Dunedin Subway manager sacks New Zealand worker for sharing drink, lays theft charges
May 8, 2007

A worker at a Dunedin, New Zealand Subway has been sacked from her full-time job for "serious misconduct". Her manager sacked her when she shared some of her free Diet Coke with a friend in distress. After being sacked, she was also charged with the theft of two NZ$4.00 drinks by the New Zealand Police.

Jackie Lang, the employee, was entitled to a free drink while she was working at the George Street franchise of Subway. "They are allowed endless amounts of soft drink if they work there. Her friend came in all upset and distressed, so Jackie took a break, poured a drink and sat down with her," Bill Clark, from the Autonomous Workers Union, said.

Mr. Clark said it was the most vicious action that a company has done in relation to the offence that he has had to deal with, a view shared with Ms Lang. Ms Lang said, "I shared my drink with my friend. I was only trying to comfort her. Isn't it what most people would do? I mean, I wasn't trying to do anything wrong. I did what I thought any person would do in the situation."

Ms. Lang was suspended for two weeks following the incident after management was shown video footage on March 19. After being suspended she filed a personal grievance case, at which point the franchise owners went to the police. She was subsequently arrested and put in jail for two hours 20 days after being suspended. The video shows that Ms. Lang took a break following her friend coming into the workplace. She then shares her drink, gets a free refill and leaves it with her friend while she continued her work.

At 12.00 p.m. (NZST) the Otago University Young Labour branch organised a protest, starting at the university and finishing at the George Street Subway. President of the university's Young Labour branch, Ashley Murchison said, "I'm disappointed that any employer would treat their workers like this, especially over a matter this trivial, which could have easily been resolved internally."

Before the incident, Jackie Lang had a clean employment history and no criminal record, which is why she is surprised the case wasn't handled internally. "It's a human thing to do to offer a drink as comfort. If Subway doesn't like it, they have internal procedures to deal with that," she said.

Exclusive interview with prominent blogger, David Farrar
May 10, 2007

Freelance journalist writing for Wikinews, Gabriel Pollard, with help from Brian Anderton, has interviewed New Zealand-based blogger, David Farrar on blogging, web 2.0, and the Internet in general.

David Farrar is most known for his "fairly popular" blog, Kiwiblog, where he posts on various topics, including politics and technology. He is the vice-
President of the Internet Society of New Zealand, and has been involved in helping to split Telecom New Zealand up and in anti-spam legislation.

David Farrar first started using the "best invention ever," Internet, in February 1996 after having owned a BBC Micro microcomputer since 1982. On the Internet he debated various issues using Usenet newsgroups. Kiwiblog now serves for this purpose. He then got his own personal Internet account with ihug in August of that year.

Farrar also has political ties, which can be seen in some of his blog posts. For eight years, Farrar worked for various Prime Ministers (PM) and Opposition leaders for the National Party, working with the likes of former PM Jim Bolger and former PM Jenny Shipley in the Media Services Unit of Ministerial Services.

Until Farrar landed himself a job in parliament, he had been using mainly Apple computers, "[I] finally converted to Microsoft in 1997 after being the only person in Parliament to have a Mac!"

Farrar was involved with introducing public e-mail for ministers, and the first Prime Minister website.

In 2004, after leaving politics, Farrar set up his polling and research company.

Kiwiblog, sparked by now defunct blog NZ Pundit by Gordon King, currently receives over 300,000 visitors a month. He suspects that Russell Brown, and the Spareroom blogs get well over 100,000 visitors. "There's then probably a dozen or so other bloggers who get into the tens of thousands."

"Gordon [King] would post wonderful polemics challenging the conventional thinking and reporting, and after a few months of reading him I realized that I also had views and could try sharing them with the world. So in July 2003 I made my first post, and enjoyed it ever since."

Farrar admits to not having a deliberate strategy for promoting himself and his blog, he just found that doing more posts in a day and posting what he was interested in got the visitors that were interested in the same things. "Oh and most important of all is to have a sense of humour and enjoy doing it."

If Farrar wasn't blogging, he says he would be "Earning money! I spend far too long blogging when I should be working on more business. However it is doing well enough that I can divide my time up between my business, InternetNZ and blogging and not starve."

Farrar has a few tips for those politicians who have started a blog, or are looking at starting one up, "Very few are successful because [they] treat it as a one way communication tool where they just post press releases or travel diaries. Rodney Hide is the best example of doing it the right way. John Key is video blogging and responding to comments through future videos, which is a different way to interact." But still warns that most readers of blog prefer "honest opinion" instead of reading what the politicians want them to read.

Farrar is a huge supporter of Wikipedia and says that he uses it multiples times a day. He says that he was "very proud" when the Wikipedia community regarded him as notable enough to have his own entry.

"I wish I had more time to edit Wikipedia. There's lots more NZ content to get onto there."

Sites like YouTube, which Farrar uses daily, show that they can leave big brand names like Google Video for dead if they show strong innovation, Farrar says.

