

# **FIGHTING BACK**



## **ZSP-IWA**

### **International Week of Action Against Unpaid Wages**

October 2020

# The International Week of Action against Unpaid Wages



During the second week of October, ZSP will be drawing attention to the problem of unpaid wages as part of the International Week of Action against Unpaid Wages organized by the **International Workers' Association**. Wage theft can take many different forms and during our years of taking action against this problem, we have seen many. ZSP is one of only a couple of unions in Poland that has acted against it and it has been uniquely successful. We have often managed to get money that was owed in situations where the system fails workers using methods of direct action. Looking back at this, we can see that more than a few hundred workers have been involved and have successfully fought to receive their money. This makes ZSP the most effective workers' organization dealing with the issue in this country.

Although very often taking action results in victory for the workers, in some situations, despite all efforts, we have not managed. The reason for this usually revolves around legal loopholes which thieving entrepreneurs can use to avoid legal responsibility. We think it is very important to describe these and to explain that these are systematic problems that the government does not want to deal with. In fact, we can say that it is an accessory to the crime of wage theft. In such situations, we still think it is important to act, because even if we do not manage to achieve all our goals, at least other workers can be warned about thieving bosses and avoid them. In several cases, we also forced the business to shut down. This is what should happen because we should not let such criminals continue to steal the time and money of working people. We know that wage theft is something that has wide-ranging consequences and, as it often affects workers who are not in a good financial position, it can lead to the accumulation of debt and sometimes eviction. As we also have some experience in fighting the latter, we can say that we have seen many cases where people could not pay their rent because they had worked but did not receive their wages.

The list of all our successful actions would be quite long so rather, we would like to focus on some more interesting ones. Unlike other organizations, we also will talk about a few cases where we didn't manage, such as last year's campaign against Hostel24. The reason we will do this is to highlight some of the legal loopholes and obstacles that workers face. Unfortunately, thousands of other workers have been victims and this is simply not acceptable. We feel that this week is an excellent occasion to draw more attention to these issues and we hope that people will understand that if we do not make pressure and take more action, these pathologies will continue. And they need to be stopped.

## FORMS AND METHODS OF WAGE THEFT

When we speak of unpaid wages, most people think of it in its simplest form – in other words, people worked and did not receive the money they were owed. However, we must understand this in wider terms. Wage theft can take different forms, including one that is very popular in Poland: the institutionalized theft of paid holidays and sick leave which is legalized in the acceptance of trash contracts. (This year, ZSP will also start a campaign in this area.) This is a common form of legalized theft because so many contracts offered to workers should be worker contracts (umowa o pracy in Polish), but are constructed otherwise with the sole intention of reducing labor costs – in other words, of denying workers what they are actually due. Although the government has at times pretended to want to end this pathology, they will not take any stronger actions to require pro-rated paid vacation for all workers, nor do they provide workers with any effective instruments to fight against abuse.

Unpaid overtime is a real pandemic in Poland and is a common form of wage theft. Unscrupulous bosses can produce fraudulent evidence of working time or even keep no evidence of working time at all – although this is clearly illegal. Unsuspecting workers may find themselves unable to prove how long they actually worked. However, sometimes it has happened that when a smaller group of workers, or even a single employee has fought against this,



then the system was exposed and hundreds of people have benefitted from this campaign. ZSP has had special success in this area, however, the problem remains on a huge scale in this country.

Other forms of wage theft may be carried out through the avoidance of work contracts and the construction of abusive civil contracts. Here we can see all of the creative loopholes that businesses abuse. The state, compromised of those raised on neoliberal ideology and pandering to those with capital, continues to aid these pathologies, with few exceptions.

A good example of this is pretending that workers and self-employed contractors and requiring them to carry out their own business activity and sign civil contracts that offer them no benefits, or even does not guarantee a minimum wage. In the worst situation, these contracts go through intermediaries who in turn sign civil contracts. The employers then claim that they know nothing about the conditions with the contractors. ZSP has taken this one numerous times and had some victories in this area, something that the mainstream unions have constantly ignored.

