

# FORD STRIKE

N2H 22/5/90



Car assemblers leave the Wiri plant after their meeting yesterday.

PICTURE: KENNY RODGER

## A RECORD OF THE VANZ REDUNDANCY FIGHT

### Thursday May 3

A joint meeting of Engineers, Electricians, and Cleaners at the VANZ Wiri site votes overwhelmingly to reject a proposed redundancy agreement because the scale (8&2) was considered too low and the mandatory transfer clause was unacceptable. When approached by union officials and delegates the company refused to consider changing its stance on either issue. The meeting then votes to strike and establish a 24-hour picket. Caravans are hired by the union for the front and back gates.

The company sends out its first letter. The strike is called "irresponsible" and asserts the redundancy agreement "recommended by your union officials is competitive."

### Friday May 4

New Zealand Herald reports Engineers Union Organiser Peter Devlin saying he had recommended acceptance. "Unfortunately it was rejected - it is unfortunate, but that's democracy," he said. Ford spokesman Russell Scouler is quoted as saying "the company did not intend changing an offer that had already won favour from officials of the union concerned."

### Monday May 7

Devlin held meetings at the Alloy Wheel Plant where he urged acceptance of the agreement. Two shifts voted in favour and one against. This action helped undermine the stand of the VANZ workers.

A second letter is sent by the company highlighting the acceptance at the Alloy Wheel Plant and repeating that it "will not be making any further offers."

### Thursday May 10

Union meeting held to assess progress. Workers have to walk past an intimidating line up of about 30 company personnel to get to the meeting. Officials from three unions in attendance to urge acceptance of the redundancy deal. These include Peter Denny, assistant secretary of the Engineers Union; Selwyn Clark, secretary of the Cleaners Union; John Churchill, secretary of the Electrical Workers Union. Denny refuses to allow Albert Vahaakola (the Engineers Union chief delegate on site) the right to chair the meeting. All three officials give lengthy speeches urging acceptance of the deal. But the workers vote against the deal in a secret ballot by 308-118. The Cleaners and Electricians secretaries then pull their members out of the meeting where they have separate votes to return to work. The secretaries return to the Engineers meeting to urge that they also abandon the strike, as did Peter Denny again. Despite these appeals the Engineers vote 182-152 by secret ballot to continue the strike "indefinitely".

During the meeting the workers made plain their anger at the officials lack of support during the strike and their disgust at the public attacks on the workers stand. They were repeatedly asked who they worked for -- the company or the workers.

#### Friday May 11

The workers decision to continue the strike is again publicly criticised in the New Zealand Herald which reports that Peter Denny "confirmed that he had asked the workers to abandon the strike". On the mandatory relocation clause "Mr Denny said the unions position was that it was better for its members to have jobs than be made redundant."

A third letter is sent by the company urging acceptance.

#### Monday May 14

At the delegates request, Jim Butterworth (Engineers Union District Secretary) meets with strike committee members in the caravan. Concern is expressed to him that the workers were feeling abandoned by the union.

#### Tuesday May 15

A union meeting is held in the carpark when the company refuses to remove intimidating line-up of personnel at the gate. Jim Butterworth attends this meeting and explains that while he considers the 8&2 acceptable he isn't happy with the mandatory transfer clause. Next meeting called for Thursday May 24.

Maintenance fitters meet seperately. Many are unhappy with the strike and want to return to work but are told they are bound by the democratic majority vote of all Engineers Union members.

#### Thursday May 17

Following a meeting of all unions affected by the strike called by the Northern Distribution Union secretary Mike Jackson, a proposal is put to the company that was seen as providing a basis for a return to work while giving the workers some guarantees. This involved an agreement from the company that there be no redundancies this year and that three months notice be given after that. (The current award contained only one months notice). For the company Tony Wright said they would discuss it over night and give their reply sometime the next day.

#### Friday May 18

The company tells a meeting of officials and delegates from the Cleaners, Electricians and Engineers that they reject the proposals.

By this time the company had already sent its 4th letter to striking workers. As well as being mailed it was hand delivered by teams of two foremen to each workers home. Strikers were also being phoned at home during the strike and in some cases attempts to pressure a workers family were made.

This letter invited workers to scab on the strike by saying work would be available 7-30am Monday, May 21. It also threatened to import cars to break the strike and implied that this could lead to the permanent closure of the car assembly plant.

After the company rejected the proposals, Denny, Devlin, and Churchill try to pressure our delegates to agree to recommend a return to work without a redundancy agreement.

The officials tried to undermine the delegates confidence by claiming we would not be able to prevent people starting work on Monday (that is, that a large number of our members were willing to be scabs -- an argument we rejected), and that there was nothing we could do to prevent the company importing cars to break the strike.

At this point Jim Butterworth arrived and when the company representatives returned he rejected the threats in the letter. He told them there would be no return to work without the agreement of our members and that the union movement was sufficiently international to counter their import plans.

Jim Butterworth also proposed that if the company dropped the mandatory transfer clause the union would recommend accepting the 8&2 scale. Tony Wright rejected this compromise proposal out of hand.

It was clear at this stage that the company's no compromise stand reflected a determination to break the union at VANZ and force us back to work on our knees.

It was agreed to organise a union meeting in the canteen on Monday morning on condition the company removed its line-up of personnel.

#### Monday May 21

Union meeting held. In a pre-arranged move, Peter Denny begins by announcing that he has a foreshadowed motion from the maintenance fitters for a return to work. There was no preliminary report on negotiations or the company threats and how the union planned to counter them, nor if the union would support us if we continued our strike. The return to work proposal was therefore discussed in a context where the workers felt increasingly isolated and abandoned. The first secret ballot tied 152-152. The second ballot was held after a few more people had arrived and rejected the return to work by 165-142.

After the vote, Denny announces that he should have some good news for us on Thursday because the union executive was meeting Monday afternoon and he expected it to provide financial support. This information was greeted with thunderous applause -- finally the dam had burst.

The executive decided to accept the 8&2 scale but said the officials responsible had been wrong to accept the mandatory transfer clause. They voted to provide \$80 weekly food vouchers to each striker.

During this week one picketer is knocked down twice by company personnel. When told of this and asked if he can tell staff to slow down, Tony Wright replies that picketers "shouldn't get in the way." Wright denies knowing anything about a worker being hit later in the Auckland Star.

#### Thursday May 24

A union meeting is held with Denis Robertson (District President) chairing the meeting. Jim Butterworth presents the proposal to accept 8&2 without mandatory transfers. This was accepted by the membership in the interests of achieving maximum unity in the union in the face of the strike breaking moves by the company. Again the offer is rejected by the company.

Jim Butterworth also reports that the Vehicle Builders Union in Victoria, Australia where Ford have two plants, had agreed to stop Ford exports to New Zealand.

While the meeting was being held the company bought in over 80 dealers and agents from around the country. A convoy of Ford cars drove out through the picket lines that afternoon, knocking down several workers. The police had been called by the company to guard the break out and workers were told they could be arrested if they attempted to forcibly stop the cars. It was legal to attempt to flag them down and talk to the drivers, but few were willing to stop. We found out later that there were 5 car loads of police and a paddy wagon being held in reserve down the road in case of any trouble. Mazda later say they had no part in breakout.

Jim Butterworth came back out to the picket line when he got the news and went in to see the company with the delegates. He told the company that such tactics would be met by counter action by the union and immediately cancelled union participation in the Employee Involvement scheme.

#### Friday May 25

Jim Butterworth sends a letter to all Engineers Union delegates in the Auckland District requesting support for the VANZ workers and asking that meetings be arranged on the job for speakers. An office is organised in the union building in the city and a team of strikers is asked to organise the phoning of delegates to arrange meetings.

#### Monday May 28 - Thursday May 31

Meetings are held at: IST Engineering; Pacific Steel; Vita Foam; Hermetic Holdings; Kinleith (delegates only); Kawerau (delegates); Carter Holt Roller Doors; Cheviot Pacific; White Star Products; Faulkner Collins; Anglo Engineering; Comalco Extrusion; Eveready Batteries; Fletcher Steel; ARA Engineers, Manukau; International Wire and Cable; Marine Steel; Email Building Products; Nylex; Rheems; Ryco Products; PDL Packaging; Many others had been arranged for Friday or the following week. Engineers Union Organisers Nick Tangaroa and Dave Jarrett were particularly helpful in arranging meetings. Few delegates refused to have meetings when contacted. Unfortunately these included the large Fisher and Paykel plants whose delegates include the union president and an executive member. One important weakness in the strike was that no meetings were organised at Sylvia Park, The Alloy Wheel Plant, or Nissan (a collection was done at Nissan). The delegates were willing to have them but were waiting to be contacted by their organiser Peter Devlin.

