

Tuesday 22 August, 2017

Streets betrays workers by terminating agreement and slashing wages by 46%

Unilever, owner of Streets ice cream, one of Australia's most iconic brands, has betrayed workers at its Minto plant in Western Sydney by attempting to terminate a workplace agreement and cut its workers' pay by 46 per cent.

As well as a drastic pay cut, hundreds of Streets' workers, who make Paddle Pop, Magnum and Golden Gaytime ice creams, would also have important conditions slashed. Limits on overtime, annual, personal, parental and compassionate leave, redundancy conditions, and protections against use of labour hire and contractors, would all be torn up.

The strategy used by Unilever over a 16 month industrial dispute is disturbingly familiar. Management proposed a new agreement, which included harsh new conditions, which Streets' workers overwhelmingly voted down.

In response, rather than continuing to negotiate, the company is applying to have the independent umpire slash wages by 46 per cent.

This practice has become a favourite of companies looking to bully their workforces into submission, and the precedent set up the Fair Work Commission's rulings on disputes at Aurizon has allowed hundreds of agreements to be terminated.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"This is industrial blackmail. Unilever and Streets are forcing workers to choose between an agreement they don't want and a 46 per cent cut in wages, with crippling cuts to conditions."

"The rules that used to protect working people from this kind of attack are broken."

"We stand with the workers at Minto just as we stood with the workers at CUB's Abbotsford Brewery. This bullying of working people will never be tolerated."

"Unilever are exploiting the fact that corporations have been given immense power, and protections for workers have been broken down. We want changes to the rules so that companies cannot blackmail their employees."

"Unilever try to portray themselves as an ethical company, but that clearly doesn't extend to their treatment of their own workers."

"The ACTU will campaign against this appalling treatment of working people – not only at Streets but everywhere that companies are using termination of agreements as blackmail – until the rules are changed."

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Media contact: ACTU Media 03 9664 7315 or Peter Green 0400 764 200

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