

Not a Typical Union but a Union all the Same: New Unions Under the Employment Relations Act 2000

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Abstract

This paper reports on a small exploratory study of factors significant to the formation, and rapid proliferation of new predominantly workplace-based unions, or New Unions, under the Employment Relations Act 2000. Specifically, it examines the motivations and interests of workers who decided to form and join those unions and the role of other parties, notably employers, in that decision. Workers' dissatisfaction with and mistrust of existing unions were factors significant to their decision to form New Unions, while the role of employers was found to be less influential and less dominant than previously thought. Overall, this paper argues that New Unions may be a predominantly employee, not an employer, driven phenomenon.

Introduction

This paper reports on the formation and growth in New Zealand of new union organisations under the Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA). To date, researchers have placed great emphasis on describing these newly formed unions and on comparing their structure, activities and character against that of older more established union organisations. Overall, newly formed unions have compared unfavourably to older unions leading some researchers to question the formers status as 'genuine' union organisations. A key element in these arguments are findings that suggest that New Unions as a group are incapable of operating at arms length from employers and are an employer-driven, not an employee-driven, phenomenon.

Researchers have focussed critically on (a) how New Unions operate, (b) the role of employers in their formation and operation, and (c) comparing their structure and activities against that of older more established unions. However, researchers have tended to overlook why those unions formed. Specifically, few researchers have addressed the motivations and interests of workers who formed New Unions and the process by which that decision was made. Some have linked workers' dissatisfaction with and possible opposition to the wider union movement to workers' decision to form New Unions (e.g., Barry & May, 2002). But beyond this, no direct or definitive examination has been provided on why workers choose to form, and subsequently join organisations that are, according to researchers, ineffective and unable to operate independently (e.g., Barry, 2004).

This paper addresses these and other questions by examining a small group of New Unions formed from 2000-2004 and the attitudes and experiences of employers and Old Union representatives who bargain with and operate alongside New Unions. It questions in particular why New Unions formed, the motivations and interests of

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workers who formed them, and challenges existing assumptions that they may not be genuine (or effective) union organisations. Existing research findings relevant to these questions are presented first, followed by a discussion of relevant results, points of convergence and divergence from prior research, and finally the implications of the paper's findings for future research are discussed.

The ERA and New Union formation

From 2000 – 2004, approximately 100 New Unions representing some 10,000 workers (see Table 1) were formed and registered under the ERA (Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002; Harbridge & Thickett, 2003; May, 2003b). The rapid growth and proliferation of this large number of new, predominantly small, unions diverged from international trends toward union decline, and the creation, by merger, of large conglomerate union bodies (Buchanan, 2003; Chaison & Rose, 1991; Freeman, 1989; Hose & Rimmer, 2002; Kuruvilla, Das, Kwon & Kwon, 2002). By 1st March 2004, New Unions made up approximately half of all registered unions in New Zealand but their membership represented only 2% of total union membership (Employment Relations Service (ERS), 2004). Despite their small size, the overall contribution of New Unions to union membership growth during this period was significant; approximately one third of all new union members registered under the ERA belonged to New Unions (ERS, 2004).

Although described as an unexpected consequence of the ERA (Barry, 2004) the formation of New Unions attracted only a modest degree of interest from researchers (Anderson, 2004; Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002; Barry & Reveley, 2001). The primary focus of this body of research has been on:

- the structure and activities of New Unions and on their possible impact on the existing union movement (Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002);
- their legitimacy or independence as organisations (Anderson, 2004); and
- the possible involvement of employers in their formation (Anderson, 2004; Barry & Reveley, 2001).

However, this same research has provided a paucity of data on why these organisations formed, workers' motivations for forming them, and the process by which the decision to form those unions was made. Rather, researchers paid greater attention to the question of whether New Unions were, or were capable of becoming, a genuine form of union representation (Barry & May, 2002), and to comparing them against existing definitions and empirical descriptions of the term 'union' and union character (e.g., Blackburn, 1967; Nicholson, Blyton & Turnbull, 1981; Webb & Webb, 1907). Key characteristics said to differentiate newly formed unions from these concepts were their:

- Non-affiliation with the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU).
- Enterprise-based membership (See Table 2).
- Lower membership fees.
- Enterprise-based bargaining agenda (Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002; May, 2003a & 2003b).

