

Media Release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union  
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## **Employment law changes tilting the balance strongly toward employers**

Rail and port workers say an ability for employers to opt out of multi employer collective agreements sends a message that a race to the bottom on wages is acceptable.

“The rail MECA employment agreement is the largest in the rail industry and covers over 3,000 workers at NZ Railways Corporation, Ontrack Infrastructure and KiwiRail,” said Wayne Butson, General Secretary of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union.

“Rail workers fought hard to achieve this document. Multi Employment Collective Agreements are a vital tool to prevent competition amongst employers for a race to the bottom with wages and conditions.”

“The government is sending a clear signal that they are happy for employers to try and opt out of industry standards.”

Wayne Butson said the removal of the provision where new workers benefit from union-negotiated conditions for the first 30 days while they consider joining the union was another signal that the government has given up on a high wage economy.

“Minister of Labour Simon Bridges is being a bit cute with his language over this. To say workers are ‘forced’ into these conditions for the first 30 days is disingenuous.”

“As we know, union collective agreements have better pay rises than the national average, as Victoria University research has demonstrated, year after year.”

“All the government is doing with these changes is putting more barriers in the way of workers coming together to improve their pay and conditions and to lift New Zealand’s living standards.”

“What happened to National’s bright future?” he said.

Ends.

For further comment: RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson - (027) 496-2461