

Kia ora koutou katoa,

Ko Rangi Tangira tōku ingoa.

I am honoured to have been nominated for the position of Co-Chair of Unite Union's Executive.

Being nominated means a great deal to me. It shows that others believe I have something valuable to contribute. It also means I can no longer pretend I am "just here for the free food."

I am not seeking this position simply for the title. If I wanted an impressive title without responsibility, I could just run for Parliament.

But in all seriousness I have accepted this nomination because I believe leadership means listening to our members, standing beside them when things become difficult, and ensuring their voices influence every decision our union makes.

Through my experience as a Unite union delegate and a McDonald's shift manager, I understand the realities of frontline work. I know what it is like to lead a team under pressure, solve problems quickly, support people with different needs, and keep things moving when the shift does not go according to plan....which, as any shift manager knows, is usually about five minutes after clocking in.

Working at McDonald's has taught me how to try to remain calm while short-staffed, to be patience with customers asking why the ice-cream machine is broken and show humility when delivery divers show me their cell phones, while asking for their orders. I feel after that, an Executive meeting should feel almost relaxing.

More importantly, being a shift manager has taught me that leadership is not about ordering people around. It is about setting the standard, communicating clearly, taking responsibility, and supporting your team. But more importantly "Don't be an asshole."

When one person is left carrying the entire shift by themselves, things fall apart quickly. The same is true of a union.

A union succeeds when its members, delegates, organisers, and leaders work together. Passing the problem to somebody else is not a strategy even if workplaces sometimes treat it like one.

Our members should understand what their union is doing, why decisions are being made, and how they can participate. And we will continue to implement this.

To our current Executive board...

I would also support meetings that are organised, focused, and productive. I cannot promise that every meeting will be short and sweet.

But I can promise you that they won't be long as watching the lord of the rings trilogy back to back.

A union is strongest when it has trained, confident representatives who understand workers' rights and are prepared to challenge unfair treatment.

So not all heroes wear capes or spandex uniforms. Some carry collective agreements, take detailed notes, and repeatedly ask management to put things in writing.

Another priority would be protecting the dignity and wellbeing of our members. Every worker deserves to be treated fairly and respectfully. Being paid to work does not mean being paid to tolerate bullying, intimidation, exploitation, or abuse.

You all here in this very room are testament to being the sword and shield that help battle the threat of unfairness in the workplace.

Another priority for me would be to continuously advocating for secure hours, fair pay, proper consultation, and employment agreements that offer genuine protection regardless of which government is in power.

For the government may move the goal post to suit their investors. We the union will still stay true to the kaupapa, principles that govern this organization.

I will not pretend that I have every answer. Anyone who claims to have every answer has probably misunderstood the questions or is preparing to run for this current government.

Strong leadership means listening carefully, asking difficult questions, considering the evidence, and making decisions that serve the membership rather than serving personal interests.

My next message is to the Executives in this room..... democracy does not mean we will always agree. Remember we are still independent individuals so everyone receives a fair opportunity to be heard. I feel a Co-Chair must help the Executive work constructively while ensuring that disagreement is not silenced and accountability is never treated as disloyalty.

Constructive disagreement can make an organisation stronger. Unconstructive disagreement usually just makes the meeting longer and causes the coffee to run out.

To our members here in this room, my commitment is to remain approachable, transparent, and grounded in the experiences of our members. I will speak honestly, listen carefully, and never forget that the authority of this position comes from the workers we represent.

It would be a privilege to serve as Co-Chair of the Executive, and I respectfully ask for your support.

And because this is a Co-Chair position, I promise to share the chair but I cannot make the same promise about the free food.

Kia Ora koutou katoa