Table 1: Registration history & membership of unions in NZ as at 1st March 2003

Classification	Registration date	Number of unions	% of registered unions	Membership of unions registered during period	% of union membership
Old Unions	Prior to January 2000	83	47.4	324,892	97.2
New Unions	January 2000– March 2002	92	52.6	9,152	2.7
	TOTALS	175	100.0	334,044	100.0

Source: Employment Relations Service, Department of Labour

Based on these and other differences, New Unions as a group have been broadly defined as small, poorly financed organisations that are something less than a genuine form of employee representation (Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002). More specifically, researchers have voiced concern that New Unions fail the critical test of being a genuine union (Anderson, 2004; Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002), including the ability to act independently of an employer (Blackburn, 1967; Blackburn & Prandy, 1965; Prandy, Stewart & Blackburn, 1974). This implied lack of independence has been of significant interest to researchers, as has the role of employers in both the formation and operation of New Unions.

Table 2: Distribution of New Unions by membership rules as at 1st March 2003

Membership criteria	Restricted to single employer	Open to employees of any firm	Total
Restricted by occupation or position	20	9	29
Open to any occupation within a firm	41	20	61
TOTAL	61	29	90

Source: New Zealand Companies Office

New Unions and Employers

Doubts over the independence of New Unions as organisations has led researchers to argue that employers may sponsor or promote New Union formation as part of a wider decollectivist strategy (e.g., Peetz, 2002a & 2002b), possibly based on a New Zealand version of the company union phenomenon seen elsewhere (e.g., Jenkins & Sherman, 1979; Kaufman, 2000; Nissen, 1999). But outside of a few, possibly extreme, examples[†] (Anderson, 2004; Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2001; May, 2003a & 2003b), little definitive evidence has been produced to show that this is a widespread phenomenon. Nevertheless, as argument it is one that has not been significantly challenged.

[†]Typically the Te Kuiti Beef-workers Union and the Warehouse People's Union

The key problem for this study is that none of the research addresses clearly the question why an employer would sponsor the formation of a New Union? More specifically, why would New Zealand employers consider it necessary and/or advantageous to do so? Undermining the collective bargaining efforts of more established or Old Unions is mooted as one reason (Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002; Barry & Reveley, 2001). But whether employers are deliberately pursuing this type of strategy is unclear. Research also suggests that in the previous legislative environment that was detrimental to unions, New Zealand employers are likely to forgo formal attempts at decollectivisation and rely instead on the legislative climate to achieve similar outcomes (Wright, 1997). While the restrictive legislative conditions to which these findings relate no longer apply, key aspects of the current legislative environment could be argued to have a similar decollectivising influence. Relevant factors include the proliferation of standardised employment agreements, and the passing on of union negotiated conditions to non-union workers, the absence of continued or sustained growth in union membership (Employment Relations Service, 2004; Waldegrave et al, 2003). In particular, the use of standardised employment agreements is a key facet of inclusive and exclusivist decollectivist strategies (Peetz, 2002a & 2002b) and many New Zealand firms would appear to routinely adopt such methods (Waldegrave et al, 2003). If this is the case, why then would New Zealand employers pursue the formation of company unions when other less overt forms of decollectivist strategy appear to be more effective under the ERA?

Workers and the formation of New Unions

The most significant omission from recent research has been an analysis of the motives and interests of workers who formed New Unions. Few writers - with Anderson (2004) being one exception - have questioned why workers would 'freely' choose to form, join and remain in organisations that could not and did not effectively represent their interests. Fewer still have questioned why workers would form, join and remain in organisations that lacked the ability to act independently of their employers. Empirical research into workers' unionisation decisions has consistently found that workers join and remain in unions in order to gain some advantage, typically an economic one (e.g., Freeman & Rogers, 1999; Tolich & Harcourt, 1999; Waddington & Whitston, 1997). If a union is incapable or unable (because of employer involvement) to offer such an advantage, why workers would choose to form, join and remain in New Unions is an important, but largely unanswered question. The only identified motives for workers' decisions to form New Unions are argued to be their dissatisfaction with the existing union movement or a desire for a cheaper form of union membership (Barry & May, 2002; May, 2003a & 2003b). But as catalysts of New Union formation, these factors have not been extensively examined by researchers. Consequently, empirical research has offered few, if any, explanations of why workers choose to form New Unions or of how that decision was reached. This is surprising given the impact New Unions are supposed to have on the union movement as a whole and the operation of the ERA (Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002; May, 2003a & 2003b).