#### Thursday May 31

Union meeting held where Jim Butterworth reports that a deal is in the works and the company seems ready to give in on the transfer clause. Meeting agrees to return to work until 3-30pm that day to allow discussions before a mediator. Victory confirmed at 3-30pm meeting.

## SOME LESSONS TO BE CONSIDERED FROM THE STRIKE

### 1) The need for stronger union organisation at VANZ

The strike revealed some weaknesses in our union organisation on the job. We didn't have up-to-date lists of members names, addresses and phone numbers. This made it difficult to organise picket rosters in the first few weeks or to contact members before special union meetings.

Evidence also emerged during the strike of problems members were having at work that the delegates hadn't been informed about. It would help if each department had its own delegate who could liaise with the main delegates on problems on the line. They could also provide a broader base for organising on the job or in a dispute.

There also needs to be greater opportunity for members to raise questions at union meetings. Meetings need to be held not just when negotiations are being reported back to members, but also so that members have an opportunity to raise any issue of concern to them. One possibility is that we have monthly meetings around the same time as the Engineers Union monthly branch meeting in Auckland. Our delegates or other members should be encouraged to attend these meetings and report the unions broader activities to the members.

### 2) The need for inter-union cooperation on a sound basis.

Before the next award or joint negotiations we should ask unions that want to join us to hold joint membership meetings and agree to be bound by the decisions of these meetings. Approaches should be made to all unions (including the Stores) on that basis. This would also prevent individual unions holding up the award by unilateral actions as happened in the past.

### 3) The need for greater cooperatopn with Sylvia Park and Alloy Wheel Plant workers.

Where joint negotiations are held delegates should be invited to attend each others meetings. The possibility of all-up meetings of all workers together at the Papatoetoe Town Hall or somewhere similar should be looked at.

### 4) The need to re-establish a working relationship with officials in the Engineers Union

The failure of the current officials representing us to support us during the strike, and, in fact, their active attempts to undermine the strike through public attacks in the media, has lead to a breakdown in confidence in them on the part of the majority of workers. We should ask the union to provide alternative officials able to re-establish a working relationship with us.

### 5) The need to deal with the company's use of the EI scheme to undermine the union.

During the strike EI group leaders and facilitators were told that their position meant they should encourage a return to work. After the strike began two EI group members were taken into the head office to give a presentation and then sent to Japan after the delegates had explained this was not acceptable while the dispute continued.

This EI presentation also involved an attempt to bypass the union to get acceptance of a cutback in numbers of workers on the Fits line. The presentation was in fact originally a company proposal that was recycled through the EI group leaders back to the company.

By declaring their own proposal the winner in the competition for the trip to Japan the company acted in bad faith to all the other EI groups who worked hard putting together presentations of their own.

The company has made it clear that it is only interested in suggestions that suit them. Because of this and their actions during the strike we should consider scrapping the EI scheme altogether.

6) The need to counter the threat of victimisation

During the strike people on the picket line were photographed and videotaped by company personnel. Names of picketers were also being taken down by Tim Robinson. Threats to "get" certain members active in the strike were made by Vinnie May.

We should be ready to respond to any attempts to victimise anyone. Victimisation can be done through actions by the company on issues that may not be directly related to the strike -- warnings for "lateness", harassment on the line to provoke people, allegations of theft of company property, etc. We should recognise them for what they are and respond accordingly.

7) The need to oppose the re-establishment of the rehab group.

Workers have reported that the company is attempting to cut back numbers on all the lines and in the process doubling up the workload on many workers. Some lines have been operating with a shortage of labour due to sickness etc while we have workers doing useless work in the rehab group. We should oppose the rehab group while normal work is available for these workers and resist attempts to increase the workloads of people on the line.

8) The need for a more well informed membership.

It would help if members were informed on union negotiations, the state of the motor industry, and what's happening at work in a regular written form. This could include translations where possible. A newsletter every couple of months would help us do this.

9) The need for more discipline on the picket line.

In any future dispute we should ensure there is no drinking in public on the picket line. This only serves to give a bad public image and can lead to problems encouraging some members to participate.

# Strike, forced holidays in car factories

NZHT 4/5/90

By **MATHEW DEARNALEY**  
Industrial Reporter

Trouble in the car assembly industry has spread to Auckland with a strike at Ford Motors and a compulsory week's holiday for workers at the nearby Nissan plant.

Production ceased yesterday morning at Ford's main assembly plant in Wiri, South Auckland, when more than 400 workers from three unions rejected a redundancy pay offer and walked out.

They intend to stay off work until next Thursday and have mounted a round-the-clock picket aimed at stopping any newly assembled cars from leaving the premises.

Meanwhile, the entire workforce of about 300 at the Nissan Wiri assembly plant have been asked to take annual leave next week in a bid to slim down stocks in a sluggish car market.

A Ford spokesman, Mr Russell Scoular, described the action against his company as irresponsible and not what would be expected from workers in an industry that was "fighting for survival."

It was also futile, he said, because the company did not intend changing an offer that had already won favour from officials of the unions concerned.

Mr Scoular said that exactly the same redundancy deal had been accepted the previous day by workers at Ford's commercial vehicle assembly plant in Westfield.

It entitled any redundant workers to eight weeks' pay for the first year of

service and two weeks for each subsequent year.

He confirmed that the company wanted the option of transferring workers from its Wiri assembly plant to its neighbouring alloy wheel factory, as an alternative to making them redundant.

That would be done only if it did not cause undue hardship, and he regarded the offer of a similar job as reasonable.

No redundancies were planned at this stage but the two plants catered for different cyclical markets and Ford wanted the flexibility to move workers between them if there was any sudden swing in demand.

An Engineers' Union organiser, Mr Peter Devlin, said he had recommended that his members at the assembly plant should look seriously at Ford's redundancy offer.

"Unfortunately it was rejected — it is unfortunate, but that's democracy," he said.

The workers were holding out for a better payment scale within the eight-plus-two-weeks formula, to give full credit for each part-year of service.

They also wanted relocation between Ford plants to be voluntary, not compulsory.

Electricians and cleaners are also on strike but the 100 store workers at the plant have not yet entered any negotiations for a redundancy agreement and are remaining on duty.

The Nissan personnel director, Mr Bruce Owen, confirmed that everybody at his plant in Wiri was taking a week's paid leave next week in an attempt to reduce a big stockpile of unsold cars.

## Striking workers reject union call

Plk. Star 11/5/90

Striking engineers at Ford's Wiri car assembly plant say their union is trying to railroad them into returning to work.

The plant's workers have been on strike since last week over a redundancy package. Wiri's 440 engineers, 12 electricians and 29 cleaners rejected the package again yesterday at a "hot and stormy" meeting, but the electricians and cleaners decided to return to work.

The engineers, who are still off the job, meet again on Tuesday to reassess their action.

When the Engineers' Union asked their members to lift the strike, they were asked if they were working for the workers or the company.

"There was a genuine revolt against being railroaded," said a plant employee.

He claimed the redundancy package was overwhelmingly rejected at the meeting and a clear majority wanted action to continue.

Ford spokesman Russell Scoular said the strike was one of the silliest he had ever seen.

# Car assemblers vote to stay out

NZHT 11/5/90

By **MATHEW DEARNALEY**

Car assemblers at Ford Motors in South Auckland say they are digging in for an indefinite strike after rejecting a plea yesterday by union officials to return to work.

Ford's Wiri assembly plant has been idle since last Wednesday after a walkout by more than 400 workers over a negotiated redundancy pay agreement that they are refusing to ratify.

The plant's 35 cleaners and electricians yesterday voted to abandon the strike but the car assemblers — the majority of the workforce — decided to stay out indefinitely.

Meanwhile, a 24-hour picket remains in place at both the back and front of the site to stop newly

assembled cars from leaving the premises.

Ford said its dealers remained well stocked with cars but a spokesman, Mr Russell Scoular, yesterday branded the strike as "futile, irresponsible and absurd."

The unions had approached the company for a redundancy deal in the first place, although there were no plans to lay anybody off.

The company considered that it had negotiated a generous deal with union officials, entitling redundant workers to eight weeks' pay for the first year of service and two weeks' pay for each subsequent year.

But a plant delegate representing Engineers' Union members, Mr Albert Vahaakola, said the workers were upset that the deal would enable Ford to relocate them to a neighbouring wheel

manufacturing operation without their consent.

The members also believed a 12 weeks plus 3 weeks redundancy package would be more in line with recent settlements in other South Auckland industries.

He said that while some members might accept voluntary transfers to the alloy wheels plant next door, that was a foundry operation so different from car assembly that no worker should be forced to move.

The workers had decided in a secret ballot yesterday to reject the deal by about 300 to 100 votes.

Mr Vahaakola would not say how many Engineers' Union members had voted to stay on strike but it is understood the majority was about 30 in a ballot of 350.