Subcontracting in general makes the relation between employer and employee more difficult and many find themselves in a situation where legally they are employed by individuals or companies that have no real presence and cannot be found and held responsible. The sole purpose of a company might be to act as a subcontractor or to be the employer for the company that people really work for. Workers often find themselves stuck and cheated by ghost employers while the real bosses claim that they have no responsibility.

Even in direct contracts, employers have been known to add many abusive clauses and if workers sign them, many courts treat them as valid, even if they clearly contradict other laws. These include outrageous contractual penalties, which often are imposed illegally.

Another method of wage theft is illegal unpaid training periods. These are unfortunately still quite common and younger workers are particularly targetted and victimized. Another group of workers that get targetted by thieving bosses are foreigners who they suspect either do not know their rights or are willing to forego them to get any employment. Some workers also may find themselves in the



grey or black economy, employed illegally or without a contract. It sometimes happens that when they are cheated, they are threatened and become convinced that it is they who will get in trouble, not the bosses.

Unfortunately, these common forms of wage theft are not the end of the long list we have seen. These forms of theft have been maintained by a legal system that is ineffective at facilitating workers' claims and keeps numerous opportunities for fraud in place. Even where

the government has taken action, after many years of campaigns by our union and sometimes others, there is too little protection for workers. An example of this is the subminimum wage, which we fought against for years. In the past, employees on civil contracts were not guaranteed a minimum wage. Some years ago, a minimum hourly wage was introduced, which was hailed as a great victory. However, our political caste, whose heads are usually in the sand and who are far removed from the realities of the working class, do not want to see that still many people earn less than this – even people working for them, directly or indirectly. It is enough that the contract does not reflect the real number of hours worked and the working time is forged. Who knows how many thousands of workers still find themselves earning less than minimum. Usually these are people in especially vulnerable situations who have few other options for making a living.

**Where the government and the legal system has failed, the best method for combatting this is direct action and solidarity.**

## EXAMPLES OF ACTION AGAINST WAGE THEFT

Since its beginning in 2007, ZSP has been involved in fighting dozens of cases of wage theft, effecting hundreds of workers – perhaps even thousands where we have forced companies to abandon practices of unpaid overtime. Here we will present just a few of the many cases which represent different types of problems with unpaid wages and how they were resolved. Then we will discuss a couple of cases that were not resolved and why.



It should be explained that there have been numerous actions which have brought victories to workers that we did not list here in this article – but not because they are unimportant. We will list some of these at the end and welcome readers to our website for more information.

### Dino and Polo Markets

There were numerous violations of workers' rights at both supermarket chains. In terms of wage theft, in both cases, there was systematic use of unpaid overtime, lack of proper evidence of the time worked and fraudulent records of working hours. Unfortunately, such things are common in some supermarket chains where workers are expected to do things before or after their shift such as cleaning, closing out the registers or helping with stock. In both cases, many pickets were held at the markets and in there were also visits to the headquarters. Finally workers were able to get their overtime pay. The union also helped workers compile evidence of this overtime.



*Picket in Dopiewo.*

The case of Dino was particularly interesting; due to the intense campaign of those involved, more and more incidents were exposed and eventually the chain was forced to change their practices and hundreds of workers were able to receive overtime. (In PoloMarket, the pressure also forced some changes, but not to the extent as in Dino. Polo tried to bring various criminal cases against the workers in an attempt to scare others.) It is interesting how a campaign where only some workers became involved can go on to improve the working conditions for everybody.



*Dozens of actions took place at PoloMarkets around the country with workers from different cities involved.*

### **PKS Grodzisk Mazowiecki**

In the first years of ZSP, we became involved in a number of struggles involving bus drivers. In 2008, we found out about systematic forms of wage theft at the PKS Grodzisk Mazowiecki company. This involved Ukrainian bus drivers working in Warsaw as that company had won a public tender to service some lines in the nearby capital. Ironically, PKS Grodzisk Mazowiecki was a „worker-run” company, a type of deception introduced during the economic transformation.