Methodology

Focus of the Study

In examining the decision to form a New Union and the questions raised by the relevant literature, this paper sought to re-examine the phenomenon of New Union formation and asked “Why do New Unions form in New Zealand?” From this question, a sub-set of questions were examined

- Why do workers reject membership in other unions in favour of forming their own union?
- What role did employers’ play in the workers’ decision to form a union?
- What are the characteristics and definition of a genuine union?
- Are New Unions genuine?

Design

The study used a qualitative methodology based upon semi-structured interviews with a small, deliberately selected sample of representatives from three stakeholder groups. Those groups were:

- New Unions formed under the ERA.
- Employers whose workforces were partially covered by one or more New Unions.
- Existing, or Old Unions, that operated alongside one or more New Unions.

New Union Participants

New Union participants were deliberately selected from 92 such organisations registered with the Department of Labour as at 1st March 2004. Representatives of nine New Unions were interviewed, and, in a small departure from previous examinations of New Unions (Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002), participants actual level of involvement in the formation of their unions was identified. The research focussed on participants who were identified as either a founding member, or ‘the’ founding member of a particular union. Six participants were identified as founding members of their unions in this fashion.

Other Participants

Employers were identified by examination of the rules of registered New Unions, while Old Unions were identified by New Union participants who frequently detailed the other union organisations operating within their place of work. Representatives of three employers, whose workforces were partially represented by New and Old Unions, and three Old Unions, who operated alongside one or more New Unions, were interviewed by the study.

Limitations of the Study

A key limitation of this study was the small number of New Union participants interviewed and its ability to provide results comparable to the work of Barry (2004) and Barry & May (2002) that provided the only previous direct examinations of New Union formation. Barry & May (2002), for example, identified 64 of 158 unions registered as at 2nd October 2001 as New Unions, and interviewed 18 or 28% of

registered New Unions using a structured telephone survey. The current study interviewed a smaller proportion of both New Unions and registered unions in general. Only 12 out of the 174 unions registered as at 1st March 2004 were interviewed, including 9 of the 92 New Unions. The sample of 9 New Unions represented 9.8% of the all New Unions registered at that time. However, the study's small sample is considered defensible on the grounds that small samples are frequently used in qualitative research (Silverman, 2001), and are justifiable where they provide sufficient information to allow themes within the research to be fully developed (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). While the proportion of New Unions interviewed by the study was small, particularly in comparison to prior research (notably Barry & May, 2002), it is balanced by the:

- Use of semi-structured rather than survey-based interview methods.
- Depth of data generated by the interview process.
- Inclusion of other stakeholder groups.

A final limitation of the study was the deliberately selection of participants which would make it difficult to argue that its findings are applicable to New Unions as a whole. However, the study was able to balance the deliberate selection of participants against the need for a representative sample by including participants:

- From a wide range of industry classifications, including both the public and private sector.
- That varied considerably in size, in terms of employee and membership numbers.

In regard to New Union participants, the sample included organisations that were broadly comparable to New Unions as whole in terms of: size, membership rules, date of formation and industry distribution.

Results

Why did workers reject membership in existing unions in favour of forming their own?

Why workers join unions is a question New Zealand researchers have not examined as extensively as those internationally. A single New Zealand examination² of the decision to join a union (Tolich & Harcourt, 1999) compares rather unfavourably to the plethora of similar studies available elsewhere (e.g., Gani, 1996; Lahuis & Mellor, 2001; Waddington & Kerr, 2002; Wheeler & McClendon, 1991). New Zealand researchers have also avoided direct examination of why workers reject membership of particular unions and/or leave them. The closest comparable evidence comes from Australia where Peetz (1998) examined workers' decisions to join, stay in and exit unions in that country.

This paper found that the option of joining an established union was actively, and democratically, considered prior to workers' decision to form a New Union. In each instance workers choose to reject membership in another, principally older more established union because of their personal and shared experiences with those unions. More specifically, workers were found to be dissatisfied with the actions, attitudes and behaviour of the members, officials and other representatives of those unions. Responses typical of participants were:

“They weren’t happy with the union reps they had, and if they had a really serious problem they found it could take a week to get someone who had any real teeth to actually deal with things.”