Farrar says the success to websites such as Wikipedia and YouTube is because of multiple user generated content, "...rather than tightly controlled content from one source." The focus on the community at large is also a major factor of their success.

When asked where he sees the Internet in decades from now, his simple response was, "I wish I knew." But he does predict every house in New Zealand will be connected to the Internet via fibre optics.

One scenario Farrar drew was, "...being able to see a map of your local area on your phone, and not just get told where the nearest toilets or bookstore is, but also if any of your friends are nearby."

David Farrar would just like to say thanks for the opportunity of being interviewed on Wikinews.

**Immediate life insurance website launched, first in world**

**May 15, 2007**

The first website in the world allowing consumers to buy life insurance online instantly has been launched today, targeting specifically New Zealanders.

The website, run by life insurance company Pinnacle Life, allows New Zealanders in many countries in the world to buy life insurance online without the need for a medical examination. Once the application has been approved, which is done immediately, the consumer can receive a $500,000 life insurance policy via an automatic e-mail. However, if certain conditions have been highlighted, then person to person contact is required to finalise the process.
Ed Saul, senior partner and architect of the new website, says, "We're giving consumers a quicker and easier way to buy life insurance. Instead of submitting an application form and waiting days for a policy to be approved and issued, we do it online and we do it immediately."

"The revolutionary website gives consumers complete control over the buying process whilst eliminating the previously obligatory involvement of people and paper. This is a global test case eagerly watched by the insurance industry around the world," Mr Saul said.

When applying online, a few typical questions are asked on personal information and if the applicant has had any previous illnesses or diseases.

The countries where New Zealand citizens are allowed to apply are UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore and the USA.

**Landfill named after comedian John Cleese**

May 21, 2007

In an unofficial move by contractor, Roy Harding, a rubbish tip has been named after comedian John Cleese, dubbed "Mt. Cleese" in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

The naming came after Mr Cleese visited Palmerston North last year and described it as a great place to go to commit suicide, claiming it was the "suicide capital of New Zealand". He also stated that they were glad to leave after their performance at the Regent on Broadway was over. Mr Harding says it is just to get back at Mr Cleese.

Official signage is now being ordered after city councillors said they thought it was good idea. "People just smile and leave it there," Chris Pepper, waste and water manager, said.

John Clarke (aka Fred Dagg), entertainer, suggested that the Awapuni Landfill be named after Mr Cleese after the comments arose in a podcast on his website. However, Mr Clarke's suggestion was slightly different, choosing the name, "John Cleese Memorial Tip...All manner of crap happily recycled."

The slightly bare tip, now being used as a waste minimisation centre, is being prepared for a large delivery of compost.

John Cleese is most famous for his parts in Monty Python and Fawlty Towers television shows as well as various movies including A Fish Called Wanda.

John Cleese, photographed here at the 1989 Oscars.
Credit: Alan Light.

**New Zealand's Head of State approves new medal**

May 23, 2007

New Zealand Defence Force personnel now have a new honour; the New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration (DSD) has been approved by the Queen Elizabeth II of New Zealand, Prime Minister Helen Clark has said.

The Distinguished Service Decoration is designed to recognise distinguished military service by regular, territorial and reserve members of the Defence Force, including command, leadership and service in an operational environment, or in support of operations, both at home and abroad, says Clark.

Defence Minister Phil Goff said that until 1995 this type of service was recognised by awards of the British Empire Medal (Military Division) and the lower levels of the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire.

"Since the change to a totally New Zealand honours system in 1996, awards at these levels have not been available,"

Chief of Defence Force, Lieutenant General Jerry Mateparae, says the award is an important addition to the country's honour system and will be highly regarded like the Queen's Service Medal.

He says more than 700 personnel are on operations or deployment and that "the DSD is an important addition to the New Zealand Honours system", and will enjoy precedence comparable to that of The Queen's Service Medal (QSM) and the recently instituted New Zealand Antarctic Medal (NZAM).

The new medal will be made of Sterling Silver. The obverse design is a representation of eight blades of a Kotiate (lobed club) in a circle with a Royal Crown in the centre. The front four blades are in frosted silver, the rear blades are polished silver. The reverse bears the inscription “For Distinguished Service” in English and Maori. The ribbon is dark blue and red, the colours of the British Distinguished Service Order ribbon, with two narrow yellow stripes that signify achievement.

The first awards will be announced on June 4th's Queen's Birthday honours
list. Recipients will be entitled to use the initials "D.S.D." after their name.

David Baguley, Director Honours Secretariat shows the Chief of Defence Force Lieutenant General Jerry Mateparae the new distinguished service decoration.

Exclusive video interview with New Zealand Opposition leader, John Key
May 23, 2007

Wikinewsie Gabriel Pollard sent questions to New Zealand's Leader of the Opposition, and leader of the National Party, John Key. Key answered the questions in the form of a video blog.

