

The Jobs Letter

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6 December 1999

Essential Information on an Essential Issue

KEY

NEW GOVERNMENT
— WHAT IT MEANS

VIVIANE FORRESTER

POSSUMS FOR JOBS

WINZ PAYOUT FIASCO

THE BATTLE OF SEATTLE

PEACE AWARD FOR JOBS
RESEARCH WEBSITE

DIARY

16 November 1999

The gender pay gap remains unchanged from last year according to a new study published by the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust. The study reveals women receive at least 20% less pay than men regardless of age, qualifications, experience or ethnicity.

The EEO Trust study also finds that Sri Lankan immigrants are discriminated against when seeking work. It says that although Sri Lankans are fluent in English and very high percentages of them have tertiary qualifications and professional experience, most take up jobs below their previous level and most experience discrimination while job seeking.

17 November 1999

The Reserve Bank is predicting a strengthening economy over the next two years because of increased demand from the US and Australia for our exports. The bank also predicts 6.9% unemployment next year and 6.4% in 2001.

Substantially more NZ prison inmates re-offend than do inmates in Australia, England or Canada. Corrections manager Roger Waite says there is evidence that longer sentences are actually associated with higher re-offending rates. He argues that well-structured rehabilitation programmes would reduce the re-offending rates significantly.

- New, sustainable, well-paid **jobs for every New Zealander who wants to work**. This is the mandate that Alliance leader Jim Anderton believes New Zealanders have given their **newly-elected government**.

The Labour-Alliance coalition, led by Helen Clark, has taken office with a strong working majority. They have clearly signaled a **halt to the market-led reforms** of the last 15 years, and a softer stance on social policy.

On election night, Jim Anderton heralded the vote as bringing “a new era of co-operation and partnership for the country”. Anderton will be Deputy PM in the new government, and probably also the new **Minister of Economic Development and Employment**. After years in the political wilderness, he will finally get his chance to lead policy on regional and business development with his eye on the critical bottom-line: jobs.

- Anderton’s contribution will be very much as the junior partner to the Labour-led government. Labour’s party vote surged from the 28% it got in 1996 to 38% this time. In comparison, the Alliance party vote fell from 10% to 8%.

The Greens, who used to be a part of the Alliance, failed to gain a seat or pass the 5% threshold on election night ... although the final count released this week may see their fortunes change.

- Labour and the Alliance have agreed on a 16-4 cabinet split. The programme of the new government is still being negotiated by Labour deputy leader Michael Cullen and Jim Anderton, and will be spelt out in the governor-general’s speech from the throne on December 20th.

- The new government is expected however to **move rapidly on those policies** which Labour and the Alliance already agree on. Expect —

- the restoration of income-related rents on state housing, a move which will substantially effect the income of the poorest NZ’ers.
- a freeze on student loan interest rates for those students who are still studying.
- a rise in government superannuation payments, perhaps by \$10 a week, from next April.
- a rise in the top income tax rate to 39c for all those earning over \$60,000.
- legislation banning MPs from party-hopping once they have got into parliament.
- changes to the Employment Contracts Act to give unions more power in employment negotiations.
- a five-year freeze on tariff reductions.
- re-nationalising accident compensation insurance under ACC.
- phasing out the Health Funding Authority over the next two years.

- The Alliance is expected to be **also pushing for** —

- more government spending on job creation, public health and education.
- an immediate rise in welfare benefits of \$20 a week.
- a rise in the minimum wage to \$7.50 an hour.
- the abolition of fees for tertiary students.
- a commitment to 12 weeks paid parental leave, and four weeks annual leave for workers.
- a 5%tariff on all imports, except for those which come from Australia.

The Jobs Letter : ESSENTIAL INFORMATION and MEDIA WATCH on JOBS

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT, the FUTURE of WORK, and related EDUCATION and ECONOMIC issues

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The Jobs Letter

DIARY

Winz gets top marks from the Aotearoa Polytechnics Student Union. President John Barkness says the union is very pleased with what it has heard so far about this year's enrolment procedures for student community wage applications.

After a *NZ Herald* front page feature alleging a clothing manufacturing 'sweatshop' in Auckland, Labour Department factory inspectors are swamped with calls reporting suspected illegal workplaces. National Distribution Union's Judy Attenberger says that her union is considering a campaign to discourage retailers from buying products made by underpaid workers.

