

To MECA or not to MECA? - That is YOUR question

You are receiving this leaflet with a secret ballot voting paper because:

- ◆ you are a member of the RMTU; and
- ◆ either the Tranz Rail Limited Collective Agreement 2003/05 (now Toll NZ Consolidated Ltd), NZ Railways Corporation Collective (NZRC) Agreement 2004/05 or the Connex Auckland Ltd Collective Agreement 2004/05 covers your terms and conditions of employment.

To have an effective say in how your terms and conditions of employment are determined please read this before casting your vote.

- ◆ The ballot will be run simultaneously – but separately – amongst Union members in all three companies. At least two of these company ballots must be successfully carried for the Union to initiate for a Multi Party Collective Agreement (MECA).
- ◆ The RMTU's preference is for an overwhelmingly majority in favour in all three company votes.
- ◆ If the MECA vote is not carried within at least two companies the Union will be forced to initiate three standard single employer collective agreements which will stretch the Union's resources and possibly may result in settlement delays.

We need YOU to vote. A low turnout will not send a unified message to the employer nor will it help your Union to determine the best path forward.

Make sure your vote counts - send it back in the stamped and addressed envelope

Background

The Tranz Rail Ltd (now Toll NZ Consolidated Ltd), Connex Auckland Ltd and NZ Railways Corporation Collective agreements are due to expire on 30 June 2005. The Collective Agreements (CA) are very similar because those for Connex Auckland Ltd and NZ Railways Corporation were negotiated on a same or more favourable terms basis from the Toll NZ Consolidated CA when the members and operation were separated. The Employment Relations Act (ERA) provides for multi party bargaining and the creation of Multi Party Collective Agreements.

MECA was in your Union's mind when it negotiated the new collective agreements for Connex Auckland Ltd and NZRC in 2004 and why both expire on 30 June 2005.

The RMTU is keen to create a rail industry Collective Agreement to which other parties can be added as and when they appear.

The underlying objective of the RMTU MECA policy is to prevent competition amongst employers, within the burgeoning rail industry being based upon the price of workers' wages and conditions.

What is a MECA?

For us, a MECA would be a Collective Agreement covering all workers in all occupations within the rail industry who work for the employer parties. It would provide the base to which other employers can be added in the future. Transfield and Alstom could fall into this category or, if a new company is formed and we obtain Union members from that enterprise, then we can seek to have the employer become a party to the MECA, thus ensuring that negotiations for wages and conditions become more efficient for both the employers and the Union. It will also provide more members with protection and progress. A MECA can also include other Unions if necessary.

Negotiations

A MECA means that one set of negotiations is conducted for the rail industry with one set of associated costs.

In our opinion **a MECA would make our Union stronger**. The biggest cause of lost wages and conditions for vulnerable workers in the years 1991 through to 2000 was due to the Employment Contracts Act and its focus on divisions between individuals and worksite-specific contracts and/or bargaining – a major factor in the current debate on why wages have not increased with the current labour/skills shortage.



**Support
one
another**

A MECA would ensure that there were uniform provisions across the three companies and, we hope, eventually the rail industry. Any single employer trying to attack any single group of workers' wages and conditions would not only have to get all Union workers in the industry to agree but they would also have to get other employers to climb on board as well.

It also re-instates the opportunity for workers across different occupations and/or employers **to support one another in bargaining**.

When the RMTU expends time and energy in multiple bargaining situations while gaining similar results in all, work on other important industrial matters are often delayed.

The MECA restores a national focus though in reality Toll NZ is still calling the shots within the industry, as they are the dominant player.

Pros

- ◆ Maintain common conditions across the industry.
- ◆ Maintain benchmark labour costs for all employers in the industry who are party to the MECA.
- ◆ Ensure consistent increases to all wage rates across industry.
- ◆ Assist to maintain common standards and effectiveness of members and their Union across the industry.
- ◆ Prevent competition amongst employers in the rail industry based upon labour costs or work flexibilities.
- ◆ Reduce cost of bargaining to the Union and members.
- ◆ Maintain ability for workers to move from one employer to another without losing pay or conditions.
- ◆ Better able to maintain industry redundancy provisions.
- ◆ The more employees in the rail industry we bargain for, the greater the negotiating leverage and the ability to achieve better outcomes for members.
- ◆ Maintain rail industry collective strength.

Cons

- ◆ Possible loss of ability for key skill groups to wrench higher pay and conditions from employer.
- ◆ Strong probability of employer hostility to a MECA and possible need for industrial action.
- ◆ Increases communication demands from members of different employers.
- ◆ Individual employers will try and increase pressure on employees to deal with them individually.

We recommend

The Union strongly recommends members to support the initiation of bargaining for a Multi Employer Collective Agreement with;

- ◆ Toll NZ Consolidated Ltd;
- ◆ Connex Auckland Ltd; and
- ◆ NZ Railways Corporation.

Please ensure that you **cast your vote and have your say** by completing the enclosed voting paper and posting it back to your Union in the reply paid envelope.

It is essential that we have a high voter response rate.

Ask your workmate if they have voted and tell them to send it in if they haven't!

Remember, how they vote is their choice, but everyone should have their say!

**Return your vote by
0900hrs
Monday 28 March 2005.**

Have your say - VOTE NOW!

Yours in Unity



Wayne Butson
Rail Bargaining Advocate



Rail & Maritime Transport Union

MECA BARGAINING 2005

A guide for voting for all members covered by RMTU Collective Agreements and employed by

- ◆ Toll NZ Consolidated Ltd,
- ◆ Connex Auckland Ltd and
- ◆ NZ Railways Corporation.