“I was 49 years old, I’d been unemployed for six months and two guys hopped on my bus the first week and said ‘come and join this union so we’ve got solidarity and with solidarity we can smash the firm’, and I said ‘well this firms given me a job at 49 years old why would I want to smash them?’ And that was their approach, and I will never, never join [that] union.”

Key characteristics with which workers were dissatisfied were: Old Unions’ aggressive organising and bargaining tactics, poor service delivery, and perceived unwillingness and inability to represent their interests. Significantly, in rejecting membership in other unions, workers did not reject the idea or concept of collectivism, only membership of specific unions. Participants considered collective representation to be beneficial, but saw little or no benefit in belonging to existing organisations.

What role did employers’ play in the workers’ decision to form a union?

Employer responses to, and involvement in, New Union formation was described differently by each group of participants. The majority of New Unions in the study believed that their employer *supported*, but did not assist with, their decision to form. Employers indicated that they only *accepted* that decision, and their involvement was a matter of legislative compliance. Old Unions were contradictory, indicating both a strong belief in employer involvement in New Union formation, and a desire to believe that such involvement existed where it did not. Responses typical of these wide variations were:

From New Unions

“They actually suggested I think they encouraged it...”

From Employers

“...we took a view that there was little point in prevailing against them, saying they shouldn’t do this [as] it was their legal right to do so.”

From Old Unions

“I don’t think that employers are involved, even though that’s what we’d like to think, it’s just, I know that’s what people are thinking...”

Overall, employers were found to play a limited role in the formation of New Unions in the study. Employer involvement with these New Unions was found to more likely reflect an acceptance of workers’ legal rights to form unions under the ERA, not a deliberate attempt to form a tame union or to undermine existing union organisations. Only in one or possibly two instances were such actions identified, with employers’ following a pattern of behaviour described by existing research. Yet, evidence of actual or widespread attempts to form a tame in-house union with the intent of undermining existing union organisations was limited, as was evidence of New Unions gaining any form of advantageous relationship with their employer.

What are the characteristics and definition of a genuine union?

Participants defined a union as a collective organisation whose primary purpose was the representation of workers' employment interests; a definition broadly similar to that of Webb and Webb (1907). Participants did not provide a consistent definition or description of a genuine union. Rather, they identified characteristics critical to the character of the *typical New Zealand union* and how their unions and New Unions in general did or did not adhere to those characteristics. The typical New Zealand union was identified as an older organisation formed prior to the ERA, that:

- Represented workers across an industry or the country as a whole.
- Pursued interests that frequently diverged from those of employers.
- Pursued those interests through collective bargaining and other non-bargaining activities.
- Was affiliated with the NZCTU.

Of these factors, the pursuit of collective bargaining, independence from employers, and willingness to engage in militant or industrial action appeared most significant to participants' descriptions.

A number of additional characteristics were also attributed by New Unions and employers to the behaviour of the typical New Zealand union. The specific terms used to describe Old Unions were:

- Confrontational or positional.
- Untrustworthy.
- Antagonistic.

Responses typical of these descriptions included:

From New Unions

"I see unions as pommy _____ who stand up and shout. That's the vision of me growing up in New Zealand, that feeling that unions were anti the bosses."

From Employers

"They [the New Union] have a very different approach to their relationship with the company than the other unions. What is different? They don't appear to be driven by any kind of national or CTU agenda."

"It's the trade off mentality or a positional mentality."

Consequently, participants' descriptions of the typical New Zealand union were broadly comparable to the concept of union character used by previous research into New Union formation (Barry & May, 2002), as well as to existing definitions of the term union.

Are New Unions genuine?

Despite each participant group sharing a common definition of the *typical New Zealand union*, the question of whether their unions (in the case of New Union participants) or New Unions in general were genuine was more difficult to answer. Participants seemed to describe New Unions in the same way, but differed on whether they were, in fact, genuine unions. New Unions were described in a similar fashion to existing research

(e.g., Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002) with participants in the study noting features such as their enterprise-based membership, and narrower bargaining agenda. However, when describing New Unions, participants gave greater weight to describing *how* they operated rather than what they did and how they were structured. In relation to the concept of union character, participant responses gave weight to previous claims that the concept had little application to New Unions (Barry, 2004). Key facets of union character that New Unions were not found to adhere to were:

- The willingness to engage in militant action.
- Affiliation with the NZCTU.
- A willingness to declare themselves to be a union.