All 35 cleaning staff at Auckland's Hyatt Regency hotel are told they are redundant and that cleaning of the hotel has been contracted out.

Student Job Search in Auckland has 3,700 jobs on its books, up 20% on last year. The Auckland office has 7,000 students signed up looking for work.

18 November 1999

A sickness beneficiary smashes up the Winz office in Orewa. No staff are injured as the man, who is said to have wanted his benefit increased, took a wooden club to six store front office windows, a computer and a sign.

Alliance leader Jim Anderton says no one under 20 years old would be on the dole under an Alliance government. He says that everyone under 20 would have access to free education or training.

19 November 1999

Wages rose 1.3% during the last quarter.

Jim Anderton proposes an amnesty on IRD penalties for students with debts and who have gone overseas. Anderton wants to encourage these people to "come home and share in the rebuilding of the country."

- Meanwhile, incoming Finance Minister Michael Cullen has asked former Council of Trade Unions economist **Peter Harris** to come and work for him. Dr Cullen says he wants to establish a flow of non-Treasury advice. Harris is considering the offer.

The former CTU economist has been a strong advocate of skills improvement, a proactive role for the government in industry development and the need for productivity improvement. He also has been a critic of tariff reductions, and the cost-cutting mentality of Treasury.

- On election night, Labour leader Helen Clark made a special point of acknowledging **the return of the Maori vote** to her party. All Maori seats have gone back to their traditional political home, ending their ties with the NZ First party.

The new faces in the Maori seats all have **close links to Maori economic development or employment initiatives**. John Tamihere (Hauraki) was the former chief executive of the West Auckland Whanau o Waipareira Trust, Mita Ririnui (Waiariki) and Mahara Okeroa (Te Tai Tonga) were former managers with Te Puni Kokiri (Ministry of Maori Development) and Parekura Horomia (Ikaroa-Rawhiti) was the former boss of the Community Employment Group.

- Labour's **Dover Samuels** expects to be Minister of Maori Affairs and says that the Maori caucus within the party will be focussing on **improving the Maori economy**. Samuels: "We are committed to closing the gap. It is our priority. We have a young team and a committed one, but it won't be an easy task ... the hard part has just begun..."

Alliance Maori leader **Sandra Lee** agrees: "The Maori politicians who will be sitting on the treasury benches on 20th December are a lot of new politicians, with a vision for our people, who know only too well what the problems facing Maori are, and are committed to the solutions..."

"Beneficiaries haven't recovered from the 1991 benefit cuts. Beneficiaries have really been struggling under a regime of market rentals, and both the Alliance and Labour are determined to get rid of market rentals. We've got the minimum wage coming up for review, and we're determined to make sure that it is increased. This will effect a large number of Maori workers who are on the minimum wage."

- Sandra Lee also sees jobs as a crucial test for Maori politicians in the next administration: "Jobs are number one. Everything else flows from this — the crime statistics, poor health, poor housing etc — we've got to create some real jobs for Maori people in this country. Our commitment in the Alliance is to create 80,000 new jobs. We're serious about that ... and this is why we've developed our Regional Development plans..."

Lee says she will be looking closely to the **Maori asset base**, which is now worth about \$5 billion. Lee: "The question is begging: If our assets are really worth \$5 billion, how can we justify the high rates of unemployment for Maori?"

- Jim Anderton has actually **revised his party's target** of creating 80,000 jobs in the first term of office, telling *The Dominion* that this figure was based on the Alliance 's full policies being implemented.

But Anderton has already indicated his enthusiasm for government assistance to **create 1,300 jobs in both textile and possum fur businesses...** and he is confident of Helen Clark's support.

(continued on page six)

DEBATE

THE ECONOMIC HORROR

French author VIVIANE FORRESTER's book *L'horreur Economique (The Economic Horror)* has just been published in an English edition. The 1996 book is already a huge bestseller in France, Germany, Italy, Japan and South America, and reviewers predict that it set to become the biggest economics bestseller since *Das Kapital*.

The 72-year old author has become a heroine in France where unemployment now stands at more than 12%. Young jobless have taken to photocopying pages from *L'horreur* — notably those passages decrying the culture of shame attached to unemployment — and sticking them up on job centre walls. The author's effigy can also be found at the front of workers' marches, with banners quoting from her book.