The assistant secretary of the

union's Auckland branch, Mr Peter Denny, confirmed that he had asked the workers to abandon the strike yesterday.

He said that because Ford had not notified it of any redundancies, the union believed that if members were unhappy with the deal they should leave it on the table and return to work, ready to renegotiate if and when an agreement became necessary.

Of Ford's requirement that the deal be subject to a mandatory relocation clause, Mr Denny said the union's position was that it was better for its members to have jobs than be made redundant.

"Our union is dealing with so many redundancies that we have a clear viewpoint — that it is better to retain jobs than see redundancies occur."



# Ford strike still on over redundancy

Management and workers at the Ford assembly plant in Wiri are still at loggerheads over a redundancy agreement.

Workers last Thursday rejected a company offer and voted to continue with their week-long strike.

Central to the dispute is a pay offer by the company and a clause allowing for the transfer of workers between the assembly plant and a nearby factory where the company makes alloy wheels.

The Engineers Union on site has rejected both. Another

vote will be taken on Thursday.

Meanwhile, production at the Nissan plant on Roscommon Rd resumed.

Nearly 200 workers were given a week's holiday because of an over-production.

Nissan's public relations officer Caroline Mackersey says the car assembly industry has been hit by a slump in sales.

One of the causes is the growing popularity of cheaper second-hand cars being imported from Japan.

*Manukau Courier 15/5/90*



**A YARDFUL:** New cars being stored at the Nissan plant in Wiri as a result of the sluggish car market.

## Car strike likely to continue

Ford's South Auckland car assembly plant is likely to remain strikebound for at least one more week after a meeting of workers outside the gates yesterday.

Although they are maintaining a round-the-clock picket to stop new cars leaving the plant, the 440 striking assembly workers are not due to meet again until next Thursday to review their position.

The workers, who have been on strike for 13 days after refusing to ratify a negotiated redundancy deal, last week rejected a recommendation by Engineers' Union officials to return to work.

The union's Auckland branch secretary, Mr Jim Butterworth, yesterday stepped into the dispute for the first time but said he had simply outlined to members three options available to them and not recommended any particular action.

The options were:

- To accept the company's redundancy pay offer and return to work.
- To reject the offer and return to work.
- To stay on strike.

Mr Butterworth said he was still gathering information about the dispute and could not comment on a suggestion from another union that his officials were trying to force members back to work by refusing to raise funds for the strike.

The suggestion came last night from an official of the stores division of the Northern Distribution Union, who said his organisation, although not on strike at Ford Motors, was prepared to canvass its members for donations.

Ford says it still has work for its 100 Wiri storeworkers as well as its cleaners and electricians.

The cleaners and electricians originally joined the strike but last week returned to work while remaining opposed to the redundancy offer.

The storeworkers remain uninterested in negotiating any form of redundancy deal.

# Strike may delay car launch

By MATHEW DEARNALEY

**Mazda Motors faces having to delay launching a new model unless striking workers return soon to the South Auckland assembly plant it owns with Ford.**

The plant's 440 car assemblers have already been on strike for two weeks and do not intend meeting again to review their action until next Thursday.

Ford, which owns 74 per cent of the Wiri plant, says its dealers remain reasonably well stocked.

But Mazda, owner of the other 26 per cent, is becoming twitchy about the planned launch early next month of the 1990 "facelift" of its Mazda 626 car series.

The company's general manager, Mr Peter Aitken, yesterday said that unless the striking assemblers voted next Thursday to return to work it was unlikely that sufficient stocks could be built up in time to proceed with the launch.

Meanwhile, the Northern Distribution Union has called a meeting this morning of all unions that are or could become affected by the strike to try to learn just what issues are involved.

Those on strike are all members of the Engineers' Union and Ford says it has enough work available at this stage to keep other employees on its payroll, even though no cars are leaving the plant.

But there is increasing nervousness in some other union camps that suspensions may be close as the striking car assemblers continue a revolt against their own officials, who want them back at work.

Today's meeting has been called by the secretary of the Northern Distribution Union stores division, Mr Mike Jackson, who could not be reached for comment last night.

Meanwhile a union source outside the dispute described it as one that defied commonsense and into which the car assemblers had backed themselves without knowing just how to get out.

The dispute began with the workers' rejection of a redundancy pay deal that officials of three unions negotiated with Ford.

# Import threat if strike carries on

02 H  
19/5/90

The Ford and Mazda motor companies have threatened to import entire cars if striking vehicle assemblers at their joint-venture plant in Manukau do not return to work on Monday.

The plant's 440 car assemblers, all members of the Engineers' Union, have been called to attend a meeting at the plant early on Monday to discuss the issue with union officials.

The assemblers have been on strike for two weeks after rejecting a redundancy pay package offered by the companies.

No redundancies have been announced at the plant.

If the companies, which together run Vehicle Assemblers New Zealand Limited, carry out their threat to import cars from Japan and Australia, about 600 jobs at the Wiri plant could be lost.

Electricians and cleaners

at the plant are not on strike and the group says it has enough work at this stage to keep them on the payroll.

It announced its overseas import contingency plan yesterday and its negotiators later met union officials but no agreement was reached.

A strike committee member, Mr Mike Treen, said the union negotiators proposed at the meeting that the joint-venture guarantee there would be no redundancies at the plant this year and that it should give three months' notice of redundancies after that.

The companies rejected those proposals and refused to drop a requirement for mandatory transfers between plants, Mr Treen said.

The Auckland secretary of the Engineers' Union, Mr Jim Butterworth, said the union would take steps to stop the import of made-up cars by contacting unions overseas for support.

A director of the joint venture, Mr Anthony Wright, said the strike was pointless when there were

now no redundancies at the plant.

Mr Wright, who is also Ford's employee relations director, said the redundancy package was recommended by union officials and was accepted at the Vehicle Assemblers of New Zealand Mt Wellington truck assembly plant and the Ford alloy wheel plant at Manukau.

He said the venture had spent \$60 million on the plant during the past three to four years and had indicated its commitment to stay. But that depended on the operation being efficient and economic, he said.

Directors of the companies said they had more than a month's stock of assembled cars to keep customers supplied. Ford owns 74 per cent of the plant and Mazda owns the other 26 per cent.

The plant assembles Ford Falcons, Telstars and Lasers as well as the Mazda 626 and 323.

Mazda may have to delay launching its new 626 car series early next month if the strike continues.

# 550 jobs hang on Ford meeting

AK Star 21/5/90

LEE UMBERS

Five hundred and fifty jobs are at risk at Ford's Wiri car assembly plant as striking engineers are today locked in an eleventh hour meeting.

The plant faces closure if the engineers do not return to work today.

Ford spokesman Russell Scoular said the strikers were warned on Friday that if they did not resume work today, the company would begin importing fully assembled Ford and Mazda cars from Australia and Japan.

Such a scenario would mean a "definite possibility" of the

jointly-owned Ford and Mazda assembly plant being closed, Mr Scoular said.

The closure would mean the loss of 440 engineers', 70 stores workers', 29 cleaners' and 12 electricians' positions.

The engineers, electricians and cleaners went on strike on May 3 over a redundancy package.

The electricians and cleaners returned to work the following week, but engineers stayed out.

Some of the engineers subsequently accused their union officials of trying to railroad them into returning to work.

The engineers gathered at 7.30am today in what is the crucial meeting of the dispute.

Engineers' Union Auckland

district secretary Jim Butterworth attended the meeting.

Ford and Mazda have about one month's stock of cars at the Wiri assembly plant.

They had been negotiating a redundancy agreement during the past three months with engineers, electricians and cleaners unions' representatives.

A deal presented in the last week of April provided for eight weeks pay for the first year of service and two weeks for each subsequent year.

It also offered payment of unused sick leave up to 10 days and transfers between Manukau plants to avoid redundancies.

The deal was accepted by the joint company truck assembly

plant at Mt Wellington and the Ford Alloy Wheel Plant at Manukau, but rejected by the Wiri car assembly plant.

The Wiri workers wanted a better scale of pay and no transfers between the Manukau plants.

Last month General Motors said it would lay off about 300 staff from all work areas at its Trentham plant over the next 12 to 15 months as it stops assembling cars.

General Motors managing director Dan McCarthy blamed the absence of a tariff differential between locally-assembled and fully built Australian-sourced vehicles for General Motors' inability to continue a viable assembly line.

# 200 suspended after vote by car workers

By MATHEW DEARNALEY

Two hundred Auckland motor industry workers were suspended yesterday after car assemblers at the Ford and Mazda Wiri plant voted to stay on strike.

The strike decision, on a second secret ballot after an initial vote revealed an even split among the assembly workers, quickly sent ripples outside the troubled Wiri site.