The drivers usually worked 60-75 hours a week, often driving more than the daily limit. One of the ways that the company stole money from workers was to enforce penalties on any drivers who used too much gas. These were taken illegally and could even amount up to 50% of their wages. They would claim that the workers exceeding the „norms”, however there was never any written regulation stipulating what the norm should be. Moreover, using extra gas usually occurs in two situations: when there are huge traffic jams and when the air conditioning is on. In other words, in situations which the drivers have little control over. (Varsovians not aware of this can now understand why they sometimes have to fight to get the air conditioning put on in the summer.) Wage theft was only part of the problem – there were also very poor living conditions and holding workers' passports. In May 2008, they decided that they had enough.

The drivers went on a wildcat strike. They received support in documenting and articulating their claims to both the company and the city government. The day after we sent in the documentation, the head of the company appeared at the depot with envelopes full of cash.

The strike action was very effective. It immediately put pressure on the company, which was contracted by the city, to resolve the issue because there can be heavy contractual penalties for failure to provide services, including loss of the contract due to breach.

This is just one of many examples of how workers can have their wages robbed through various penalties the bosses think up, many of which are imposed in contradiction to the law. Luckily the drivers took action.

## Sadar

Probably almost nobody knows this firm but it is one of hundreds of such companies in the country that provides service staff to the public sector for the jobs they are outsourcing. This firm specializes in cleaners and the people involved in the campaign worked at the refugee center in Debak, not far from Grodzisk Mazowiecki. There were various forms of wage theft as the firm hired people on false contracts (and, in other cases, with no contract at all). People who had normal 40-hour working weeks often had contracts for fewer working hours. Because of this, all payments to social security and paid vacation entitlement were lower and, in the event of any conflict, the employer would try to claim that the worker was only contracted for a few hours a week.



When workers confronted the boss about some issues, they were reprimanded and threatened, so they decided to take action. There was a protest at work, some articles and eventually a protest in front of the boss's house. Following this protest, workers were paid what they demanded.

As part of ZSP's ongoing campaign called „No Exploitation on Public Money” - which seeks to end the use of such outsourcing companies by public entities, the workers contacted the government Ministry in charge of the center to discuss direct hiring. (One person was hired directly – others decided in the end to change their jobs.) We also contacted the city government about the cleaners at one of the railway stations who had no contracts and they took action against them.

## Impuls

Another company that had numerous contracts with municipal, government or publically-funded entities was Impuls. Impuls provided people for outsourced services such as cleaning or portier work. You could meet people in an Impuls uniform going into some ministries, municipal offices, theatres or even the Palace of Culture in Warsaw. They had won lots of public tenders by offering low prices but this came at the price of robbing the workers.



*Workers occupied the Impuls office, demanding their money.*

The first problem was that some workers were paid a sub-minimum wage. This was accomplished by signing fake contracts. On the contracts were only a small amount of hours, but in reality they worked many more hours and were paid under the table. Then the company often paid late and started not paying some people at all. Workers didn't know what to do because they thought that if they made legal claims, the courts would only recognize the amount of hours written and if they tried to claim more, they were afraid they'd be in trouble for tax or social security fraud. This is something that some unscrupulous employers use by threatening workers that they would be held responsible for the company's cheating.

When the first person came, he told us that there were many other workers in the same situation because there were lines at their office of workers waiting for payment in cash who went away empty handed. We suggested organizing. Mainstream unionists think this is impossible because the workers are spread out at different workplaces, but it was enough to go to the office and talk to people in the line, or discuss with people we met at the places they had contracts and invite them to a meeting.

*(Mainstream unions also organize workers for different reasons than we do so they are usually not interested in these sorts of situations where they cannot make money.)*

The first thing was to write about the problems and then organize a few actions at their office. When a group of people occupied the office, all of a sudden the boss appeared and, after seeing that nobody was leaving and this action was being filmed, all of a sudden paid thousands of zloties in cash to all the workers there. This was after weeks that he had been claiming to workers that there was „no money” and they'd have to come back later.