International financier George Soros was so impressed with *L'horreur* that he arranged to meet with the author in Paris. The book has also been discussed by the Mexican parliament, and politicians in Peru have invited the author to lecture in Latin America.

This official interest has come despite the author's argument that there is a conspiracy by "those who control economic power" to "hide from the workers the truth that they are no longer needed by the capitalist system" and that we are witnessing "the end of employment as we have known it."

In this special feature, *The Jobs Letter* profiles Viviane Forrester and gives an essential summary of her views on the future of work.

- Viviane Forrester's economics is largely self-taught, and until the publication of *L'horreur*, she was better known as a novelist and literary critic. Yet, according to Ian Cotton of *The Guardian Weekly*, Forrester has emerged as "... a fine example of the outsider who sees things insiders cannot."

Forrester's thesis is that employment as we have known it for three centuries throughout the West, has had its day and is becoming less

plausible by the year as a way of distributing wealth. *L'horreur* also attacks the present policies of Western governments as it makes ever more desperate attempts to keep the jobs-and-wages system alive. Forrester cites the constant downsizing of ever larger numbers of the working and, now, middle classes; the steady attrition, internationally, of welfare and union rights; and the growing destabilisation of those in work, let alone of the unemployed.

All this has created an employment and unemployment (and underemployment) culture that is not merely stressful, regrettable and unpleasant but has also, according to Forrester, "spawned an economic world that is an obscenity, an affront to human nature" and, in the words of the book's title, a "horror".

"Those in power continue to present employment as the norm — and by doing so make the unemployed feel worthless. Everything of value in contemporary western society — our income, our status, our contacts, our self-esteem, our power and our peace of mind — is inextricably bound up with work.

"The panaceas of work-experience and re-training often do nothing more than reinforce the fact that there is no real role for the unemployed. They come to realize that there is something worse than being exploited, and that is not even to be exploitable ..."

— Viviane Forrester

- Ian Cotton remarks: "This is not a thesis likely to appeal to Messrs Clinton and Blair. After all, it doesn't square with the fact that the United States economy is enjoying the longest, strongest economic boom in post-war history. Or that unemployment in Britain is at its lowest for 19 years. Yet there is a curious thing about Forrester's reading of the situation: a vast number of ordinary people believe it..."

- Forrester finds that the book has certainly struck a nerve: "When I was promoting the book in South America I'd go to these town meetings of factory workers, clerks, ordinary people. The cheering would start before I entered the hall..."

"My book has brought me in touch with the powerful as well as the poor, and there is this strong feeling among political elites that you must not tell the people the truth about today's economic realities; that they just can't take it.

"In fact, I found the opposite: people aren't, in fact, afraid ... but they are indignant. They're not stupid, they can see what's going on, and

The Jobs Letter

the thing that really angers them is denial. Indeed, it's surprising how many people have told me that reading my book has actually reduced their anxieties ...

"Waiters, bankers, housewives, taxi drivers, students, young unemployed ... they say to me: 'I've had exactly the same thoughts you wrote in your book myself, for years. But it wasn't until I read *L'horreur* that I even realised I'd been thinking them - let alone started taking such ideas seriously' ..."

- Forrester argues that economic neo-liberalism has introduced a new economic paradigm: "Increasingly it offers the most vulnerable in our society a quite new choice — poverty at work or poverty on the dole..."

For examples, she points to the desperate rush of French unemployed applying for the *Contrat Emploi Solidarite* jobs which pay half the guaranteed minimum wage, and are only part-time. Or those on workfare programmes in the US who are paid a third of union rates and have benefits docked if they are late for "work". Or those in Britain whose special economic horror is to have achieved invisibility - the "economically inactive" who don't even count as unemployed for statistical purposes.

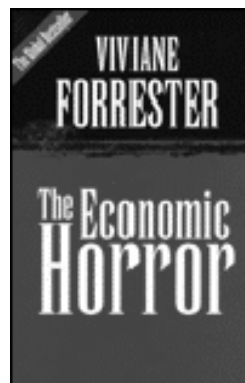
Forrester: "The feeling that we must prove ourselves useful to society, or at least to the market economy, is rooted in the value system of a world which no longer exists. As we are unlikely ever to have a culture of full employment again, we need to stop basing our identities, individually and communally, around the idea of employment. First and foremost, the new millennium calls out for a new culture, with a new social structure which is not centred on paid employment ..."