Participants also identified a strong divergence between New Unions and their definition of the typical New Zealand union. Significantly, how they did so also appeared more significant to participants than New Unions' adherence or non-adherence to the academic concept of union character. Key factors said to differentiate New Unions from the typical New Zealand union were argued to be their:

- Pursuit of enterprise rather than industry and national level collective bargaining.
- Unwillingness or inability to engage in militant action.
- Unwillingness and inability to pursue activities outside of collective bargaining.
- Unwillingness and possible inability to pursue interests that diverged from those of their employer.
- Pragmatic and cooperative rather than confrontational relationships with employers.

Responses typical of these descriptions included:

From New Unions

"I see us [the New Union] as a group of people working together rather than a group of people with our fists out fighting together."

"Well I don't think we do a hell of a lot that's different but we do communicate perhaps a little better."

From Employers

"In many ways they have more of a partnership relationship with the business than a positional or adversarial relationship."

From Old Unions

"I don't see them as a reputable union. We see them as just basically bargaining agents they don't do the things that proper unions do. They're there to negotiate the agreement then they're gone basically."

On the basis of these findings, the New Unions identified in this study would appear not to be genuine unions as they do not adhere to either the concept of union character or participants' descriptions of the typical New Zealand union. Conversely, however, when asked whether those unions were genuine, both New Unions and their employers stated that they were. Only participants representing Old Unions argued against defining New Unions (particularly those with whom they had contact) as genuine, placing significant emphasis on two key characteristics attributed to those organisations:

- The presumed lack of independence, and
- The pursuit of a purely enterprise-based agenda.

The first characteristic was argued to be derived from New Unions' reliance upon free-riding to secure a collective agreement, and their inability to pursue a confrontational relationship with employers. Old Unions regarded both as indicative of New Unions' dependence upon employers for their long-term survival. In describing the second, Old Unions did not dispute that many New Unions bargained collectively, which is a key facet of union character (Blackburn, 1967). They argued, however, that this did not make them genuine unions as how they bargained was not sustainable and an ineffective method of representing workers.

New Unions and employers, however, placed less emphasis on the level at which they bargained and operated, and focused more strongly on the basic purpose of those organisations. This was defined by both groups as the simple representation of workers' employment interests, a definition similar to Webb and Webb (1907) and an organisational objective that does not differ from that of other unions. Overall, New Unions argued that they were genuine but distinctly different to organisations typical of the New Zealand union movement. These differences, while significant, did not prevent those unions from being regarded or from operating as genuine independent union organisations.

Responses typical of these descriptions included:

From Employers

"The only thing we struggle with its like having two children, the eldest [The Old Union] and the youngest [the New Union] child."

"The histories of the two are very different. We have a lot less misunderstanding and contention between the firm and them [the New Union] because they are a bit more mature, more responsible, and less prone to being opportunistic in their approach."

From Old Unions

"The members say don't call them a union, the members hate them, they hate the idea that they are calling themselves a union – the membership hate them because they are users you see."

Findings of this study also suggested that the attitude of Old Unions toward New Unions may be determined, not by the character of the New Unions, but whether they compete with them for members. All three groups of participants highlighted the significance of competition for members to the type of inter-union relationships they experienced. In workplaces where New Unions and Old Unions represented, and therefore competed for, the same group of workers, these relationships were predominantly confrontational and at times openly hostile. Where relationships were hostile participants were more likely to argue that New Unions were not genuine unions. In workplaces where New Unions and Old Unions did not compete for members, inter-union relationships were predominantly neutral with minimal contact between each group. In these circumstances, there appeared to be less opposition by representatives of Old Unions toward the newly formed organisations.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper found that New Unions formed to represent the specific collective employment interests of small groups of workers, typically employed within a single workplace, through the process of collective bargaining. Workers' decisions to form a New Union, rather than join an existing union, represented a deliberate decision to reject membership in the established union movement. That decision resulted from workers' personal and shared experiences, and strong dissatisfaction with, the behaviour and attitudes associated with Old Unions, their officials and members. In general, the studied New Unions formed because workers desired membership in a collective organisation that would not repeat their personal experiences with other unions.