## **No Exploitation on Public Money**



Impuls became a focus of our campaign „No Exploitation on Public Money”. We were able to show that in some of the tenders, they had offered such a low bid that the public entities involved had to see that it was impossible to pay even a minimum wage. The tender system where price was a leading priority was creating a pathology in which public entities who outsourced labor were encouraging the use of some of the worst working conditions in the city. There was a reaction, but like many „solutions” thought up by the government, it left lots of room for abuse. They loudly declared that price no longer had

to be the main priority in public tenders and that they could demand social clauses which guarantee that the service providers were using workers employed on normal contracts. Later there was also a minimum wage introduced for all workers, regardless of whether they were on a work contract or civil contract. However this proved to be a lot of propaganda as the act stipulated that a municipality or other public entity could demand a social contract, but they didn't have to. On top of that, we later learned that the at least in Warsaw, the municipality never introduced any mechanism for checking the working conditions of the people the contractors were using.

Despite the fact that the government reacted, as usual, by pretending to take a problem seriously to appear more pro-social, the attention that the struggle with Impuls brought and these declarations meant that we have more ways to criticize public entities since they tried to present an image of caring and are more sensitive to exposure. As far as Impuls is concerned, we made pressure that they were no longer chosen in public tenders, but they just operate under a different name now and pretend that its a different company. We haven't heard of the same practices being used there and we hope they were forced to change their ways.

## GreenWay

Another type of wage theft which is particularly common when it comes to younger workers (but not only), is the illegal use of unpaid training periods. Under Polish law, all training must be paid. However some businesses try to go around this. One such company was the first franchise of vegetarian restaurants in Poland called GreenWay. GreenWay convinced people that they should work a few days for free as „training”. Other workers told us that they observed how at least one restaurant used a different person for free every week. It became clear that it wasn't even about „training” but about getting free labor.



*Action at GreenWay in Wroclaw.*

We made a campaign, including protests at their restaurants in different locations, inside the restaurants and outside. There was also an action where free vegetarian food was served outside one restaurant. The campaign inspired a lot of discussion. There were some people related to different movements, such as animal rights movements, who worked there however they were discouraged from joining in by activists of another union with a pseudo-syndicalist profile who saw the franchise as a „step forward for vegetarianism”. The pressure on these people from the pseudo-syndicalist subculture made the campaign less effective, however it was effective enough to stop those practices and gain payments for those who fought.

One of the results of the campaign was also that the franchise holders were very upset by the negative publicity and whereas there was once dozens of these restaurants in Poland, within the year of the campaign, they started closing down and now there are only a few.

## Uber Eats



All sorts of irregularities are known in Uber Eats. Workers in Warsaw claimed that they were entitled to a higher rate if they worked a certain number of hours but that somehow their app would mysteriously stop working just before they reached these hours. We have heard such claims before from other workers, not only in Uber, around the world. Although workers addressed us with these concerns, no campaign mobilized around it. Instead, when something did happen, it related to wage theft.

Uber Eats' way of operating is scandalous. Instead of employing workers directly, they sign contracts with the workers as „independent contractors”. In reality, they often use subcontractors who in turn can employ dozens of people. These firms are not regulated, as they are not considered temporary work agencies. In the case of Uber Eats, which employs mostly foreigners, including many students, many of these agents are very shady.



The workers are often afraid because they are unsure of their legal status. Many of them came on student visas but some actually came to work and are registered at universities that are only covers for getting a visa. As students, they can work only a limited amount of hours but through this system, they often work much longer. There is usually little to no contractual record of their employment. The contract with Uber Eats is with the agent.

Of course Uber Eats knows that an agent who bills for thousands of hours of work a week is employing other people, but they act as if that is not their concern. However they have to know that this is a perfect setup for people to get cheated. Workers contacted us when their agent stopped paying. There had already been a case of an agent who disappeared and workers thought he just took their money and went back to India. These agents used more than 100 workers.

After tracking down the agent, we promised a big scandal and the people in question were paid. (We don't know however if everybody he hired received money because only a smaller group of people took action.) Later, it was enough for a few workers to claim that they were in ZSP to get paid.