- Meanwhile, in France, Forrester's book title has become the catch-phrase of all kinds of protest movements. But French economists have generally been reluctant to discuss the book, with some describing its arguments as "irrational" and "irrelevant to a serious discussion of the subject".

The liberal French economist Alain Minc, who is also chairman of *Le Monde*, has described the book a "rubbish". He recently told Forrester: "Your book is a talented opinion poll. It is a publishing success because it plays on people's fears. But it would have sold far fewer copies if it had been signed by [Communist party leader] Robert Hue..."

Minc argues that the prosperous French workers and their unions have refused to trade some of their benefits for wider employment. Minc: "Since 1973, average purchasing power has risen by 40 per cent in real terms in France. If we had accepted a rise of only 35 per cent, there would be a million more jobs..."

Minc nevertheless concedes that Forrester has articulated a popular feeling which, for him, demonstrates "the confusion in society at large about current economic developments..."



The Economic Horror

by Viviane Forrester
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VIVIANE FORRESTER on A PROFOUND CHANGE

- I think that each of us, whatever our walk of life, should feel concerned about the present state of the world, which is entirely governed by economics. If Shakespeare were to come back to life today, I think he would be fascinated by the tragic interplay of powerful economic forces which are stealthily transforming the lives and destinies of the citizens — or rather the populations — of all countries.

- To my mind we are witnessing a profound change, a transformation of society and civilization, and we are finding it very hard to accept. How can we say good-bye to a society that was based on stable jobs that provided a safety net and the basics of a decent existence? Job security is on the way out.

For the first time in history, the vast majority of human beings are no longer indispensable to the

small number of those who run the world economy. The economy is increasingly wrapped up in pure speculation. The working masses and their cost are becoming superfluous. In other words, there is something worse than actually being exploited — and that is no longer to be even worth exploiting!

- It is true that this state of affairs is not being concealed, but there is a tendency to avoid talking about it clearly. In democratic societies, at any rate, you don't tell people that they are regarded as superfluous. Under totalitarianism there might be an even worse danger than joblessness and poverty. Once salaried work has disappeared, why should a totalitarian regime not simply eliminate those forces that have become useless?

In democratic countries there is an urgent need for vigilance. It is often claimed that the industrial age, when a regular wage provided the means of subsistence, can somehow be patched up. But those days are over. Wage-earning is disappearing and the panoply of temporary doles and allowances designed to replace it is shrinking, something that is nothing less than criminal.

- The managers of the economic machine exploit this situation. Full employment is a thing of the past, but we still use criteria that were current in the nineteenth century, or twenty or thirty years ago, when it still existed. Among other things, this encourages many unemployed people to feel ashamed of themselves. This shame has always been absurd but it is even more so today.

It goes hand in hand with the fear felt by the privileged who still have a paid job and are afraid of losing it. I maintain that this shame and this fear ought to be quoted on the stock exchange, because they are major inputs in profit. Once upon a time people pilloried the alienation caused by work. Today falling labour costs contribute to the profits of big companies, whose favourite management tool is sacking workers; when they do this, their stock market value soars.

- Today we hear a lot about “wealth creation”. In the past it was simply known as profit. Today people talk about this wealth as if it will automatically go straight to the community and create jobs, yet at the same time we see highly profitable businesses cutting down heavily on their workforce.

When people talk about society’s “movers and shakers”, they aren’t talking about the bulk of their country’s population but about business leaders who relocate at the drop of a hat. Politicians make jobs their priority, but the Stock Exchange is delighted whenever a big industrial complex fires workers and gets worried whenever there’s the slightest improvement in the unemployment figures. I wanted to draw people’s attention to this paradox. A company’s stock market quotation depends largely on labour costs, and profit is generated in the last analysis by reducing the numbers of those who have a job.

- The present situation raises a vital question for the future of the people of our planet, above all for young people and their future. Today the great thing is to be “profitable”, not “useful”. This raises a very serious question: Should people be profitable in order to “deserve” the right to live? The commonsense answer is that it is a good thing to be useful to society. But we are preventing people from being useful, we are squandering the energies of young people by regarding profitability as the be-all and end-all.

- Most countries have lost their sense of priorities. There is a greater and greater need for teachers and medical staff, but governments are increasingly aggressive towards them. These are the professions where posts are abolished and funding is cut. Yet they are indispensable to the welfare and future of humanity. This confusion between “usefulness” and “profitability” is disastrous for the future of the planet.