Kenson Industries Ltd, which had run out of work making car seats and interior door panels, suspended the 140 staff at its East Tamaki works at 11 am.

They were joined in limbo by 60 Wiri store workers who were issued with suspension notices by the Ford and Mazda joint venture Vehicle Assemblers New Zealand Ltd late yesterday.

The two motor companies have meanwhile begun acting on their ultimatum to import completely built-up cars from Japan and Australia unless the strike was called off yesterday.

## Limited orders

Ford's employee relations director, Mr Tony Wright, said his company placed orders yesterday for cars due to arrive in four to six weeks and a Mazda spokesman said his company had taken steps in the same direction.

Kenson Industries has invited its Auckland staff to return to work on Friday, but only for as long as it takes to fill limited orders from another vehicle manufacturer, Toyota.

The company also has a hundred staff off work at its Wainuiomata head office site, where it makes frames for the car seats.

Yesterday's suspension followed secret ballots at a meeting of about 310 of the 440 Engineers' Union members who have been on strike at the Ford and Mazda plant for almost three weeks.

The first ballot revealed an even split — said to be 152 votes each way — between those wanting to call off

the strike and those wanting to stand firm.

But a second secret ballot, conducted after the arrival of some latecomers and further debate, produced a majority of between 13 and 18 votes in favour of staying on strike.

This was despite the ultimatum delivered late last week in letters to workers' homes that vehicles would have to be imported unless production resumed yesterday.

## Jobs at risk

The joint ventures assured its staff then that they would lose nothing by returning to work without a redundancy agreement as it did not intend following the example of General Motors in winding down its New Zealand car assembly operation.

But it warned them in their letters that the strike was seriously affecting its ability to maintain the operation and was therefore putting their future employment at risk.

Mr Wright said yesterday that his company was still committed to staying in the local assembly business despite the reduction in import tariff.

However, he said there was a danger that what he hoped would be only a temporary car importing arrangement might become "very permanent."

The suggestion went down badly with the Auckland secretary of the Engineers' Union, Mr Jim Butterworth, who said that threats to circumvent the strike by importing built-up cars served only to aggravate the situation.

"Workers are legally entitled to strike for a redundancy agreement in these uncertain times and a more positive response from the company should be aimed at removing the

differences between the parties," he said.

"This would enable the workers to feel more secure and ensure Ford's long-term production in New Zealand."

Mr Butterworth's statement followed a meeting of his union's Auckland district executive, which moved yesterday to heal a rift between union officials and members by pledging formal support for the strike.

The rift developed after the car assemblers rejected an official's advice that they accept a redundancy pay deal that would have given the company the right to move workers to its neighbouring wheel plant without their consent.

Mr Butterworth acknowledged that the union's assessors had erred in not rejecting the condition in the first place but said his executive nevertheless accepted the original redundancy pay formula.

He said his union did not support "excessive claims" such as a formula proposed a fortnight ago by a car assembly delegate that redundant workers receive 12 weeks' pay for the first year's service and three weeks for each subsequent year.

Ford has offered a formula of eight plus two weeks.

"There were some errors made but the errors have been cleared up and our position is quite firm," Mr Butterworth said.

"We reject the transfer clause but we do support the eight plus two weeks."

The car assemblers intend meeting again on Thursday to review their position but Mr Butterworth said he would be tied up in the Labour Court for the next day or two and unavailable to meet the company in the meantime.

NATIONWIDE

# Accusations fly at stalled

BY CUSHLA MANAGH

Striking engineers at Ford's Wiri car assembly plant have accused the company of trying to intimidate them.

The company says any intimidation is two-way.

Engineers said an employee on the 24-hour picket line was run over twice by cars entering the premises.

The first time, he had not seen the car and was standing with his back to it. He was knocked to the ground, and his legs were bruised and grazed. In the second incident he was trying to stop a car entering the plant premises and was knocked aside.

Staff telephoned the police who they said referred their complaint to the Ministry of Transport. Half an hour later the police answered a complaint from Ford about picketers blocking plant entrances.

Employees say managers have also been photographing and videoing the picket.

And on two occasions when workers were to meet company officials, they were forced to walk past 30 plant supervisors lined up at the gate.

Staff and union officials spoken to by the *Auckland Star* yesterday afternoon said they found these tactics intimidatory.

But Ford employee relations manager Tony Wright said any intimidation was two-way.

## Engineers claim picketer run down

For instance, a woman leaving the plant had the keys ripped from her car's ignition. Other people had been abused by picketers.

He said he did not know anything about an employee being knocked over.

"If people will stand in the middle of the (entrance) driveway, they have to consider that they may end up being approached by cars."

He said people could take photographs if they wanted and besides picketers had also been getting pictures.

Supervisors had lined up at the gate before the all-up meeting because Ford had noticed people on the picket line who were not employees and was concerned they might try to attend.

The Ford row has been going on for three weeks and seems little closer to settlement than when it began.

Engineers voted narrowly on

Monday to continue striking and are due to meet again tomorrow.

They walked off the job over a redundancy offer they say is not good enough.

The package provides eight weeks pay for the first year of service and two weeks for each subsequent year. It also offers payment of unused sick leave up to 10 days and transfers between Manukau plants to avoid redundancies.

Ford says no redundancies are planned.

The Wiri workers want a higher pay scale and no transfers between the Manukau plants.

Ford and Mazda have started moves to import fully-assembled cars from Australia and Japan, which will take four to six weeks to arrive.

They said on Friday that they had about a month's stock of cars.

Ford employees said yesterday that the Engineers Union had agreed to give staff suffering hardship food vouchers and other assistance.

It was also giving letters to staff outlining the situation and seeking flexible arrangements from landlords, banks and other institutions during the strike.

It was considering seeking financial help from other Auckland workers and unions, and had not ruled out approaching overseas unions for support to stop cars being brought into New Zealand.



Another day on the picket line

# ... fly at stalled car assembly plant

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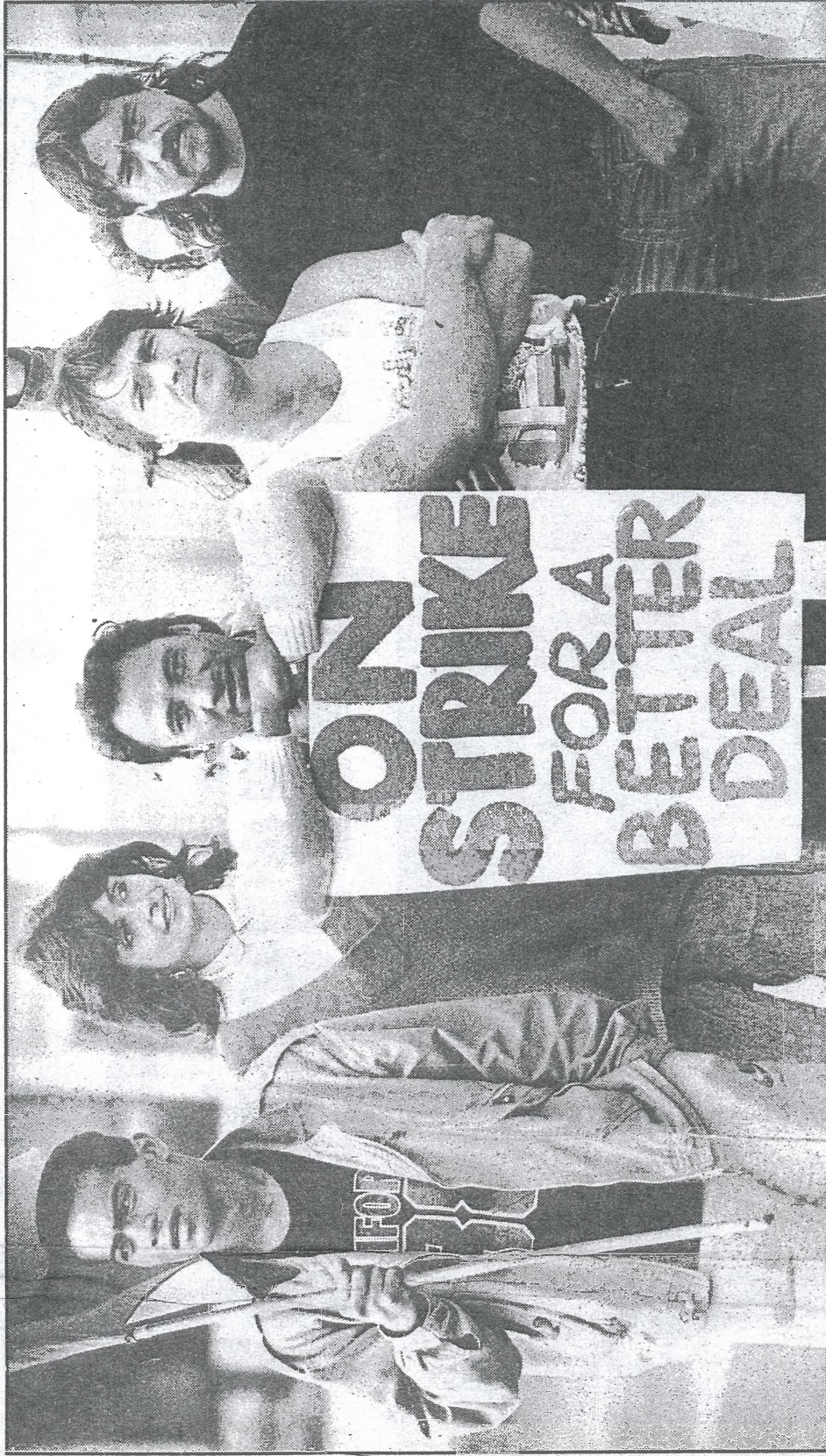
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Another day on the picket line . . . Amid claims of intimidation from both sides, striking Ford workers — buoyed by Engineers Union gifts of food vouchers and other forms of assistance — say morale is still high.

