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NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS

www.union.org.nz

Te Kauae Kaimahi

3 May 2013

Hon Simon Bridges
Minister of Labour
Private Bag 18041
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Dear Simon

Thank you for including me in your forestry safety visit yesterday. I am unsure what you learned from your meeting with PF Olsen but it would be good to discuss that.

The contractor we went to see was interesting. Clearly the workforce was smart and knew what they were doing which was great to see. They also had a good picture of what other contractors were like and that those having the accidents were working in ways they didn't like and understood to be dangerous. This is a serious issue and some of these contractors work for PF Olson. PF Olson do not see this as their responsibility. Even this good contractor did not have an employee participation system. It had clearly crossed no-ones mind!

The case study I gave you in the car was one of those contractors that did not have a good worksite. The worksite was chaotic and PF Olson had clearly put the company under pressure. The Director of the contracting company was charged but only as an employee. You will have seen all my scribbles in the margins. There was no comment in the inquiry into the rescue which was botched. The one person on the worksite who did know where everyone was and was directing the site was not held responsible and the guilty plea of the man charged meant little else was considered. The investigation report was full of holes. Clearly the worker killed had worked a long period without a proper lunch break and had been put on unscheduled cutting which no-one else knew about. No safety meeting was going to cover that. P F Olson confirm they continue to use this contractor, and as you heard the skills shortage means not all companies are optimal.

I don't think it is possible for you to now assert the ACOP is working. It does not even reference the participation system. Effectively the contractor we saw is breaking the law but probably complying with the ACOP. I also don't think it is viable given the stories told to you today by these workers including that there are lots of unsafe operators out there, that you continue to assert things are in order in this sector. This is particularly important given that the accidents keep happening.

An inquiry into this industry could be done in many ways. We do not have a firm view about the methodology. I think we must understand the industry better to make any

difference and the only way to do that is to give workers like those we heard today, the chance to give their views and to tell of their experiences. I hope after today you will reconsider this proposal and we of course are happy to talk more about how this might be done.

I think we were shown the best today and even then there were gaps. I consider that we and PF Olsen are now on notice in regards the practices of this industry and are not now able to simply ignore that.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'H' and 'K'.

Helen Kelly
President



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Te Kauae Kaimahi

7 May 2013

Peter Clark
Chief Executive.
PF Olsen Group
99 Sala St
Rotorua

Dear Peter

Thank you for including me in your forestry safety visit with the Minister last week.

The visit to Newton Logging was interesting. Clearly the workforce was smart and knew what they were doing which was great to see. They also had a good picture of what other contractors were like and that those having the accidents were working in ways they didn't like and understood to be dangerous. This is a serious issue and some of these contractors work for PF Olsen. Even this good contractor did not have an employee participation system. It had clearly crossed no-ones mind! As you said on the way up, you encourage the workers to speak up – well they did last week and I consider all of us present to now be on notice that there are operators in the area that are working people too hard and workers that are unhappy about that.

I don't think it is possible for anyone to now assert the ACOP is working. It does not even reference the participation system. Effectively the contractor we saw is breaking the law but probably complying with the ACOP. I also don't think it is viable given the stories told to us by these workers including that there are lots of unsafe operators out there, that anyone continue to assert things are in order in this sector. This is particularly important given that the accidents keep happening.

An inquiry into this industry could be done in many ways. We do not have a firm view about the methodology. I think we must understand the industry better to make any difference and the only way to do that is to give workers like those we heard last week, the chance to give their views and to tell of their experiences. I hope after our visit you will consider my offer to meet and discuss these issues in more detail.

I think we were shown the best the other day and even then there were gaps. I consider that we, the Minister and PF Olsen are now on notice in regards the practices of this industry and are not now able to simply ignore that.

Regards

Helen Kelly
President