

# AUT staff call strike over pay claim

by Aaron Lawton

About 600 Auckland University of Technology academic staff are preparing for a strike on Tuesday to push their wage claim.

ASTE, the union acting for most of the university's academic staff, is seeking a pay rise of 6.5 per cent back-dated to June 1 this year. It also wants a 6.5 per cent rise from January 1 2007.

The university is offering 3.5 per cent to be paid at the start of November, with a further 3.5 per cent at the start of 2007.

This strike is the latest in a series of industrial disputes

across the tertiary sector nationwide. Industrial action is ongoing at Auckland, Waikato, Canterbury, Victoria and Lincoln universities.

However, strikes were suspended at Massey and Otago universities earlier this month after management agreed to discuss multi-employer contracts.

John Prince, deputy chair of AUT's ASTE branch, says the strike has now been called.

"The first strike on Tuesday will definitely happen unless the employer comes back with a decent offer that makes our staff feel they are valued," he says.

AUT vice-chancellor Derek McCormack has expressed his

disappointment with the decision by staff members to take industrial action.

He says AUT is still committed to providing competitive remuneration and excellent working conditions.

"The simple fact is that AUT pay increases have consistently exceeded the annual rate of inflation for the last four years and what's more, many ASTE members have enjoyed automatic pay increases during this period based on their length of service," says McCormack.

Staff at AUT began their industrial action with a withdrawal of goodwill, which started on Monday.

Goodwill refers to any extra

duties performed by staff members outside normal work tasks.

Prince expects the absence of goodwill to be very noticeable and he says he is confident it will be successful.

Staff want a 6.5 per cent pay rise because the average wage of AUT academic staff is far below that of other universities, he says.

Prince says staff originally wanted a rise of 7 per cent but after talks with the university they cut their claim to 6.5 per cent.

McCormack believes the current offer of 3.5 per cent is competitive, considering that no other universities around the country have signed any

employment agreements this year.

But Prince believes the below average pay scales at AUT makes it harder for the university to recruit good staff.

"The effect it has on the university is that skilled staff are harder to attract, let alone overseas workers," he says.

If there is no resolution after the scheduled strike on Tuesday, Prince says more industrial action is expected.

"Ultimately our members will have to decide what we do from there."

McCormack says AUT is standing by its 3.5 per cent offer to ASTE and hopes to resume pay negotiations with the union as soon as possible.

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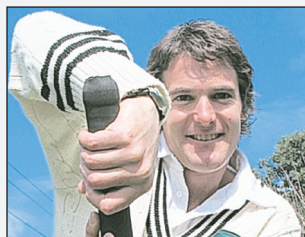
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RAINBOW WARRIOR: The Greenpeace ship bombed by French secret agents in 1985.

## French apology 'a must'

by Sarah Kaci

Twenty years after the bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior*, French people, both in France and in New Zealand commemorate the event.

In Paris, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Lyon and many other cities in France, Greenpeace activists and local public figures have paid tribute to photographer Fernando Pereira, killed in the bombing, by naming streets and places after him.

On these new street signs is written: "Fernando Pereira Street, pacifist activist killed by the French State during the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing."

On July 10, the day of the bombing, several commemorations took place in France. In Paris, at 1.48 pm, the exact time when the first bomb exploded, 500 people gathered on the Trocadero to observe two minutes' silence. Demonstrators held signs in English saying: "You can't sink a rainbow".

Pascal Husting, CEO of Greenpeace France, said in an interview for *Libération*: "There is no useful, or acceptable bomb. Wherever it may be: on the *Rainbow Warrior*, in the London or in the streets of

Baghdad, it is terrorism."

With the anniversary, French media have published much on the issue, especially after the discovery of secret documents written by Admiral Lacoste who was then chief of the DGSE (General direction of foreign security) and claimed that the President, François Mitterrand, agreed to the bombing.

French magazine, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, talks about "one of the biggest scandals of the French Republic" and newspaper, *Le Monde* referred to it as a "terrorist attack".

French people living in New Zealand also have strong opinions on the bombing.

Michel Cassin, French teacher at the Alliance Française in Auckland, arrived in New Zealand shortly after the attack. Married to a New Zealand woman before the bombing, he felt as if he was betrayed by his home country.

"For me it has been a shock. It was a betrayal...a nightmare. I felt guilty and I was ashamed," says Cassin.

"When I arrived in New Zealand I realised that, as a Frenchman in a foreign country I will be a representative of France. Even if I was strongly opposed to these acts of terrorism I had to cope with the

attacks from people here and to assume the irresponsibility of French politicians."

"Today I think that the French Government should make official apologies to New Zealand, because now and since the bombing it is the French people living in New Zealand who have had to apologise to Kiwis."

Cassin admits today that he was often ashamed to tell people he was French and told them he was Swiss or Belgian. He did this not just after the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing but also in 1995 after Jacques Chirac decided to resume nuclear tests in the Pacific.

"At that time I was a teacher in a North Shore private school and in my class there was graffiti insulting France, people spat on my car, no one would talk to me. I was the enemy," says Cassin.

Gilles Le Guern, 45, works for the New Zealand Ministry of Defence, and has lived in Auckland since October 1986.

"At that time, along with all the other French people living in New Zealand, I was very embarrassed by what happened," he says.

"Today we are trying to forget but it would be good for France to officially apologise to New Zealand."

PHOTO: JOHN MILLER/EYES OF FIRE