We would actually prefer they build a structure there and are hoping this will happen but for now, the action has been sporadic. This is probably because the workers feel more precarious and have less social support than in some other places in the world where they have already organized. Many workers are also afraid because they think that their visas will be cancelled if they came as students but are found to be working. Despite the limitations of union activities there, we can claim some success in a few concrete situations and we can continue to campaign against this form of contracting, which facilitates all types of wage theft.

## Amazon



Workers at Amazon who were hired through the work agencies Adecco and Manpower had different problems with pay, which they were able to fight against, using direct action. The problems began at the beginning of Amazon's operation in Poland, when it first opened and workers did not get paid for idle time. According to the law, training takes place after a contract is signed and is paid. Workers who were supposed to start at Amazon

were not given hours until some time later, although they had been contracted and were ready to start work. This time should be paid, although these agencies tried to get around it and convince workers that they were not entitled to it. They also tried to say the contracts started later and wrote up some one-day contracts retroactively for the day of training. The workers decided to organize and fight for what they were owed.

As the work started, other problems started to appear: late payments, unpaid overtime and problems with getting paid for sick leave. (Unfortunately they haven't resolved the latter and workers from Amazon write us about this to this day.) They organized a union and there were protests in front of the work agencies in different cities and internationally against the agencies and Amazon. Thanks to these actions, they were able to get what they were owed. This was even up to 28 days pay for idle time.

This was a major victory in Poland since many work agencies try to get around this by lying to workers or by writing up new and different contracts for them and asking them to sign backdated documents. This was the only such victory for agency workers that we have heard of.

Another type of problem which workers had was about sick leave because the company must fill out a form and make payments in order for workers to be entitled. Unfortunately, this is a common form of theft in Poland, that employers avoid these payments and then, if something happens, the workers cannot get sick leave pay. Thanks to the actions, the workers were also able to get what they were entitled to.

One result of the actions was also that Amazon terminated their contract with Manpower for some period of time.

## Building Investments Edyta L.



Few people have heard of this construction firm, but it won numerous public tenders, including with ministries and local administrations. It turned out that they used homeless people to do construction on municipal flats in Warsaw, without any contracts and then didn't pay them.

Such wage theft occurs all the time in Poland and people working without contracts often feel that they have no way to win. It's true that the legal system does not support them. We organized an

occupation of the municipal office. We reminded them of how they had people from Impuls working there who hadn't been paid for months and they didn't even know about it. The bureaucrats looked pretty stupid and after insisting they use social clauses, explained that even if they did, they have no mechanism to check what was happening with the workers.

We had problems making direct actions directly against the owner because of the lack of a target, so we concentrated on the municipality. The workers were able to get a payment order, but could not get her to pay. In the end they got their money, but it took some while. In the meantime, one of the workers became very ill and was being treated for cancer. It was tragic that he wasn't able to receive money before that terrible period in his life.



Despite the process that took too long, it is one of the rare cases where people working in the black and able to get the money they were owed. Unfortunately, they are especially vulnerable and are often cheated.

## Problematic Cases

### JW Construction



Construction is one area where there are often incidents of wage theft. Larger projects often use various subcontractors who sometimes do not pay people. ZSP has dealt with numerous incidents in construction, but none like the situation with a group of Chinese workers who were building an apartment block for JW Construction, one of the major developers in Poland. The situation concerned as many as 450 workers but finally only maybe 50 of them took action.

The workers were contracted in China by three different agencies to work in construction in Warsaw. The cost for the „service” of being employed was around \$1500. They had two-year contracts with the agents who promised 700 euros plus room and board for 250 hours of labor per month. They were hired out to two shady subcontractor firms (which were owned by the same people) however these companies did not provide any type of local contract. The company (because they really worked for the same one), had contracts on different sites. The workers were often driven to these places and could not always identify where they worked. Of course with many safety violations as well. They were able to identify two housing estates. They had been working for 3 months without any salary at all and were basically starving when they finally went on strike. Then they were fired by the subcontractor company, V-Agra.