Young people live in a society which still regards salaried employment as the only acceptable, honest and lawful way of life, but most of them are deprived of the opportunity to achieve this. In deprived inner city areas this is a major problem.

At the same time I often meet young people with armfuls of degrees who are out of work. What inexcusable waste! For generations study was young people’s initiation into social life. I admire young people today because they go on with their studies fully aware that they are running the risk of rejection by society.

“Today the great thing is to be “profitable”, not “useful”. This raises a very serious question: Should people be profitable in order to “deserve” the right to live?”

— Viviane Forrester

- Only twenty or thirty years ago, there was still reason to hope that the relative prosperity of the North would spread all over the world. Today we are seeing the globalization of poverty. Businesses based in the North that set up in the so-called “developing” countries, do not create jobs for the people of those countries but generally make them work without any kind of social security protection, in medieval conditions. The reason is that the workforce — underpaid women and children, as well as prisoners — costs less than automation would cost in the country of origin. This is colonization in another, equally heinous, form.

- I am not pessimistic, far from it. The pessimists are those who say there is no alternative to the present situation, that we have no choice. My book is an attempt to describe what is going on. It’s true that the situation is dramatic. All the same I am, like many other people, the citizen of a country whose democratic regime makes it possible to reflect and freely resist the growing pressure that the economic factor is exerting on our lives.

- I would like there to be checks and balances, alternative thinking, conflicts of ideas and interests. Not violent conflict, of course, but we should wake up and stop being petrified, prisoners of hackneyed thinking. Already in countries where my book is being translated—especially in the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Lithuania, Poland and in others such as the Republic of Korea — it is causing something of a stir even before publication.

I am neither against the globalization of exchanges, nor the emergence of new technologies. Such an attitude would be absurd. But I am against their being taken over by a tiny minority of economic power centres, often in private hands, whereas entire populations are excluded from social progress. I am against the globalization of rejection and poverty and for the globalization of well-being.

Source — (edited) from Viviane Forrester interview with Edgar Reichmann, Unesco Courier June 1997 “We are witnessing a transformation of society and civilisation”

The Jobs Letter

DIARY

21 November 1999

The toll-free telephone enquiries for the Australian finance company GE Capital will soon be answered in New Delhi. Indian workers in the call centre are being given Anglo names and are being trained to speak with an Australian accent. Shifting the call centre to India is part of the company's plan to eliminate 140 jobs in Sydney.

22 November 1999

Pay increases for chief executives in NZ averaged 5.6% last year according to PA Consulting Group's salary survey.

Winz has paid a senior executive \$106,000 in order to obtain his resignation.

All of Pacifica Shipping's 240 staff are taking 20% wage cuts as well as reductions in conditions and entitlements. The company says that protective legislation for coastal shipping had disappeared and it is necessary for it to cut costs in order to compete with international companies working NZ waters.

23 November 1999

Winz's national commissioner Ray Smith admits that the department spent nearly eight times the amount on personal grievance claims than it had originally said. Last month Winz released papers saying it had paid out \$41,000 in claims in its first year. Smith now says it paid out \$326,500.

A pre-Seattle WTO meeting of trade ministers is postponed. Spokesperson Keith Rockwell says the reason is that the WTO members have not been able to find a consensus on agricultural subsidies.

Anderton: "We want some signals to go out to the New Zealand community as to how this government and our role in it changes things. I don't think there will be any resistance in the new government to getting sustainable jobs that actually get people off the unemployment benefit and save the government hundreds of millions of dollars..."

- Anderton drew up his "**possums for jobs**" plan when he visited the Nelson A&P show and came across a machine stripping fur from possum skins, which would be later blended with merino wool. The Snowy Peak company and others are turning the fibre into export textiles and garments. But they cannot get enough possum skins, and they want the government to help.

Anderton says that the industry leaders had told him that, with government assistance, they could create 1,000 jobs within months ... as well as helping wipe out millions of pests.

- Otago possum skin merchant Chris Taylor told *The Dominion* that the industry employed 10,000 trappers ten years ago, but now would be lucky to have 100. The industry exported about three million skins a year at its peak, but has been hit hard by the strong dollar and the collapse of major markets.

Dave McKinstry, of the West Coast company Possum Pam, says that even a **government bounty** of \$1 a skin would go a long way towards resurrecting the industry.

