

PICKET LINE



Tom McKeon — Industrial Information Officer

ACTU policy statements

The ACTU Science and Technology policy adopted by the ACTU September 1989 Congress calls for increased investment in research and development. Within this policy the Congress calls for: 'improved infrastructure and access in areas such as libraries ... for research and learning.' The ACTU Education Policy statement notes that within higher education: 'funding for libraries, capital works, technical support staff, computing facilities equipment and student services, has declined significantly over the last decade.' The Congress calls for upgraded funding for higher education. Within secondary education the Educational Policy calls upon the Federal Government to: 'designate information technology as a key centre for teaching and research in 1990.' *Policy and Strategy Statements, October 1989* is now available from the ACTU, 393-397 Swanston Street, Melbourne, telephone (03) 663 5266.

Salary scales

A new ALIA salary scale book is currently being compiled. It will be available as soon as all information is to hand. When published, it will be advertised in *inCite*.

Award restructuring 1990

This column has previously discussed the topic of award restructuring. It is worth examining this process again and seeing how much progress has been made.

Pay Rises

In the national wage case of August, last year, the Industrial Relations Commission decided that in the following twelve month period, two pay rises of 3 per cent each would be made available to workers employed under industrial awards. The various state industrial tribunals have adopted basically the same decision.

The two rises would not be granted automatically, but would be dependent on unions and employers reaching agreement on restructuring awards. This restructuring would be guided by the structural efficiency principle (SEP).

Talk money

Most employees have gained the initial 3 per cent pay rise in the 6 month period up to January 1990. The various industrial commissions have granted the rise on evidence that discussion has commenced, between unions and employers. This has been called 'progress money' or 'talk money'.

In this second 6 month period up to July 1990, fully restructured awards must be devised and hopefully, agreed upon. If this agreement is not forthcoming, then unions may take their proposals to the commissions and ask for arbitrated decisions. In either case significant changes in work organisation, career structure and pay will be sent in place during the next 6 months.

Under the structural efficiency principle (SEP), the following measures should be included when awards are redrawn;

- * establishing skill-related career paths which provide incentive for workers to continue to participate in skill-development
- * eliminating impediments to multi-skilling, and broadening the range of tasks which a worker may perform
- * create appropriate relativities between categories of workers within the award and at enterprise level
- * ensuring flexible working patterns
- * reviewing leave procedures
- * updating and/or rationalising the list of award respondents, and
- * rationalising the number of awards covering any employer.

As the new award structures are agreed upon in the middle of the year, changes to work organisation may be phased in over the next 2-3 years. At the moment the broad picture is being decided in senior level discussions. As more of the day to day, practical details are discussed, unions will be looking more for the involvement of rank and file members in discussions.

What is to be done?

Union members should be on the look out for union brochures and journals. Some unions have indicated that training in award restructuring principles will be provided to members. This will occur in preparation for the formation of participative structure such as joint workplace negotiating committees.

It is important that library and information staff take up the opportunity to be in such committees.

Involvement of ALIA members at this level is crucial if changes are to reflect members' interests. A first step is to ensure that the lines of communication are kept open. If you are unsure if your union has a workplace representative in your organisation or area, then contact the union office to ensure that you are receiving all publications.

The future wage system

The popular press is already running stories about what the next wages system will be like under either an ALP or Coalition government. The form of future pay rises is undecided. However, the hard work of award restructuring is still largely ahead of us. It will continue regardless of the election result.

The next wage system will operate from August 1990 when the next national wage case will be heard by the Industrial Relations Commission. However, pay rises may not flow on for some months.

An ALP government would argue for a package of small pay rises with tax cuts and superannuation increases. A coalition government would argue for a mixture of pay rises under the centralised wage fixation system, for some employees with options for enterprise bargaining or voluntary agreements which would govern other pay. The results are hard to predict in either case.

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