For a foreigner on a work permit, getting fired means that your work visa is no longer valid, as it is with a particular employer and they would have to leave the country. It also usually means getting kicked out of any housing that was provided. In fact, V-Agra wrote a threatening notice to the workers saying that they would inform officials to start their deportation process. They had no food or money



*Picket at one of the building sites.*

or place to stay. For this reason, to avoid deportation, they decided to camp on the lawn in front of the Chinese Embassy, which is not considered „Polish territory”. Any move off the lawn could mean deportation.

We presented the workers demands and after some campaign about their situation, they at least received help. Unfortunately, since the subcontractors were fighting about who was the real employer – they or the agents in China – the situation in Poland ended with most workers returning home, with only assurances from the government that they would force the agents to pay them. We did not manage to follow how the situation ended for more than a few people and we can say the results were different – some reporting they received all their money, some saying only partial and one suggesting that he still hadn't received anything.

Because of the complicated situation, we can only look at this as a partial success. The main construction company, which was the one recognized by the public, was put under pressure not to use such agents but we know that this practice is unfortunately very widespread in Poland and workers are in a precarious situation due to work visa requirements. The workers received some immediate help, including food, clothes and sleeping bags from ZSP and from people in the neighbourhood and eventually were put up in a hotel and received tickets home. After we exposed how they were threatened with deportation, it didn't happen, but they were sent home. The subcontractors were obliged to pay for hotels and meals.

The situation was complicated and in general, it is much worse for citizens of different countries who have strict visa requirements. Because of the complicated situation where workers cannot sometimes prove who they actually are employed by and because it is difficult to legally deal with a foreign entity such as the agent while being in another country, many workers in this situation are screwed. One way of putting pressure on such agencies is to make a campaign against them, to warn other workers not to use them. In some situations this is possible and we have had a lot of success with them when it comes to local agencies and European ones, but with all sorts of limitations to communicating in China through any electronic media, our possibilities were limited. In this situation, unfortunately, we were left with assurances of the government that they would do something and, although we are sure of their power to repress, we see no evidence that they try to ensure the rights and safety of their citizens who work abroad, often through such intermediaries.

## Hostel 24



Hostel 24 in Bydgoszcz is one of several businesses which were forced to close down after we started campaigns about workers rights. Although in this case we cannot talk about a victory, but rather about massive legal complications, there is at least some satisfaction that these people will not continue to harm more working people.

Hostel 24 kept hiring different people, often students, foreigners or foreign students, and simply not paying them.

Most workers would leave after a month or two, when they understood they would not get paid. Finally they organized and found around 30 people in the same situation.

The lawyer for Hostel24 immediately started to threaten the workers and claim that they were not employees of Hostel24. That is because Hostel24 is a name, but the firm they worked for had another name. Such were the legal machinations of the owners, who, as it turned out, had been doing these kinds of scams in other businesses. The union took action with pickets, an occupation of the hostel and a picket at the owner's house, with neighbours supporting the action. The negative publicity forced the hostel to close but the workers still hadn't got their money.

In Poland, if a company cannot pay workers, it is required to file for bankruptcy and, if it does not do so, the workers can go to court, declare it bankrupt and have a claim on the assets when liquidated. Once the company is declared bankrupt, they are also entitled to support from a special fund. (Of course the money from this fund comes from workers themselves and all workers have to pay into it.) However, the bandits at Hostel24 dissolved the Board of the company, so they claimed there were no people to make the payments. This is a legal loophole we have encountered before but that the government does not want to do anything about as it allows criminal bosses to avoid personal liability. Then another problem occurred. While workers were waiting for their court date, Coronavirus struck and court dates were postponed. However the government does not allow any claims to the fund after one year and this meant that the claim had expired. Of course it is a case where the claim should still be honored and another thing to fight against. The terms of filing claims are unreasonable given the lack of guarantees that courts can deal with these within one year and also they are much shorter than the terms that creditors have to collect debts. The law is designed to make it difficult for workers to use the fund. Also, in order to collect money from the fund, the workers have to go to court and pay court and legal fees which can even exceed the amount of money they would collect in cases where only a few workers are involved.