Employer's role in the formation of New Unions in the study was less active and significant than was expected from prior research (Anderson, 2004; Barry, 2004; Barry & May, 2002; Barry & Reveley, 2001). Specifically, no evidence was found of widespread attempts by employers to sponsor or create a tame or company-type union. Evidence was found, however, of possibly isolated incidents, similar to those reported in existing research. Overall, this study found that employer support for New Unions could be more appropriately described as an acceptance of workers' legal right to organise. It was probably also influenced by an employer preference for the type and style of bargaining that New Unions was expected to pursue.

The question of whether New Unions were genuine was harder to resolve. Each group of participants provided a broadly similar description of the *typical New Zealand union* and of the characteristics of the *typical New Union*. Participants differed however, on whether New Unions as a group were genuine. What was more evident was that participants saw strong differences between how new and old unions operated, if not their central purpose or character as organisations. This study, like previous research (e.g., Barry, 2004), did find that the concept of union character was not applicable to New Unions. However, this study's findings suggest that this did not prevent many participants, and significantly the workers who formed and joined New Unions, from viewing New Unions as anything other than genuine union or more accurately collective organisations. Findings also suggest that inter-union competition for members may be more significant to how participants defined New Unions, than the actual character of those organisations.

Overall, if we assume that these findings are applicable to New Unions as a whole, and not solely representative of this small group, then these findings have some practical implications for a number of stakeholders, the New Zealand union movement and older more established unions in particular. For these organisations, the deliberate and free choice by collectively-minded workers to reject them is a sign of the problems they face in rebuilding under the ERA. Slow union membership growth and poor membership retention rates will not be helped by suggestions that in some workplaces unions' own organising efforts, officials and members have served to deter people from joining the union movement. Amongst employers with similar attitudes to those in this study, Old Unions' efforts at building constructive partnerships with employers and at multi-employer collective bargaining may be hampered by suggestions that they are seen as antagonistic, overly militant and untrustworthy. Both situations suggest that unions need to take greater care in how they build and maintain relationships within New Zealand organisations.

For researchers, this study, while small in scope, suggests strongly that New Unions and union membership may have been an under-explored phenomenon in this country. Why workers join unions, what they believe unions are, and how they choose between unions are questions critical to any understanding of union membership trends. It is surprising, therefore, that these questions are often left unexplored or are given less attention than the wider examination of unions as organisations. The findings of this study suggest that the unionisation decisions of New Zealand workers need to be examined in more detail, and perhaps a side by side comparison of the motivations and interests of the members (rather than the secretaries) of Old Unions and New Unions provided.

The great weight given to comparing New Unions against organisations that have evolved over several decades also highlights the inadequacies of existing definitions of the genuine union. The concept of union character used, in part, to separate New Unions and Old Unions is in itself incapable of stating that an organisation is or is not a union (Gall, 1997). Yet this is the very manner in which researchers appear to have used the concept when examining New Unions. Perhaps a more appropriate method would have been to compare the character of New Unions against that of Old Unions of a similar age - in other words, to the character of Old Unions when they first formed.

These findings also suggest that more needs to be done to identify how workers, rather than academics, identify, describe and define unions. They raise the question of what type of organisations workers believed they were forming when they created a New Union. The results show that some workers believed they were forming something distinctly different to the typical union. However, given the small number of New Union members interviewed, it is difficult to state this as a certainty, particularly as participants frequently saw little or no difference between what their organisations were formed to do, and why other unions formed.

Finally, academics may have been too quick to judge the character of New Unions. While they have argued that some are genuine forms of workplace representation, they have been strong in their general criticism of these unions and in accepting existing research findings. These have predominantly implied that New Unions are an employer-driven phenomenon, or at the very least incapable of becoming effective unions. That workers in this study do not seem to think so, and that employer support may only exist in a few isolated cases, questions previous findings (notably Barry, 2004 and Barry & May, 2002) and argues for additional research into New Unions and further examination of employers' attitudes toward and response to unions under the ERA. More importantly, it would be of some benefit to see whether the findings of this study could be replicated among a larger group of similar participants.

Notes

* Information based upon personal communications with representatives of the Registrar of Unions, November – December 2003.

2 Subsequent to the completion of this study several articles have added to this particular body of research in New Zealand. The work of Haynes, Boxall & Macky (2004 & 2006) and more recently Boxall, Haynes & Macky (2007) stand out for their examination of workers motivations for union membership and the factors that have contributed to union decline in this country. Of key interest are their identification of a strong untapped demand for union membership in New Zealand (Boxall et al, 2004) and the implications of this demand for New Zealand unions organising efforts.

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