- The Forest and Bird Protection Society, however, is **critical of the Anderton possum proposal**, saying that effective control of the possum for conservation purposes cannot be achieved by commercial trapping. Forest and Bird Director Kevin Smith, who was a commercial possum trapper in the late 1970s, says the idea of sending unemployed people to trap possums for an export fur industry sounded great in theory, but he believes it is a marginally viable industry. Smith says that current possum control operations **already provide significant employment opportunities**, and DOC has become very efficient at reducing possum numbers by 80-90% in areas targeted for control.
- The new government will be looking closely at the **future of Winz** and its boss, **Christine Rankin**. Labour leader Helen Clark has warned public sector bosses to **expect a shake-up**. Clark: "To those in the public sector who have forgotten how to spell the words 'public service', I say get ready for change. The party is over..."
- In the week before the polls, yet another Winz scandal hit the papers with revelations of big payouts to Winz senior executives in settling personal grievance cases. Winz national commissioner Ray Smith has revealed that, since Winz was established in October last year, nine personal grievances have been lodged and settled and the total payouts have come to \$326,500.

One of the payouts, which **ended up totaling \$106,000**, was paid for the immediate resignation of a senior executive. Documents faxed anonymously to Labour's Steve Maharey showed that the department was nervous about the payout, which was negotiated during a period of **public outrage over golden handshakes** in the state sector.

The leaked papers suggest that Winz was anxious to settle the deal before government tightened rules on secret payouts. In a letter from Winz to the sacked executive, dated June 24, the department says: "You are by now no doubt aware of the very real risks surrounding the issue of payments being made to senior public servants. To date we have not received instructions to cease negotiating such payments nor to cease

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DIARY

24 November 1999

Police arrested a Winz customer who allegedly threw around furniture at the Upper Hutt Winz office. One staff member required medical treatment.

ERG Connect makes 68 workers redundant. The loss comes after the cable laying company finishes its immediate contracts.

26 November 1999

December 23rd will be the last day of work for 171 staff at Adventist Hospital in St Heliers. The trustees have told staff that new competition for ACC elective surgery contracts and other financial reasons have contributed to their decision to sell the not-for-profit hospital. The facility will be turned into an elderly care resthome.

Recruitment company Lampen's survey of companies with employment vacancies shows that the most difficult jobs to fill are in information technology. It also says firms have difficulty filling positions in accounts, accounting and sales.

On the eve of the polls, Treaty Negotiations Minister Doug Graham signs a controversial \$34m settlement with Taranaki's Te Atiawa iwi.

agreeing to confidentiality clauses. Nevertheless, there exists a real possibility that such an instruction could be issued by the Government in the near future. Accordingly, we are anxious to conclude settlement of this matter without delay ...”

According to *The Dominion*, Winz agreed to pay the executive \$100,000 in return for his immediate resignation. When the department realised that such a payment was unlawful and exceeded chief executive Christine Rankin's authority, it put together a deal which meant it would not need to seek ministerial approval.

The executive received a lump sum payment of \$50,000 to stop work, and remained on the Winz payroll for six months on “study leave”. At the end of that time, he would receive an extra month's pay and a performance bonus of \$15,000. This takes the total payout to \$106,000.

The executive also has his study fees paid for by Winz, receives career and financial counseling worth \$2,500, and gets annual leave entitlements of \$4,600 — including ten days accrued while he studies on full pay. A confidentiality clause was written into the agreement.

Winz Minister **Peter McCardle** admitted he had approved the payment “reluctantly” last month, after seeking Crown Law advice. State Services Commissioner Michael Wintringham says he is investigating the matter.

Labour's **Steve Maharey**: “This is a case of stunningly inept personnel management at the top of a major government department. Several cases like this have been reported to me verbally, but Winz has always managed to hush them up with confidentiality agreements. This is one that got away...”

Maharey has called on Michael Wintringham to reopen inquiries into Christine Rankin's management practices.

- Helen Clark says Christine Rankin was wrong in sanctioning the payout, and has **pledged an inquiry** into the department after the election. Clark says she won't comment on job prospects for departmental chief executives, but it is understood that Ms Rankin's future would hinge on the outcome of the government inquiry. Clark: “Ms Rankin and Winz continue to lead the field as examples of how not to run a government agency. In her haste to pay off a senior executive, she made an illegal payment...”
- The Jobs Research Website www.jobsletter.org.nz has been awarded the Premier prize in the Internet category of the **1999 Media Peace Awards**, organised by The Peace Foundation.