## Vis / Atlantic

*Confrontation with the boss in Warsaw.*

Similar problems were encountered in the case of Vis/Atlantic. Atlantic was a famous brand of underwear in Poland with its shops in many shopping malls around the country and some sales abroad. It would hire some people under the name Vis, and some directly under the name Atlantic. Although these were the same, they used this to claim they were two different entities. This was also used to deny people benefits as workers. In Polish law, after



a certain time, if a company hires someone under a temporary contract and signs consecutive contracts, it becomes a permanent contract, with paid vacation and other guarantees. What they would do is hire somebody for a certain period of time under one name, then for the next period of time, under another. This was to claim that the person was not working for the company for two consecutive periods of time and to avoid legal obligations to hire them with employee benefits. It is clear that this is a scam, but it is one that the law allows as the government provides all the tools to bosses to practice this form of theft. Workers who do not have paid vacations or sick leave are being robbed.

Although some workers who organized and fought were able to get some compensation, Atlantic/Vis also used this trick of dissolving their Board and claiming that there was nobody responsible. Hundreds of workers were thus denied any payment.

## Zle Mięso



One final example of a problematic case was with the vegetarian restaurant Zle Mięso in Wrocław. Most of the people working there were employed under the table, so they did not have any payments towards social security or health insurance and no contracts to prove employment. In the rare cases where there was some type of contract, there were different ones – the employer had one thing written in the

contract, the employee another. There were also other problems such as an action were employees were encouraged to give their tips to charity, to help the homeless or animals, but this money never made it there. Workers were threatened when they tried to discuss these problems with the boss and many simply quit.

The problem was that the boss was one of those people who feel like such things like health insurance payments are something that destroys business and he tried to portray himself as a victim. It was not very successful, although we have to say that this represents a change in mentality in the public. In previous situations like this, the owners of „alternative” businesses got some sympathy and were even sometimes defended by leftists and pseudo-syndicalists. In this case, it did not work so well, so the boss, failing to gain sympathy, just closed the place down. He decided that he would rather not run a business than have to contract workers and have some sort of responsibility towards them.

In such a case, we cannot really say that the workers had a victory but, on the other hand, we always say that the businesses that don't pay should not be allowed to operate. In this case, like in a few others we dealt with, at least we know that the exploitation in that workplace will not continue.



**Webpage of ZSP-IWA: [zsp.net.pl](http://zsp.net.pl)**

Below are a list of some other situations where we dealt with different forms of wage theft in English. (There are some others in Polish on our page.) In some cases, wage theft was only one of the issues. There were also a few cases which were not resolved and because the workers did not want to continue but we will not include them in this article.

## In English:

<https://zsp.net.pl/direct-action-pays>

<https://zsp.net.pl/marcpol-workers-receive-some-money-struggle-against-over-yet>

<https://zsp.net.pl/otto-pays-workers-after-series-actions>

<https://zsp.net.pl/employees-temp-agencies-can-fight-and-win>

<https://zsp.net.pl/victory-worker-against-schaffa-shoes> (Further payments were later received in a couple of cases against Schaffa.)

<https://zsp.net.pl/shoe-shop-pays-after-picket>

<https://zsp.net.pl/more-victories-polomarket>

<https://zsp.net.pl/hotel-pays-and-shows-it-worth-taking-action>

<https://zsp.net.pl/otto-has-pay-back-worker-plus-some-tips-agency-employees>

<https://zsp.net.pl/otto-workers-wago-elwag-paid-missing-wages>

<https://zsp.net.pl/restaurant-plonsk-pays>

<https://zsp.net.pl/jmp-paid>

<https://zsp.net.pl/successful-intervention-against-wage-theft>

<https://zsp.net.pl/wroclaw-positive-ending-case-unpaid-social-security>

<https://zsp.net.pl/runaway-sex-shop-owner-pays-well-almost>

<https://zsp.net.pl/visit-otto-office-warsaw>

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