

02 October 2008

Hon. Clayton Cosgrove
Minister of Immigration
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister

This union represents masters, deck officers, maritime pilots and other maritime qualified persons employed in the New Zealand shipping and port industries. We are also an affiliate of the NZ Council of Trade Unions, and regularly attend the CTU's transport and migration sector meetings to assist the CTU in its regular dealings with Labour Department officials on questions of immigration.

We bring to your attention our serious concerns at the failure of many offices of the NZ Immigration Service to carry out adequate labour market tests in relation to work permit approvals for persons seeking work in the maritime industry.

We have on a number of occasions attempted to establish relationships with the Wellington and Christchurch offices, but this has failed, and instead, we are regularly confronted with applications for membership of our union from persons already employed on work permits in our industry. In some cases we have members who have been declined for the position by the employer concerned.

We have not been consulted by the Immigration Service on any of these applications. There are only two offices with which we have regular contact, Palmerston North and Queenstown, and we have no concerns with those. The Palmerston North office has also recently circulated our membership and contact details to all offices in an effort to establish communication and we appreciate this. But we are dealing with employers from Bay of Islands to Bluff, and in many overseas countries, and we need to be sure that all NZIS offices will consult us on work permit/visa applications.

But given the dialogue between the service and the NZCTU, it seems to us rather strange that we, as a CTU affiliate, are 'unknown' to many immigration officers. I have tried to raise my concerns with the Wellington office but my numerous messages left there for someone called "Fay-Marie" have seemingly been ignored. We have now given up trying to make contact there, and appeal to you for assistance.

We are deeply committed to protecting job opportunities for New Zealand citizens and permanent residents, and we believe that an increasing number of work permit applications will be lodged for jobs in our industry in the very near future.

We also enthusiastically support the Minister of Transport's recent workforce development initiatives for the coastal shipping industry, and we do not wish to see industry training lost in favour of an influx of 'already trained' temporary migrants.

We are acutely aware of the loss of the New Zealand charter fishing industry to a 100% temporary migrant workforce, whilst the government of the day promised New Zealand workforce development in that industry. This causes us to worry and question if we are excluded from any input into the use of temporary migration in our industry by mistake or by design.

Yours sincerely

Helen McAra
GENERAL SECRETARY
Email: helenm@nzmsg.co.nz

Cc: Hon. Annette King, Minister of Transport