

Stolen Wages Update

A QCU update keeping you informed of the latest on the campaign for wage justice



August 2009

The Queensland Council of Unions is continuing the campaign for wage justice for Aboriginal workers...

Court proceedings commence

Litigation commenced in the District Court on 19 August with the lodging of a writ on behalf of claimant, Uncle Conrad Yeatman, a former carpenter and labourer from Yarrabah. Uncle Conrad's wages were withheld from him since he began working at age 14 and he refused the original offer of compensation in 2002 as he knew that it was not a fair settlement.

Even though the Stolen Wages Reparations Scheme was re-opened last year, the government still siphoned off over \$20 million into an education fund for Indigenous children.

"The \$55.4 million was set aside to repair the significant and long-lasting damage inflicted on workers whose wages were stolen and it should be used for that purpose and no other. All these workers are asking is that the government come good on its promise," said General Secretary, Ron Monaghan.

The QCU is pleased to offer its assistance to Uncle Conrad in his quest to gain wage justice and in the process, offer hope to all those workers whose wages were stolen.

Continuing the fight

Over the last six months the QCU has been putting in place its four pronged campaign plan.

The community campaign has started with morning teas across Queensland to celebrate the commencement of legal proceedings. In addition, community members and union officials, delegates and activists have been running stalls asking for signatures on our petition to be presented to the Premier. As the legal process continues, the QCU will keep you up to date on progress and any plans for community campaign events or meetings. Stay tuned.

Stolen Wages – Lousy Little Offer

Decades ago we Aborigines worked hard for our wages. Wages which we never got to spend. Couldn't really help our families because we didn't have the money to send.

*We're now in the year 2005, and we still haven't received our "savings"
Successive governments won't address our Aboriginal "stolen wages" issue
How much longer will it take government leaders to stop lying and misbehaving?*

*Documentation clarifies our "stolen wages" claim. Yet government denies those facts and are running out of excuses
They promote equality and prosperity but completely overlook Aboriginal abuses.*

For countless years Aborigines were employed as housemaids, nannies, cooks and drovers – we thought our money was being "saved".

But governments used Aboriginal money to fund developments and no "savings" were left over.

How dare they take our land, use our labor and then spend our hard-earned money!

Did this degrading and stealthy practice occur within their white society?

If it happened to them recompense would have been immediately.

*For so-called compensation they are offering a lousy \$4000
Is the oldest culture really worth that much?*

Why are Aborigines still living in increasing squalor?

If Australia is such a "lucky" country, why is government's "compensation" offer so very paltry?

Australian governments paint a deceptive vision of equality in Australia

The true picture tells a different story of suffering and injustice.

Would they accept their money being held in "trust"?

No way! Okay to do it to Aborigines though. How grossly unjust.

Prominent Aborigine David Unaipon appears on our fifty dollar note.

Is government's purpose to hide behind his image and then gloat?

In this age of "litigation" perhaps Aborigines should venture overseas and expose their "stolen wages" claim.

Lobby the international monetary organisations and hope that they are able to resolve our Aboriginal "stolen wages" shame.

By Coralie Cassidy (7 April 2005)

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

1. Register your protest to the Premier at www.qcu.asn.au/223.html
2. Yarn it up! Keep talking to people about this issue. Most people don't know the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in Queensland - let people know what happened and how important this is.
3. Stay tuned and participate in any upcoming events happening in your community.