

THE ACTIVIST



Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) - 15 July 2008

ANNUAL CPI HITS 4%

The Consumers Price Index (CPI) was updated today by Statistics NZ and came in above predictions at 4% for the June 2008 year and 1.6% for the June 2008 quarter. This is the highest quarterly increases since June 1990. Most forecasts were for around 3.8% for the year.

Transport prices increased 4.9% in the June 2008 quarter, with the main contribution coming from increases in petrol prices (up 12.8%). Prices for the food group were up 2.2% in the June 2008 quarter, mainly due to price increases for grocery food, vegetables, and restaurant meals and ready-to-eat food.

The housing and household utilities group recorded an overall increase of 1.2%. The increase in this group was mainly due to price increases in electricity. Higher prices for petrol (up 25.9%) made the most significant individual contribution to the 4% increase in the CPI for the year to June 2008. If petrol prices had remained constant from the June 2007 quarter, the CPI would have risen 2.7% for the year to the June 2008 quarter. Tradables inflation was up by 2.3% for the June quarter and 4.8% for the year. Non-tradables inflation was up by 0.9% for the June quarter and 3.4% for the year. Meanwhile the monthly update for food prices was also released today. In June 2008 food prices went up by 1.3% lifting the annual increase to 8.2% with grocery food prices up by 12.1%.



TIME UP FOR JUST IN TIME

Faced with growing environmental concerns, the freight industry will be pushed to divert air cargo to sea and rail in our view. Over the last 10 years there has been an increase in international freight from consumer goods such as electronics and so delivery pressures had made the Transport logistics industry opt for air travel due to its speed advantage, that approach has become unviable with the rising cost of fuel and environmental concerns. You may ask "Does the world want to absorb the greenhouse gas so that some kid can get the latest iPod a bit earlier?"

ONTRACK WAGEROUND 2008

The Union served notice of Initiation of bargaining on both ONTRACK entity's (Infrastructure and Core) on 3 June 2008. The initiation notice is on the basis of the parties forming a Multi Party Collective Agreement (MECA) by joining the current two single employer collective agreements (SECA).

The Wages Working Party has been placed on hold and we have a joint commitment to reconvene the working party immediately upon settlement of the MECA. A joint report on the working party was recently circulated.

A shortened lineout of Ontrack and RMTU reps met in Wellington on 9 and 10 July to undertake the technical work of merging the two Collectives. The full teams will meet in Wellington 16 and 17 July to endorse the work of the shortened line out and to resolve any disputed clauses. They will work toward achieving a settlement for recommendation to members.

This is for the information and guidance of RMTU members only!

MAERSK ORDERS ANOTHER 16 CONTAINER SHIPS

Maersk has signed an agreement with Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Co in Korea for the delivery of 16 container vessels in 2010-12. The vessels have individual capacities of 7,450 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) and they are equipped with reefer plugs enabling them to carry 1,700 refrigerated containers each. Maersk claims this to be the highest number ever carried on a container vessel.

The ships are designed to meet the highest demands for safe and economic transportation of goods in the trade to and from the East Coast of South America. In addition, each vessel is equipped with a waste heat recovery system. The system reuses excess heat from the exhaust and thus generates energy for propulsion of the vessel or on-board electricity consumption. The reduction in fuel consumption results in a corresponding reduction of emissions. Maersk Line expects to deploy the 16 vessels in the trades between the East Coast of South America and Asia and Europe.



TOLL NETWORKS

Following the ratification meetings a debrief of the RMTU teams identified that there were some "issues" that had been raised by members that we had to deal with before signing off the agreement. The issues were;

- mechanical engineer progression methodology being in the CA, and;
- the process for travel privileges.

The Mechanical engineer was able to be resolved reasonably quickly. The Travel Privileges has proven to be more difficult. The issue is that Toll Networks expected our members to purchase their tickets and then to seek reimbursement of the monies which they undertook to pay within 7 days. The RMTU believed that this was too tough for our Toll Networks members and we requested that the company pay for the tickets by the service provider invoicing

them. We have now resolved this as the following email message from Toll networks states;

"We are going to put a process together that resembles what United currently do, I have discussed this with Rail Passenger Group and the Interislander.... At this stage it looks like the Interislander and Rail Passenger Group will invoice us on a monthly basis."