# Union moves to halt car imports

23 May 90

Striking South Auckland car assemblers have asked Australian unionists to frustrate plans by Ford Motor Company to import fully built-up vehicles.

The Auckland secretary of the Engineers' Union, Mr Jim Butterworth, said last night that while Ford had been placing orders overseas, he had also been "busy on the phone."

Union leaders representing Ford's Australian workforce were meeting yesterday to consider his request to stop any cars being sent across the Tasman and he hoped to learn today what they had decided.

He would also make contact in the next few days with unionists in Japan,

where Ford says it has also been placing orders and from where Mazda intends importing cars as well to make up the shortfall from the strike.

Ford says it has sufficient car stocks stored off the troubled Wiri assembly site it shares with Mazda to last until the imported vehicles are due to arrive in four to six weeks.

But a spokesman was unwilling last night to comment on Mr Butterworth's approach to Australian unionists.

The strike is now in its third week and pickets from among the unions 440 striking members are posted at the front and rear of the Wiri site to stop new cars from leaving.

# Staff woes at second car plant

24/5/90

N2 Herald

Industrial trouble is brewing at a second Auckland car factory today after negotiations between Nissan and several of its staff unions reached an impasse.

Storeworkers, cleaners, clerks and cafeteria staff at Nissan's assembly plant at Wiri intend meeting this morning to discuss possible action in support of a new industrial agreement.

Although the company last night denied there was any great problem, the union advocate for the group insisted that negotiations broke down yesterday.

Meanwhile, car assemblers who began a strike three weeks ago at the

Ford and Mazda combined plant at Wiri will meet again today to review their position.

But the meeting was scheduled some time ago. Last night it was considered unlikely that the 440 assemblers would hold another vote on whether to return to work, despite the closeness of a ballot on Monday.

The Auckland secretary of the Engineers' Union, Mr Jim Butterworth, will tell his striking members that he received agreement yesterday from leaders of Ford's Australian workers that they would not allow any cars to be shipped to New Zealand.

# Ford agents break picket to get cars

Herald  
25/5/90

By LLOYD JONES

Ford car dealers swooped on the strikebound Ford and Mazda plant at Wiri yesterday and broke out with about 100 newly assembled cars past angry picketing workers.

Engineers' Union officials, representing the plant's 440 striking car assemblers, said the break-out was a provocative move and would only aggravate their dispute with Vehicle Assemblers New Zealand, which is jointly owned by the two car companies.

The assemblers have been on strike for three weeks after talks broke down on a redundancy agreement. No redundancies have been announced at the plant.

After the car break-out, the Auckland secretary of the Engineers' Union, Mr Jim Butterworth, met management representatives and announced that the union was withdrawing from the plant's employee involvement scheme set up to promote quality work and management/worker co-operation.

The external affairs manager for Ford, Mr Russell Scoular, said it was regrettable that the assemblers had not returned to work and the company had felt it appropriate that Ford dealers could "pop into the plant and collect vehicles owned by them."

The company advised South Auckland police of the plans and when the Auckland dealers and their staff were ready, a big convoy of cars broke through the worker pickets.

Six police officers watched the break-out through about 20 pickets. A further 15 police officers and a police van were waiting up the road but were not called in.

No arrests were made but pickets reported being bumped by escaping cars and one man said he was carried down the road on a car bonnet.

Mr Scoular would not be drawn on whether other mass break-outs of cars were planned.

The strikers are especially angry about the break-out because in the morning union officials had presented the management with a compromise proposal.

A strike committee member, Mr Mike Treen, said they proposed that workers accept the redundancy pay deal if management dropped the idea of mandatory job transfers. He said union officials were prepared to encourage voluntary transfers.

Mr Treen said workers were worried that the company might want to transfer workers from defunct assembly plant jobs to do totally different work at the nearby Ford alloy wheel plant.

The mandatory transfer clause meant that if a worker refused such a move, that worker would not be entitled to the option of redundancy pay.

The dispute has already led to the suspension of 60 store workers at the assembly plant and the suspension of 140 staff at Kenson Industries Ltd, which makes car seats and door panels in East Tamaki.

Last week, the joint-venture company said it would import assembled cars from Australia and Japan if the Wiri assemblers did not return to work.

Mr Butterworth said he had telephoned the Victorian secretary of the Australian Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation and gained agreement that Ford's Australian workers would not allow any cars to be shipped to New Zealand.

The Australian federation's federal secretary, Mr Wayne Blair, and a Ford Australia spokesman, Mr John Miller, said yesterday that they had not heard of the approach from the New Zealand union.

*Manhattan*  
*Courier Auckland Star*

# Sides deadlocked in Ford dispute

By ALAN APTED

The Ford Motor Company and its 400 striking workers appear no closer to settling their dispute over a redundancy agreement.

The strike has crippled production at the plant for the past three weeks.

There have been no negotiations to break the deadlock.

Production at the assembly plant in Wiri stopped when members of the Engineers Union led a walkout following the collapse of redundancy talks.

Store workers, electricians and cleaners later voted to return to work.

Members of the Engineers Union twice voted to stay out. The last vote was taken on Monday when two secret ballots were needed to get a majority.

At the heart of the dispute is the size of the redundancy offered by Ford and a clause which will allow the transfer of assembly workers to the company's alloy wheel plant.

The company's offer of eight weeks pay for the first year and two weeks for each year after has been rejected

as insufficient by the members.

They also refuse to accept the transfers.

The same package was accepted by fellow workers at the Mazda plant in Mt Wellington.

In refusing to accept the Ford offer, the Wiri plant members clashed with executives of the Engineers' Union. The union executive is understood to be favourable towards the offer.

A meeting on Monday between site representatives and the union's Auckland district executive appears to have resolved some of the differences.

Michael Treen, a member of the strike committee, says the union executive agrees the clause relating to the transfer of workers between the assembly plant and the alloy wheel factory is unacceptable.

The company has suspended about 60 store workers because there is no work for them. They were suspended on Monday afternoon.

It has also placed orders in Australia for 500 fully assembled cars which it expects to arrive in five weeks.

Ford's employee relations officer, Tony Wright, says the orders were necessary to fill local orders which could not be met because of the strike.

He says that if the strike continues indefinitely the company may be forced to shut down the assembly line and import cars directly from Australia.

## Ford picket ready to bar convoy

*A.S. 25/5/90*

By CUSHLA MANAGH

Striking engineers at Ford's Wiri car assembly plant were today preparing for another convoy of cars to cross their picket line.

But Mazda has apparently delayed publicly launching its 626 two-litre saloon and sports hatch because the built-up cars are at Wiri.

Angry scenes erupted yesterday when Ford drove 100 cars through a picket.

Employee relations manager Tony Wright would not say today whether Ford planned another drive-through.

The Engineers' Union was organising more people to join the picket line just in case.

Union delegate Phil McCrory said picketers had it on good authority the company would try to take out more cars.

He estimated Ford had 300 cars stored at the assembly plant when the dispute began three weeks ago.

The Council of Trade Unions was to meet in Auckland this afternoon to discuss the row and consider a request for support.

The 440 engineers at Wiri walk off the job three weeks ago over a redundancy package they say is not good enough.

Ford says no redundancies are planned.

Ford and Mazda have begun ordering fully assembled cars from Australia and Japan.



# The lesson of Wiri

There is something Gilbertian about the strike that has closed the Ford and Mazda assembly plant in South Auckland for the past three weeks.

The 440 car assemblers have struck over compensation for redundancies that the owners do not contemplate. If later they become necessary, the company wants to save jobs through transferring car assemblers to a sister company rather than lay them off. The workers want more for being fired and seek the right to refuse another job.

