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New push by highly-paid company executives for a return to WorkChoices is a sign of blatant self-interest

A new round of lobbying by big business for a return to WorkChoices is a sign of blatant self-interest among the executives of highly profitable multinational corporations, say unions.

The ACTU said the hardline changes to industrial relations laws being advocated by the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) would reduce the pay, conditions and rights of Australian workers.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said the new lobbying push by big business and the Liberals policies would take the nation back to WorkChoices, despite Australians rejecting it at the last election.

“Highly paid executives in the booming mining industry and in other sectors are now flexing their muscles and making it clear they want the Liberal Party to go even further than WorkChoices.

“The big miners are hugely profitable companies but still they want to take away even more rights from the workers in this dangerous industry.

“When AMMA and ACCI talk of ‘flexibility’, this is code for another attack on workers’ rights through individual contracts that cut pay, conditions and job security.

“A return to WorkChoices would simply mean higher salaries for executives but lower pay and fewer rights for ordinary workers.”

Mr Lawrence said the Fair Work Act had restored workplace rights, and Australians wanted to move on from WorkChoices.

“Under the new Fair Work system, we now have protection from unfair dismissal for all, a watertight safety net of standards and awards, guaranteed rights to collective bargaining, and no individual contracts,” he said.

Unions take legal action to defend rights for casuals

The ACTU announced today it will oppose a move by employer groups to abolish minimum hours for casual employees in the new retail award.

The ACTU will seek leave to intervene when the matter is heard soon by Fair Work Australia.

“More than two million Australian workers would face pay cuts and lose their job security if the requirement to pay casuals for minimum hours of work was scrapped,” Mr Lawrence said.

“Hundreds of thousands of workers rely on a guaranteed minimum number of hours of work to maintain their standard of living. If this standard was removed, employers would be able to call in staff and send them home after only half an hour. That would be totally unacceptable.

“The push to remove rights for casuals is the thin edge of the wedge. It is part of a concerted push by extremist employer groups and the Liberal Party to fulfil their dream of abolishing the entire award safety net and returning to WorkChoices.”

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