

The argument among
the major
stakeholders in the
australian waterfront
dispute es...



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The Australia Waterfront dispute occurred during 1997-1998. The dispute has been described as a war, which influenced the nation profoundly and immensely (Trinca and Davies, 2000). The Waterfront dispute caused a wide-ranging debate about the role of the Australian unions, the effectiveness of the industrial relations system and the effectiveness of the Australian Waterfront. However, the debate turned into a series of arguments involving workplace change, the role of unions, managerial power and what constitutes the public interest (Petzall, Timo & About, 2000).

There were several groups directly affected by this dispute, the different stakeholders (Schermerhorn, 2003) played different roles in the dispute. However, The union achieved the final goal in this dispute. An important issue for Prime Minister John Howard was to overcome the union's unreasonable and overbearing: position by not allowing employer to hire the non-member workers of unions; not allowing employer to sign the labour contract with individual workers directly (Robyn Williams, 1998).

At that time, Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) had a conference with Patrick to discuss and redesign the labour contract, the Patrick group which were stevedoring the company of National Farmers Federation (NFF), fired the employees who were the members of MUA and other unions, instead of hiring workers trained by some agency in United Arab Emirates and Australia. Furthermore, the Patrick's actions were connived by the government of Prime Minister John Howard and the Federal Workplace Relations Minister, Peter Reith.

However, MUA received the support from the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), ITF proceeded to announce at the ports around the world resisting relevant companies and its stevedores. Then, the MUA sued Patrick group through court and won in the lawsuit finally. The Patrick group had to agree to meet the legal costs of MUA, about 1.5 million Australia dollars, the MUA succeeded in the dispute (Petzall, Timo & About, 2000). This essay will explain the dispute from three main views of stakeholders: the government, the unions and the stevedoring and stevedores in this dispute.

From the union's view, the dispute initiated by Patrick group fired labourers of the waterfront, then, it received support from the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), which declared to the ports around the world resisting relevant companies and its stevedores unless they recalled all the primary labourers. After the judging by law, the MUA got the final success in this war. Concerning this, the MUA got support from ITF, however it did not get real support from other labour unions and sympathy from Australian society. If so, I believe that the MUA can make the Patrick group give more concessions in the dispute.

From the stevedoring and stevedores' view, the dispute began from the MUA stopping work, the Patrick group and stevedores fired the workers immediately. At that time, the Howard Government and Patrick continued a media campaign about 'lazy and over-paid warfies' holding Australia to danger (Petzall, Timo & About, 2000). So Patrick group and stevedores believed that the government could manage it very efficiently. At the same time, the NFF had planed and implemented to set up a new stevedoring <https://assignbuster.com/the-argument-among-the-major-stakeholders-in-the-australian-waterfront-dispute-essay-sample/>

company to train stevedores and run stevedoring operations on docks leased from Patrick.

However, when the dispute entered into the legal process, the situation changed to be propitious to MUA. Finally, the Patrick loses the lawsuit. At the beginning and during the dispute, the Patrick received support from the Howard Government, nevertheless, because of the limit of legal system, they lost the dispute at the end. For the government, the Howard Government changed laws and reduced the droit of Australian Industrial Relations Commission and intended to make a new tax law, to force the Waterfront Company to reduce labour cost (Gang, 2002).

The government supports the Patrick stevedores during the dispute. At the beginning, the policy was favourable to Patrick. However, the laws were likely to support the MUA, and the Australian Government has been accused of breaching international labour laws through its actions in the waterfront dispute (Australia Dockers Arrested at Barricades, 1998). At the end, the government had to concede to MUA. Because the government also had to obey the law; it could not get across Parliament, in which the Communist Party of Australia took a big percentage.

Therefore, if the government wanted to adjust the law, the Parliament would be a block of Government. In this dispute, The Australian Government has been accused of breaching international labour laws by its actions. The Government can point out the effectiveness of Patrick Stevedoring and Stevedore into its new industrial law. Unions did not relapse into an involved situation caused by the Patrick Stevedoring and Stevedore and conservative

government leading by Prime Minister John Howard. Furthermore, the court adjudicated that Patrick Stevedoring and Stevedore had to pay about 1. million Australian dollars to the unions (Petzall, Timo & About, 2000).

The role of the boycott has been seen to be less effective that what was challenged by ' peaceful pickets' (Steve O'Neill, 1998). However, not all future industrial disputes can able to mass organisations as what has been the same situation in the waterfront dispute. This dispute is a heated industrial contest. It will have significance because of the in-depth debate on waterfront efficiency and productivity and also because of its implications for the conduct of general industrial relations.