The strike is opposed by the workers' own union. The Engineers' Union, along with the Electricians' and Cleaners' Unions, negotiated a redundancy agreement with Vehicle Assemblers New Zealand Ltd and recommended its acceptance. Members accepted at two other plants — but Wiri wildcats rejected it. Instead of eight weeks' pay for the first year of service and two weeks' for each subsequent year as agreed by the union, they wanted 12 weeks plus three.

The union also took the line that in a high unemployment zone its members would be better off with an alternative job in Ford's neighbouring alloy wheel plant than with redundancy pay. The Wiri assemblers objected, arguing any transfers should be voluntary.

The strike is taking place as if the real world did not exist. The vehicle assembly industry depends for its existence on the Government maintaining a tariff far higher than it has prescribed for all but a handful of industries. Already the company has ordered completely built-up cars from Japan and Australia to make up the local shortfall, and about 350 workers in related industries have been suspended. The Wiri stand begins to look like a death wish.

In another fanciful twist, the union now says it was wrong to agree to the transfer clause in the first place, though it holds to the redundancy provision.

All that is bizarre enough. But there is another dimension to the Wiri dispute that takes it out of the category of just another piece of industrial pottiness. It could foreshadow the shape of things to come in the deregulated workplace advocated by free marketeers and the National Party.

Labour market reformers might say the strike lends weight to the argument for breaking down industry-wide agreements, so that disputes are resolved by the people on the spot. To that extent, the Wiri strikers, by defying their union, are playing into the hands of those who want to weaken national unions.

The other side of the coin is that Wiri provides a sample of what the reformers want — but it is yielding results precisely opposite to what they predict. The national union negotiated a deal, and it is the people in the workplace who are the sticking point.

It is a myth that workers in a local plant will be more docile than unions, which must consider the total scene. The dynamics of each workplace, including history, personalities, management competence and worker attitudes, vary. There is no tidy universal solution such as the free marketeers promise.

For them, the lesson of Wiri is that deregulation of the labour market carries as many fish-hooks as the more controlled system it seeks to replace. And that it is possible to change a great deal without improving anything.

# Dealers break car plant picket

Don. 25/5/90

FORD car dealers broke a picket at the Ford-Mazda plant at Wiri, near Auckland, yesterday and left with about 100 newly assembled cars.

Engineers' Union officials, representing the plant's 440 striking car assemblers, said it was a provocative move and would only aggravate the union's dispute with the joint-venture Vehicle Assemblers New Zealand Ltd.

The assemblers have been on strike since talks on a redundancy agreement broke down three weeks ago. No redundancies have been announced.

After the car breakout Engineers' Union Auckland secretary Jim Butterworth met plant management and announced the union was withdrawing from the plant's employee involvement scheme set up to promote quality work and management-worker co-operation.

Ford external affairs manager Russell Scouler said it was regrettable the assemblers had not returned to work, and the company had felt it appropriate Ford dealers "pop into the plant and collect vehicles owned by them".

Six police officers were on hand to watch the breakout through about 20 picketers. Another 15 officers and a police van were waiting up the road but were not called.

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□ Editorial, p6

# Car launch deferred by strike

N2H  
26/5/90

Striking vehicle assemblers have dashed Mazda's hopes of launching the 1990 version of its 626 car series next month.

The company has had to defer the launch of its new 626 saloon and sports hatch models until July while it orders supplies from Japan.

Mazda took no part in action on Thursday at the strikebound Wiri plant it shares with Ford, when Ford dealers drove about 100 cars past picketing workers.

The workers, who have been on strike for more than three weeks, sent for reinforcements on the picket lines yesterday when they noticed more

cars being lined up and filled with petrol.

But despite suspicions that some new cars had left the site by last night, there was no mass break-out.

Meanwhile, the Engineers' Union is preparing to send members out canvassing other workplaces next week in search of financial and other support.

The union has already distributed \$80 food vouchers to more than 300 of its 440 striking members — all those who do not have dependent children and therefore do not qualify for Social Welfare Department hardship payments.

What the company wants is the right to mandatorily transfer car assembly workers employed on a day shift job to a foundry on shift work. This could mean, for instance, a spray-painter working on a 7.30 am-4 pm job could be made to work in a foundry pouring molten metal in the middle of the night. The work then is anything but similar.

The union has said that it is willing to agree to voluntary transfer and, in fact, it would encourage workers to do so rather than be made redundant. But surely the worker must have some say in the type of job that he or she does.

In an attempt to resolve the problem the union has suggested that a worker who volunteers to transfer should give the new job a fair trial for a month. But if the new job does not work out then the transferred employee should have the right, before the 12th pay day, to pick up the redundancy pay he would have received had he not transferred.

I would point out that the employees' right to choose is the right your company has recognised

# Brownie points for car dealers

Car dealers have never been the public's favourite business-people, but they will have gained some brownie points this week for breaking the Wiri strike picket to take delivery of vehicles to which they are entitled.

Strikes replete with pickets are ever a sad affair; this one in the car assembly industry is sadder than most. While it can generally be said of strikes in shaky industries that the strikers cut off their noses to spite their faces, another metaphor is perhaps more fitting here: the workers represented by the Engineers Union have seen the writing on the wall.

And it does not take a

Daniel to interpret that writing motor vehicle assemblers have made it perfectly plain that they are, ultimately, indifferent whether the industry lives or dies. The companies involved will do just as nicely, thank you, by importing vehicles fully built up, probably at a significant saving to the consumer.

At least the car dealers have got themselves out from under. Not so fortunate are those who have been suspended from their jobs in related industries. But there can be little sympathy for unionists who would rather be made redundant than be re-trained and kept employed in similar work.

Editorial N2H 26/5/90

# Car plant workers end strike

1/6/90

in agreements covering our members at your Ellerslie plant.

J. Butterworth, Auckland district secretary, Engineers' Union.

Cars will start rolling off the Auckland assembly lines of Ford and Mazda today for the first time since 440 workers went on strike four weeks go.

The strike was called off yesterday after the companies dropped a mandatory job transfer clause from a redundancy deal that will cover most of the workers at their joint-venture Wiri assembly plant.

Their backdown means that they will be unable to withhold redundancy pay for any surplus staff who turn down alternative work in Ford's neighbouring alloy wheels factory.

But the striking workers—all members of the Engineers' Union—have accepted the redundancy deal, originally negotiated by their officials, of eight weeks' pay for the first year of service and two weeks' pay for each subsequent year.

The settlement of the dispute also means a return to work for 60 stores staff suspended from the Wiri plant last week and more than 250 people laid off from component factories in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

It comes a week after Ford dealers, unwilling or unable to wait for imported vehicles from Japan and Australia, broke through picket lines to free about 100 new cars from the strike-bound plant.

Despite the loss of four weeks' pay, leaders of the strike were, late yesterday, claiming a victory in having forced the car companies to scrap the mandatory transfer clause.

"A lot of people — before the dispute — thought they couldn't beat Ford but they have been proved wrong," said a strike committee member, Kathy Lissienko.

The Engineers' Union Auckland secretary, Mr Jim Butterworth, was more modest about the deal he negotiated yesterday afternoon in front of an industrial mediator.

He was pleased to be rid of the controversial clause but he believed his job was one of resolving disputes rather than arguing about winners and losers.

However, the strength of the victory was questioned by one independent union source in view of Ford's stated intention to avoid redundancies at least until the next review of vehicle import tariffs.

He said the mandatory transfer clause was unlikely to have affected many workers and he noted that the timing of the dispute had not been entirely inconvenient for Ford which had had a stockpile of cars to start with.

Ford spokesmen were not available last night to comment on the victory claim.

## \* Ford strike \*

Sir,—In your editorial on the Ford strike you state there can be little sympathy for unionists who would rather be made redundant than be retrained in similar work. The point that you are missing is that the work that is being offered is anything but similar.

N2H 30/5/90

Auckland: City of Motoring 3/15/90

# TOPSELLERS Toyota and Ford

When the March figures were totalled, Toyota were there continuing their long run as makers of the top selling vehicles in New Zealand.

The Japanese-owned and Wellington-based company piped Ford yet again and were over 500 vehicles ahead of third placed Mitsubishi.

Yet, at the same time Toyota were celebrating, Ford were claiming their vehicles as top sellers too. Can the figures lie? Toyota sold 2052 vehicles in March. Ford sold 1861,

But that's another story.

# END IN SIGHT FOR NEW ZEALAND ASSEMBLY?

It is less than two years ago that Subaru opted out of assembling cars in New Zealand saying it was more practical to import the vehicles ready for sale from Japan. At the same time the Subaru importers predicted it was just a question of time before there was no New Zealand motor vehicle assembly.