The award was announced on 18th November at a ceremony at the Maidment Theatre, Auckland. The Peace Foundation's greenstone and silver trophy was presented to Shirley Vickery who received the award on behalf of the Jobs Research Trust.

The Jobs Research Website was designed by Vivian Hutchinson, who is also editor of *The Jobs Letter*.

In announcing the Premier Award, the Peace Foundation said: “The judges considered the winning site not only succeeds as a source of information on employment and unemployment related issues, but does so in a way that effectively uses the new medium.

“The site supports the mission and values clearly set out on the front page. It is well architected with a simple structure, making it easy to navigate, and the developers have avoided technological gimmickry...”

The Jobs Letter

DIARY

27 November 1999

Election Day.

New Zealand elects a centre-left coalition government led by the Labour Party.

28 November 1999

PM-elect Helen Clark meets deputy PM-elect Jim Anderton in Auckland. Clark says parliament will meet right up until Christmas Eve in order to pass new tax legislation, review the minimum wage law, ban political party hopping and ease student loan interest.

30 November 1999

Violence and riots erupt in Seattle as tens of thousands of people take over the central city in protest at the trade talks being held by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In scenes reminiscent of the US civil rights and anti-war protests of the 1960s, police in full riot gear use tear gas and fire rubber pellets to clear the protestors. Seattle mayor Paul Schell declares a civil emergency and imposes a 7pm-dawn curfew on the downtown area.

2 December 1999

PM-elect Helen Clark says her government will push for the World Trade Organisation to include employment and environmental issues on its agenda, and she expects this position to be represented in the current round of talks.

Editor

Vivian Hutchinson

Associates

Dave Owens

Jo Howard

Rodger Smith

- The Media Peace Awards recognise those in the media whose work increases co-operation not conflict, tolerance not tension. Winning entries are those that demonstrate flair and skilful use of the media in various categories of Print, Radio, Television/Film, Internet, and Public Relations.
- Amidst the protest violence last week at the **World Trade Organisation** talks in Seattle, the UN Secretary-General **Kofi Annan** expressed sympathy with some of the views of protesters. Annan was unable to present his own speech to the WTO conference, because protesters had disrupted the opening ceremony and forced him to stay in his hotel suite.

Annan says the protesters are right to be concerned about jobs, human rights, child labour, the environment and the commercialisation of scientific and medical research. However, he says "it seldom makes sense to use trade restrictions to tackle problems whose origins lie in other areas of national and international policy..."

Annan believes that the Seattle Forum was not the place to try and negotiate labour, environmental and other social issues. Instead, the UN bodies dealing with these matters should be strengthened "to avoid giving industrial nations a pretext for more protectionism."

VOICES

on THE BATTLE OF SEATTLE

"It won't be much of a victory if all the WTO succeeds in doing is launching a trade liberalization drive that governments cannot sell to their citizens. Western leaders ought to have learned that lesson from last year's debacle over the Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

"For three years, behind closed doors, negotiators from the world's 29 richest countries tried to hammer out of a set of rules for global investment. Finally, last fall, in the face of spreading grass-roots opposition, the talks collapsed.

"Yet trade ministers are making most of the same mistakes again:

"They are haggling over technicalities and ignoring the human impact of trade deals.

"They are refusing to address legitimate public concerns about globalization: the loss of national sovereignty, the growth of an entrenched underclass and the danger to the environment.

"They are negotiating in secrecy.

"They are claiming that there is no time to

slow down and think through the consequences of exposing their economies to global competition.

"U.S. president Bill Clinton, the only head of government attending the talks, tried to send a conciliatory signal yesterday, promising that the concerns of labour and environmental groups would be taken into account. But it will take more than the assurances of an outgoing U.S. president to convince citizens who are worried about their jobs and their future, to support a trade agenda over which they have no control..."

— Toronto Star editorial 2 December 1999

"The WTO is not just about agriculture. Nor is it benign. It fundamentally affects the capacity of New Zealand governments to determine and implement domestic economic and social policy. It is time to move beyond the free-trade rhetoric and embark on a well-informed, broad-ranging debate about the costs and benefits of the forthcoming WTO negotiations for New Zealand. The election result puts the onus on Labour to do so..."

— Professor Jane Kelsey, Auckland University