Sadly this has taken too long to fix so the company has been unable to action the pay the wage increases this pay fortnight. **The payment of the increase will now be made 30 July with full backdating to 1 July 2008.**

TOLL-VEOLIA WAGEROUND

The parties are due to meet again in Auckland 22-24 July. The Union is endeavoring to get an agreed joint statement out to members as soon as possible.

UNITED GROUP RAIL UPDATE

The parties have agreed that all communication during the bargaining process will be by issuing of Joint Notice. The latest states;

Wage Round 2008 - Update # 3

Joint Communication to Staff/Union Members re: Status in Collective Agreement Bargaining

The RMTU and United Group Limited (UGL) negotiating teams have met in Wellington for a further days bargaining. We have now met on 29 February, 27, 28 March, 29, 30 April and 10 July 2008. The gap between April and July was due to the Union conducting report back meetings with members and the conducting of a ballot to authorise strike action.

When the parties met on 10 July 2008 the issues between the parties were clearly identified and robustly discussed.

The employer advised the Union negotiators that they needed to adjourn to further review their position and ensure all options have been canvassed within UGL before any

further offer could be considered. The Union negotiators considered the UGL request and agreed to the adjournment.

The parties are scheduled to meet again on 29 July 2008 in Wellington.

Notice of Industrial action has **NOT** been issued by the Union as yet.

LOCO ENGINEER SAD FUND – VACANCY

Peter Manson has resigned as a Union appointed Trustee from the Fund due to leaving the Company.

Section 3(a) (ii) of the Trust Deed states:

"The Union shall have the right from time to time to invite any two persons being Members of the Fund to act as Trustees and the right to remove any persons so appointed. Any such appointment or removal shall be made by notice in writing delivered to the Trustees".

Union criteria for replacement trustee as outlined in rule 116 of the Union Policy states:

"That the Union Policy on trustee appointments to the Locomotive Engineers' Superannuation Trust Fund be that one trustee be a Locomotive Representative selected from and by the National Management Committee, and the other by National ballot of the Fund members subject to the requirements of the Trust Deed. Should there not be a Locomotive Engineer present on the NMC then both trustees be elected by a national ballot of the Fund members subject to the requirement of the Trust Deed;"

Wally Wallbutton holds the NMC North Island Rail position and is therefore one Union appointed Trustee. The second position will be filled by calling for nominations which will be open for three weeks. In the event of there being more than one nominee, a ballot will be

conducted in accordance with the Union Rules.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR 2ND LE FUND TRUSTEE

Nominations are hereby to fill the vacant Union Trustee position on the Board of the NZ Locomotive Engineers Sickness, Accident and Death Benefit Fund. Nominees must be;

- Current Financial Members of the RMTU
- Hold a current Locomotive Engineers certification and qualification
- Be currently undertaking locomotive engineer work
- Be a NZ citizen
- Be a member of the Fund

Nomination forms are available from the Union's National Office by calling 04 4992066, fax 04 4710896 or by email to julia@rmtunion.org.nz

Nominations must be moved and seconded by Locomotive Engineer fund members who are current financial members of the Union and an acceptance of nomination signed by the nominee.

Nominations must be received in the Unions National Office by 1700hrs 25 July 2008.

In the event that there is more than one nomination received by the closing date

then a postal ballot of fund members will be held. Nominees are warned that in the event of a ballot being held a photograph and election rhetoric of 150 words is required from each candidate ASAP.

RMTU CONFERENCE 2008

Conference Delegates and Branch Secretaries are reminded that Conference will be held on **TUESDAY 14 to THURSDAY 16 OCTOBER 2008** at the Royal New Zealand Police College, Porirua, and Wellington.

Final confirmation of who will be attending Conference as Delegates and Observers is



required at National Office before **FRIDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2008** to enable leave, accommodation and travel bookings to be finalised. (There are a restricted number of discounted fares available and to obtain the best deal requires early booking).

The National Union pays all costs for one delegate from each Branch, and costs incurred by Observers (leave, accommodation and travel etc) must be met by the Branch or at their own expense unless otherwise arranged through the General Secretary. **NOTE:** Should arrangements need to change after the initial bookings are made then any cost of travel alteration (including name change of delegate) will be charged to Branches.

If you are unable to provide delegate/observer information by the above date, please contact Julia at Head Office on 04-499-2066 or julia@rmtunion.org.nz. If travel bookings are not available at a later date then those delegates will not be able to attend. Please treat this matter urgently.