Were those truly prophetic words? Because right now there seems to be a real question mark hanging over the largest motor vehicle assembly plant in New Zealand - the VANZ plant in Wiri.

VANZ - Vehicle Assemblers of New Zealand - is a joint operation between Ford and Mazda. It was a move that made sense at the time because the Mazda 323 and 626 ranges are virtually identical to the Laser and Telstar offerings from Ford.

But the VANZ operation has been paralysed for almost four weeks now while motor vehicle assemblers and the plant owners argue about a redundancy agreement.

restrictions like limited import licenses for new vehicles.

The result was that New Zealand was something of an automotive joke worldwide. Our new cars were horrendously expensive and because of the shortages late-model, low-mileage cars fetched premium prices and New Zealand assembly left plenty to be desired.

And our stock of cars being driven by you and I was over-priced and fit for the museums of most other motoring nations.

We became very adept at keeping our old bombs going with number eight

fencing wire, a pair of vice-grips and brown paper packages containing "liquid piston rings", and "pour-in bearing shells". But that has all changed.

Given the new set of rules local assembly of vehicles is that anachronism we referred to earlier.

New Zealand is a small market and our entire sales for all makes and models for one year could be met in hours by a single plant in Japan.

The striking workers at Wiri obviously know the writing is on the wall. The question is - will their action result in a decent redundancy deal for them - or simply hasten the demise of the assembly lines?

eight weeks pay for the first year of employment and two weeks for every year thereafter. It took almost two and a half weeks of strike and picket to reach that agreement but it was reached.

The sticking-point now is a mandatory transfer clause that as this was being written the unions say they will never accept in its present form.

This allows the employer to transfer workers to other departments in the event of redundancies as well as mandatory transfer of workers from one union to another.

A union spokesman says that among staff at the VANZ plant are handicapped and blind people and there is need for these special cases at the very least.

New Zealand assembly of motor vehicles has become increasingly something of an anachronism in an age of free-market. Local assembly really hit-top gear in the late-twenties and early-thirties and has been with us ever since along with (until recently) other

at Wiri than the ageing GM plant at Trentham. But Ford have thrown down the gauntlet to the striking, picketing workers at Wiri by saying return to work and negotiate or we will import assembled cars.

Mazda have said they are considering their options. Unless there is a complete about-face by Government of the future and a return to protectionism and a mandatory New Zealand content in all new cars with restricted import licensing then the future of New Zealand assembly must be under serious question.

The striking workers at Wiri say they know the risk is that their action might force Ford and Mazda into making an immediate decision to close the Wiri plant and simply write-off the millions of dollars invested in the factory. But the workers say that given the parlous future of the motor vehicle assembly industry they need a decent redundancy agreement.

So far the unions and the employers have agreed on

Ford say they have no immediate plans to close down the plant and make staff redundant. But at the same time can give no long-term guarantees for the future of the operation.

General Motors recently closed its Trentham car assembly plant after 64 years and that is very much in the forefront of the thinking of Union delegates as they negotiate with Ford and Mazda at Wiri.

When GM announced the closure of Trentham it ended an assembly line that had screwed together everything from four-cylinder National Chevrolets, through the six-cylinder Wentworths to latter-day offerings like FJ Holden, PA Vauxhalls and a range of Bedford trucks. Truck assembly will remain at the GM Trentham plant.

GM say they can import fully assembled cars more effectively and more efficiently than they can assemble them locally.

Ford say they are not quite in the same position having a more modern plant

## DISPUTE AT FORD MOTORS, WIRI

Over 400 Engineers Union members have been on strike for nearly four weeks for a better redundancy deal from the company.

The company claims it is not planning redundancies today.

But they will not give us a guarantee that there will not be any redundancies even for the rest of this year.

They continue to claim that assembling motor vehicles in New Zealand is only marginally more profitable than importing built up cars. Fords in Australia have said they may decide to send the Falcon built up to New Zealand, and Falcons are a third of the Wiri plant's production. General motors' decision last month to end car assembly in New Zealand underlines the insecurity workers face in this industry and why we want a redundancy deal.

It is our view that it is better to have a redundancy agreement in place now. Once redundancies are announced, we would be in a weaker position to fight.

But the company will not give us a redundancy deal unless we give up our legal right to refuse to transfer to the Ford-owned Alloy Wheel Plant that involves completely different work and is a 24-hour three shift operation. That means a person hired as a spray painter on a day job could be made to work permanent nights in a foundry pouring molten metal. If we refuse, we're out of a job without redundancy pay.

We are prepared to encourage voluntary transfers, but we insist on our right to choose.

The company has gone to extreme measures to break our strike. They have ordered cars from Australia and Asia and threatened that this could be done permanently and the plant closed.

Last week, they brought in 100 dealers from around the country to drive their cars through our picket lines. Company management have knocked down and injured several picketers.

They are out to break our Union and through their actions are threatening the rights of all workers.

### WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

The Engineers Union is fully behind our struggle. \$80 food vouchers are being supplied to each member each week, but we need financial help for the many families suffering real hardship.

Anyone is welcome to visit our picket line which is maintained 24 hours a day at both the front and back entrances to the plant. For further information, phone Engineers Union 303 4959, or  
Picket Caravan 277 6842

~~LETTER~~ THE NEW ZEALAND AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING AND  
RELATED TRADES INDUSTRIAL UNION OF WORKERS

8-12 ST MARTINS LANE  
AUCKLAND  
PHONE (09) 303-4959  
FAX (09) 376-532

AUCKLAND

**TO: ALL SHOP STEWARDS IN THE NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT**

**SUBJECT: FORD DISPUTE**

Dear Bros/Sisters,

You will all by now be aware of the big dispute at the Ford Motor Co. at Wiri, and as delegates of the Engineers Union I would like to explain to you the reasons for this dispute, and to appeal to you for support.

During recent negotiations of a redundancy agreement, Ford management offered the average scale of redundancy but insisted on the inclusion of a mandatory transfer clause which would mean that any workers made redundant at the Ford Assembly Plant would be forced to transfer to the wheel manufacturing plant that is also owned by Fords. The wheel manufacturing plant is basically a foundry and machining shop and workers required to transfer under such a clause would have to work in a completely separate factory, where different skills are required, and would have to do shift work.

The Union is willing to agree to voluntary transfer; that is, we insist that any worker made redundant at the assembly plant who volunteers to transfer should be able to pick up the redundancy pay he/she would originally have got if the job is not to his/her satisfaction after a month's trial.

Quite simply, the Union is insisting that the worker must have some say in the type of job he/she does if they are made redundant. This is the principle for which the Ford workers are on strike. The Union has signed many hundreds of redundancy deals that provide for voluntary transfers where the worker has transferred, not liked the job, and has picked up the redundancy pay and left.

**THERE ARE 360 WORKERS ON STRIKE.  
THEY ARE BEING ASSISTED BY THE UNION  
YOUR FINANCIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT IS URGENTLY NEEDED.**

Please arrange for a speaker to come and address you at your place of employment by ringing the Auckland Union Office 303.4959.

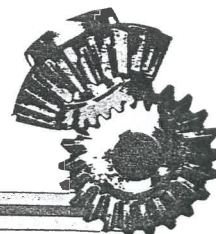
The retention of the principle of the worker having some say in the type of job that he does is absolutely essential and I again request your support in this matter.

Yours fraternally

  
J. Butterworth  
**AUCKLAND DISTRICT SECRETARY**

25 May 1990

ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO DISTRICT SECRETARY



TO MEMBERS OF THE ENGINEERS UNION ON STRIKE AT V.A.N.Z. WIRI

Dear Brother and Sisters

Meetings of members will be held each Thursday at 10am to receive food vouchers to the value of \$80 from the Union for the duration of the dispute.

The District Secretary, on behalf of the Auckland Executive, advises that Union support does not extend to a 12 + 3 claim but that it does support an 8 + 2 scale, plus the removal of the mandatory transfer clause.

Meetings will be held in the V.A.N.Z. cafeteria (if available) or car park. These vouchers are available from 24 May. If you missed the meeting come to the caravan and arrange to get one.

Special grants are available from Social Welfare for single income families with children. Most Social Welfare offices pay \$115 in cash although some, especially the Otara office, give good vouchers. The Social Welfare inform us that you cannot receive a grant from both the union and Social Welfare.

Social Welfare require:

1. Identification i.e. Passport or Drivers Licence.
2. Your last wage slip with Employers name.
3. Bank Books - yours and your partners.
4. Rent book or mortgage outgoings, hire purchase agreements.
5. Family Benefit number.

A form letter is available from the union caravan that can be taken to companies or banks you owe money to. The Housing Corporation has informed us that they can make arrangements for people to catch up on their rent or mortgage payments after the strike. You need to phone or visit the Housing Corporation and let them know you are on strike.

