

Press Release

Vibrant Mayday in Blackball

Once again, people assembled from near and far for the Blackball Mayday celebrations. There were guests from Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, San Francisco and Europe, as well as local people. MP's Damien O'Connor and Rod Donald were in attendance as well as organisers from the Engineers Union, the Transport and Maritime Union and the Clothing and Footwear Union. Later in the day they were joined by Mayor Kevin Brown who revealed that he is a member of the Carpenters Union.

Guests were entertained by the Blackball Workers Choir singing a repertoire of working class and union songs and by two theatre pieces, one telling the story of the famous 1908 strike by Blackball miners, the other paying homage to a Palestinian martyr, Rachel Corrie.

Finally, guests participated in a commemorative march through the town before the feasibility study for the proposed Museum was officially launched.

During the morning a forum was held on regional development with considerable debate occurring amongst the political parties represented. There was agreement on the magnitude of the forces impacting on developments at the regional level, with the arguments centering on whether barriers need to be put up against those forces, or whether pragmatism dictates that we have to go with the flow of globalisation.

In summing up the debate, Christchurch based worker, Leigh Cookson made six succinct points: She pointed out that when talking about reality, we have to ask, Whose reality- e.g. the reality of local people or the reality of World Banks and the like.

She stressed the need for discussion and stated that often there was no time anymore to talk and listen because people were too busy reacting to outside forces.

She emphasised that economics was just a theory and that perhaps we were stuck in the theory wanting out, that perhaps there were more meaningful measures than GDP and the like, measures such as the impact of some measure on people's lives, or the sustainability of the development.

She stressed the importance of local and international links and that in this time of globalisation NZ workers, especially those in the regions, have much in common with third world workers.

Finally she said that in Blackball you can't ignore history and if we don't learn from history we are doomed to repeat it.

All in all, the day was a very successful celebration of the part played and continuing to be played, by working people in the forging of a just and equitable society.

Paul Maunder