Mr. Key discusses how and why he participates in video blogging, and the details of his video blogging activities, and other related activities such as using Flickr to post images.

Key has video blogs (or 'vlogs') on his website, dating back to 23 March of this year; other videos on the site reach back to 30 January. His most recent blogs have been about climate change policy and the 2007 national budget.

Other members of the NZ National Party also 'vlog', bringing the total number of videos for YouTube user NZNats, which the party operates under, to 56. There are 64 subscribers.

Exclusive interview with New Zealand republican, Lewis Holden
May 25, 2007

Wikinewsie Gabriel Pollard interviewed Lewis Holden, the chair of the Republican Movement and a noted blogger who writes about New Zealand's constitution from a republican's perspective. [He is not to be confused with New Zealand economist Lewis Holden.]

In New Zealand, Queen Elizabeth II is the de jure head-of-state, holding the title Queen of New Zealand, despite having very little actual political influence. Surveys sometimes conducted shows that one in three New Zealanders generally support a republic in New Zealand. Holden, living in Auckland, New Zealand, says that it is a way for New Zealanders to show that New Zealand is truly an independent country, standing on and emphasising our own strong tradition of democracy and politics. "I believe a republic is important to mark New Zealand’s place on the map."

In 1997, after reading the book New Zealand: Republic by Alan Cook and Barry Wheelan, Holden became a republican, three years after he first heard about it in a speech by former New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger.

23-year-old Holden decided to start his fifth website, Holden Republic, mainly due to his interests in republicanism the Internet in general, and being a debater at heart.

As a way to help New Zealand make its mark on the map, Holden says that the international confusion over New Zealand needs to be cleared up. "Some think we’re part of Australia, some think we’re a colony of Britain and others just don’t know we exist." He also cites that there is confusion over our Governor-General (currently being served by Anand Satynand). He gives Greenland as an example of a country with a governor-general, but is under direct rule from Denmark. He also says that people often think that as a result of New Zealand becoming a republic, the flag will have to change, but says that this is also not true, and needs to be clarified, "My own personal view is that change should only be by referendum(s), perhaps with different designs put to the New Zealand public – as to when that happens, before or after we become a republic, I don’t know." Fiji's flag still retains the Union Jack, despite being a republic since 1987, and Hawaii retaining the Union Jack as well despite being a state of the U.S..

The issue isn't that the Queen is doing a bad job, it's that she's doing the wrong job – the position of Sovereign has become symbolically out of step with New Zealand's aspirations for itself.

Despite being a strong supporter of a republic, he believes that neither monarchists, nor republicans are the better patriot, "monarchists say republicans are disloyal to the Queen, republicans say monarchists are disloyal to New Zealand." He does believe that both hence New Zealand's future at heart, but have different views and conclusions about it. He does say that he has often been labelled as a "traitor", and admits once that he was threatened with sedition charges, but "It never would have flown."

Although he is not sure whether or not his blog has actually helped his cause, "I'd like to think so, but I can’t really say for sure." But he does know that several other blogs such as Kiwiblog,
NZ Monarchy and Queen and Country have now joined the debate over the possibility of New Zealand becoming a republic. Creating the Holden Republic blog, Holden says, was a way for him to articulate the case of New Zealand becoming a republic.

In 2003, Holden became involved with the Republican Movement, a member of Common Cause, and is now the chairman. During his course of involvement with the organisation, he has helped with research and analysis. When he was elected to be the chair of the organisation, he pondered about shutting down the blog, but his readers urged him keep going.

"Common Cause is a group through which Commonwealth republican groups can work together to share information and ideas."

Lewis Holden says he is, despite not being a big petrol head, a Holden fan; of course.

In the preferred Prime Minister stakes, new National leader John Key has jumped 9.3% to 45.5%, ahead of the incumbent Helen Clark who has dropped 5.6% to 42.21%.

The poll follows a recent TV3 TNS poll which puts Mr Key ahead of Miss Clark as preferred Prime Minister, ending her eight year reign as preferred Prime Minister.

The New Zealand Herald-DigiPoll survey, polled 600 voters between May 18 and 24 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 per cent. The survey was started one day after the 2007 Budget announcement, which announced further details to KiwiSaver, a retirement savings scheme, but did not announce any personal tax cuts.

The next New Zealand general election will most likely be held in the second half of 2008.

New Zealand newspaper poll projects majority for National Party
May 26, 2007

A New Zealand Herald-DigiPoll survey has put the Opposition New Zealand National party so far ahead of the governing New Zealand Labour party that it would form a majority Government if a general election were held today.

The poll, taken in the week after the budget shows 50.9 percent of likely voters would give their party vote to National. Labour is more than 17 points behind, on 33.6 percent.

Translated into seats under New Zealand's MMP electoral system, this would allow National to govern independently with 64 seats in New Zealand's 120 seat Parliament with a two seat overhang.

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