workers receive only 5 paid sick days per year after 6 months employment, and it would be reasonable for most employees to use this 5 days plus more resulting from many of the flu's that travel through the local community. Further the risk of accidents and work related diseases in the meat industry is far higher than any other industry in NZ.

Meat company owners....

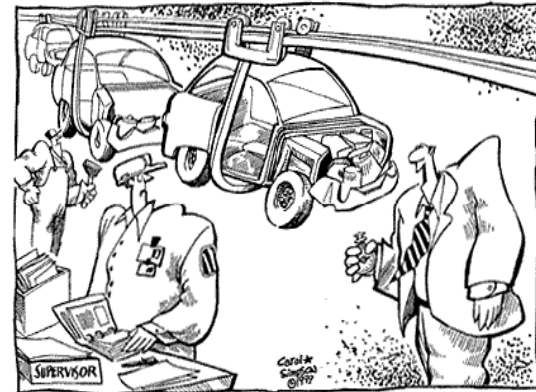
- have concentrated on 'reducing costs' - this has seen meat workers losing many fair terms and conditions of employment since 1991. So what was reasonable employment prior to '91 has deteriorated and we now see many meat workers going to Australia or seeking employment in other NZ industries. Labour turnover or "churn" in NZ meat plants is very high.
- used to employ "spares" - that was a pool of labour within the plant that could be used to fill gaps in the production line - now they choose to employ casuals through employment agencies and are seeking to use immigrants from overseas. This makes your job more uncertain and temporary. Far too many workers are on short time, night shift employment totally uncertain and shifts laid off more than once in a season.
- if likely to top up wages to the "weekly minimum", now prefer to terminate.

Meat workers are entitled to reasonable time off work - it is not up to you to get stuck into your workmate if he/she has time off.

Your Boss should provide the right working environment so that workers enjoy the job and want to come to work when the chains have stock available for slaughter.

Unfortunately we have couple of meat company's threatening their workers with warnings then dismissal if you don't attend work 98% or 95%. This amounts to "bullying" and is illegal. However, in return they will **not** offer you 8 or 10 hours a day, 5 days a week full paid job for 52 weeks of the year.

Boss wants you available and on call 100% but won't pay you 100%.



"You haven't had a serious accident in 8 months, so I know the employees could be working faster."

If a worker shows a trend for excessive time off work - they are liable for warnings

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ON TRACK

GST to 15% from 12.5% and continued tax cuts for the well off.

Sadly this Government seems encouraged to use the excuse of recession to chip away at workers' rights. There is now a long list of changes on their agenda which will impact on workers - after the wholly unnecessary move of the 90 day fire at will law there is the attack on ACC, rolling back meal breaks legislation, the reduction to holiday entitlements, and a review of personal grievance rights. It is hard to see what any of these moves will do to help the country out of recession.

Beneath its veneer of middle-ground caution the Government seems happy to revert to antiquated right-wing dogma that believes prosperity is simply created by making workers easier to sack, cheaper to pay for longer hours and less expensive to injure.