The strike committee has established a Welfare Committee to help people deal with problems they may have with these companies or banks. It may also be possible to give some financial assistance in urgent cases. Contact us at the caravan if you need help.

It is important for people to help with the picketing. The company is trying to take cars out of the yard and the more people we have the better chance we have of preventing them.

CARAVAN PHONE NUMBER

The picket line caravan phone number is: 277-6842

24 May 1990



May 3, 1990

Dear Employee

During the past few years the Company and unions have united to address motor industry issues such as the Government tariff review, vehicle quality improvements (now equal to the Japanese built-ups) with some success.

After working together successfully the Company is extremely disappointed with the irresponsible strike action today at Manukau Assembly.

The proposed redundancy agreement, which was recommended by your union officials is competitive with present agreements in the motor industry (the same as GM and better than Mitsubishi).

We believe you are well aware of the fragile nature of car assembly in New Zealand. This is reflected by the recent GM announcement of the closure of their car assembly operation in Wellington and the week that Nissan are suspending their vehicle assembly operations. We are more than willing to work towards a competitive operation however we can't do this without your active support.

Your action today has seriously undermined the future viability of this Company. We urge you to reconsider the position you have taken today.

*V. May*  
V. MAY

*K. Horibe*  
K. HORIBE

0682L

VEHICLE ASSEMBLERS  
NEW ZEALAND LIMITED

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SYLVIA PARK ASSEMBLY PLANT  
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Ph(09)579-019 TelexNZ2433 Fax(09)278-7731



7th May 1990

Dear Employee

Last week we wrote to you concerning strike action taken at Manukau Assembly Plant over the redundancy agreement. This Thursday morning, (May 10) a meeting will be held in the cafeteria at 7.30 a.m. to consider what should be done next. Please make sure you attend this meeting so you can have your say.

The following is a summary of the Company's redundancy offer.

- . Four (4) weeks notice of redundancy
- . Eight (8) weeks pay for the first year of service or a part thereof depending on service. At the moment nearly everybody in Manukau Assembly would get at least six (6) weeks pay.
- . Two (2) weeks pay for each year after one year or a part thereof for uncompleted years.
- . Payment of unused sick leave up to a maximum of 10 days.
- . Reasonable time off to look for new jobs.
- . Payment of wages in lieu of notice during the four weeks notice if the Company does not have work for you.
- . Transfers between plants on the Manukau site to avoid redundancy providing these transfers do not cause employee undue hardship.

This agreement was accepted by the VANZ Sylvia Park Plant on May 2 and the Alloy Wheel Plant on May 7. The Company has told Union Officials it will not be making any further offers.

We strongly urge you consider your next step carefully. There are no redundancies at the moment and the Company is doing everything possible to ensure that our Assembly Plant stays in business. We cannot do this if we do not have stable work environment. So whatever votes are taken on Thursday, insist on a secret ballot. Its your right.

*Vincent May*  
V. MAY  
ASSEMBLY MANAGER

*K. Horibe*  
K. HORIBE  
PRESIDENT





11th May 1990

Dear Employee

On Tuesday, May 15, 1990 at 10.00 a.m. a meeting will be held in the plant cafeteria to decide what to do over the redundancy agreement. You should make sure that you attend this meeting.

On the back of this letter is the Company's final redundancy offer which has been accepted at Sylvia Park and the Alloy Wheel Plant.

It is important that you understand two things about the offer the Company has made.

- (1) The redundancy payout scale of 8 plus 2 is a good offer. Since 1988, 70% of redundancy agreements registered with the Government are 8+2 or less. 55% of registered agreements are less than 8+2.
- (2) The transfer clause in the agreement will only be used when there are actual redundancies. It will not be used on a day to day basis.

Even though the Cleaners and Electricians have not accepted this offer they have gone back to work because they know there are no redundancies at the moment.

The Company is committed to keeping an assembly operation in New Zealand providing we can be competitive locally. You must consider your next step very carefully.

V. MAY  
ASSEMBLY MANAGER

K. HORIBE  
PRESIDENT

0054/SM

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May 18, 1990

Dear Employee

As you know, the last several years have been economically difficult for New Zealand and for the vehicle assembly industry in particular. We know that you worked hard to help the Manukau Assembly Plant to stay in business and we are determined to continue to do this.

The present strike action seriously affects the ability of the Manukau Plant to continue car assembly operations and therefore to continue our employment. We do not believe this strike is in the best interests of any employees. Already, each of you has lost two week's pay. Nothing has been gained and nothing will be gained by continuing the strike.

There are no redundancies today. If we were to return to work without an agreement and there were redundancies at some time in the future, the law provides for the settlement of a redundancy agreement through negotiation.

As you know General Motors recently announced its intention to stop assembling cars in New Zealand. We do not wish, to do the same.

In an effort to ensure we stay in the assembly business, we plan to restart the Plant at 7.30am on Monday, May 21st. The Company buses will be running as usual. We urge you to report to work at that time. If a sufficient number of employees report for work, normal operations will resume.

If we are unable to restart the plant Ford and Mazda will begin the actions necessary to supply their customers in New Zealand from other assembly sources.

We sincerely hope that with your cooperation we can continue as a part of the car assembly industry and restart operations on Monday morning.

J E Miller  
Chairman

K Horibe  
President

I Oga  
VANZ Board Member



18 Me 1990

Mo oe le Uso/Tuafafine

Ou te masalo ua lē lilo ia oe le tulaga fa'aletonu ua fa'afeagai nei male tele o pisinisi i Niu Sila ona ole leaga ole tulaga ua iai le tupe a Niu Sila. Ua taufa'aletonu ai foi le pisinisi ole fauta'avale. Ae ui i lea, o lou lima malosi ma lau fesoasoani ua mafai ai ona olaola lelei pea le pisinisi a le Manukau Assembly Plant. O la matou fo'i lea mana'oga, ina ia olaola pea le Manukau Assembly Plant auā le lumana'i, o tatou, ona tagata faigaluega.

A'o lenei strike, ua pei ole a avea ma mea ole a fa'aleagaina ai le pisinisi. Ou te masalo foi ua e silafiaina, e pei e leai se lelei tele ole a mauaina e oe ma a'u, tagata faigaluega. Ua matou talitonu o le tele o uso ma tuafafine o lo'o mafatia taluai lenei strike. Taga'i fo'i, ua lua nei vaiaso todogi ua misia. Ta'ilo, afai e fa'aumiumiloaina le strike, ou te masalo, o oe lava le tagata faigaluega ma si ou aiga o le a fa'atigaina. Aisea? Ua pei a mafua lenei Strike ona ole mataupu ole redundancy.

E le'o iai ni redundancy i le vaitaimi nei. Afai e toe amata le galuega ae e le'o iai se feagaiga e uiga i le redundancy, o lo'o iai tutafono e mafai ai ona talatalanoaina (negotiate) se feagaiga e uiga i redundancy.

O lea ā la le mea o le a fa'atigaina aifua oe le tagata faigaluega ma si ou aiga i lenei strike ao lena ua iai tulafono e fa'asino tonu i lenei mataupu?

E pei ona outou silafia le fa'asalalauga e uiga i le tapuniga o galuega a General Motors, le fausia lea o ta'avale i totonu o Niu Sila. E matou te lē mananā'o e o'o Manukau Assembly i lea tulaga.

Ona o le taumafai lava ina ia olaola lelei le pisinisi i Manukau Assembly Plant, ma ina ia maua ai pea ni avanoa mo tatou, ona tagata faigaluega ma o tatou aiga; o le a toe amataina ai galuega i le Aso Gafua, 21 o Me, i le 7.30 ile taeao. O pasi a le kamupani o le a toe feoa'i e pei ona masani ai. O le fa'amoemoe e fa'apea, afai e lava le numera o tagata faigaluega e usu mai, o le a faia galuega e pei ona masani ai. O le mea lea e lapata'i atu ai, ia e mafaufau loloto auā le lumana'i o lau galuega.

Manatua le mataupu o le strike (redundancy).

Ia uta le mafaufau, auā a lē amataina galuega a Ford ma Mazda o le a sa'ili mai loa e i latou nisi auala e maua mai ai ta'avale a fa'atau atu i tagata fia fai ta'avale; pe maua mai nisi ta'avale mai nisi falefauta'avale.

Ae ui i lea, o la matou talitonuga moni, o lau fesoasoani malosi ma le loto felagolagoma'i, o le a avea lea ma mea o le a olaola lelei ai le Manukau Assembly Plant; ae maise lava pe'a e usu mai i le taeao ole Aso Gafua, sauni e toe amata i lau galuega.

J E Miller  
Chairman

K Horibe  
President

I Oga  
VANZ Board Member

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# Happy Days at the Ford Factory

