meat industry association

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1 June 2000

MEDIA RELEASE

ANGRY MEAT INDUSTRY REACTION : MAF VETS STRIKE WILL COST MILLIONS

The Meat Industry Association reacted angrily today to advice from the Ministry of Agriculture that their Veterinarians had given notice of intention to strike from Tuesday to Thursday following Queens Birthday. Withdrawal of these regulatory services will oblige meat plants to shutdown.

"We warned the Government its Employment Bill would encourage just this sort of industrial action," said MIA Executive Director, Brian Lynch. "We told Ministers and the Select Committee hearing submissions, that there has been more disruption in this industry since December than occurred throughout the last decade. That can't be coincidental. It's ironic this action comes from a group of the country's highest paid public servants."

"Ministers have tried to assure us our fears about their Bill are over-stated. But this strike notice confirms the stable workplace environment of the nineties is in jeopardy".

Mr Lynch said that, because the processing season is past its peak, the claim will be made that the impact of the threatened strike will be minimal. "That's nonsense. The season may be eighty per cent over, but there are still nearly five million lambs, nearly a million sheep and half a million cattle waiting to be slaughtered and processed for export to over seventy markets. $14 million a day in farmers income is at stake".

"We've made plain to Ministers that any disruption to production schedules comes at a cost," Mr Lynch said. "It creates animal welfare concerns and endangers supply contracts. This is no longer a seasonal industry, half the year on and half the year off."

"Companies have twelve-months commitments to meet. They are in a no-compromise, fiercely competitive business. If they lose a reputation for reliable supply, they can not be internationally cost competitive. That means hard-won market positions are given away, returns are lower and jobs are at risk".

Mr Lynch said that as the MAF vets were public servants, the MIA was considering options that could be available to seek compensation from the Government for lost production.

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