

Put yourself in their shoes

Employer uses new IR laws to undermine
workers' redundancy entitlements.



The Howard Government must be held
accountable for these laws.

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Tristar worker John Beaven, suffering from bowel cancer, felt he had no choice but to accept the voluntary redundancy offer, but was honest enough to inform the company of his illness.

While all other applicants for the reduced entitlements were paid, Mr Beaven was ignored and instead kept on sick leave, allowing the company to avoid any redundancy by waiting for him to die.

Following public outrage Mr Beaven's redundancy payment was agreed by the employer only after the Prime Minister and Minister for Workplace Relations had to intervene because their laws had failed Mr Beaven.

The Workplace Relations Minister was forced to acknowledge the problems with his government's extreme IR laws, branding the company actions as criminal, and the owners as ratbags.

However, the struggle between other workers and management at component company, Tristar, is ongoing.

The Tristar workers, who each face losing up to \$200 000 in redundancy entitlements.

Although the company has not produced anything for over 6 months, workers have been kept on with nothing to do until their collective agreement expired in September last year, exposing them to redundancy provisions under the new IR laws, which could pay as little as \$8 000 for over 40 years service.

The company had offered voluntary redundancies paying less than a quarter of the owed entitlements which 20 employees had accepted, fearing losing the lot. But many more, whose only retirement savings were at stake, chose to fight for their full entitlements.

The company's actions are an example of what can happen under the federal government's IR laws.

The new IR laws means that there is no longer an Industrial Relations Commission where workers can go to get this sort of matter sorted out.

This dispute highlights the way that the new laws allow employers to behave legally but appallingly.

What happens to workers who don't have the support of a Union or public pressure? Neither the Minister nor Prime Minister have suggested changes to their laws to protect these workers.