Travel itineraries, airport transfers between Wellington Airport and the venue and conference documents will be sent directly to the Delegate/Observer when finalised. Branch Secretaries please ensure your Branch Representative returns the registration form to National Office urgently.

NOTE:
CONFERENCE

REMITTS: Remits for the Annual Conference are required to be submitted to the General Secretary by 31st July 2008 however late remits are frequently accepted. Conference delegates also have an opportunity to table "notices of motion" at conference to be debated on the floor. Remits are the way in which the Policies of the Union are changed or the Union Rules amended (a Policy Manual is sent to Branches following each Conference). The content of Rule 15 of the Union Rules and Standing Orders is drawn to the attention of Branches.



**PROTECT OZONE LAYER AND
COMMUNITY HEALTH NOW**
(EXTRACT FROM SCOOP.CO.NZ)

Following two court decisions, both strongly in favour of limiting the release of ozone destroying gases into the environment, the Soil & Health Association of New Zealand is calling on the Ministry for the Environment (MfE), the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) and Ministry of Economic Development (MED) to put an immediate stop to the reckless release of methyl bromide gas at New Zealand ports.

Methyl bromide is mostly used for log fumigation at New Zealand ports. Its use has increased by more than 300% since 2001, even though methyl bromide fumigation is no longer used in horticulture, and an alternative toxin, phosphine, is sometimes used for log fumigation. A further huge increase in log exports requiring phytosanitary fumigation is expected in the next few years.

The Environment Court made a decision limiting the permitted release of the neurotoxic, ozone-depleting methyl bromide fumigant at Port Nelson. This decision is premised on the introduction of the recapture of unused gas and includes strict limits on worker and community exposure.

Almost simultaneously, a prosecution brought by the Ministry of Economic Development for reckless discharge of an ozone-depleting substance, resulted in the conviction and fining of two refrigeration engineers \$750 plus court costs each. The engineers had released the refrigerant chlorodifluoromethane, an HCFC gas, which must not be discharged under the Ozone Layer Protection Act 1996.

Although methyl bromide is also an ozone depleting gas, its use is less restricted, because of its frequent use as a phytosanitary fumigant. Soil & Health has regularly pointed out this contradiction.

"Regarding the charges of reckless discharge of an ozone depleting substance, the MED director was quoted as saying the protection of the ozone layer was an important priority, but MED is not charging those with a continuing history of releasing vast volumes of methyl bromide recklessly at ports throughout New Zealand," says Soil & Health spokesperson Steffan Browning.

"While the refrigeration engineers deserved being convicted, MED should now look very closely at fumigating company Genera's log fumigation operations. I suggest Port Wellington and Port Tauranga just for starters."

"At the recent Rail & Maritime Transport Union conference's methyl bromide forum, the Genera representative was challenged directly by Port Tauranga delegates, when the representative said all large fumigations were monitored closely. The delegates had never seen any monitoring by Genera when tarpaulins were removed from large piles of logs, allowing methyl bromide to be released into the air."

"My experience with Wellington's Centre Port was similar," said Mr Browning. "Until Soil & Health began lobbying against the reckless discharge of methyl bromide adjacent to Waterloo Quay and Westpac Stadium, Genera rarely used any warning signage, failed to monitor correctly, and discharged near unprotected port workers and without stopping internal port traffic."

"All this, even though Genera were stopped from fumigation in Port Marlborough's Shakespeare Bay because of a lack of appropriate controls. Soil & Health had brought this to the attention of authorities. At the same time Genera were involved with an Environment Court hearing in Nelson where substantive evidence pointed out the health risks and showed the unpredictable movement of the neurotoxic, carcinogenic gas that has no odour, taste or colour."



"Genera appear to only take worker safety even vaguely seriously when confronted port by port. It is beholden on MfE, MED, ERMA and occupational health officers to lift their game and stop this company from its reckless behaviour. If its clean green approach to climate change is to be taken seriously, Government must insist that the log industry, fumigators, and the ports urgently implement fumigant gas recapture technology. Methyl bromide contributes to global warming by weakening the UV limiting atmospheric ozone layer."

ERMA, who is to begin a 2-½ year process reassessing methyl bromide's use and controls, is also developing an interim Code

of Practice - The Control and Safe Use of Fumigants.

"If ERMA is to live up to its name, the Environmental Risk Management Authority, and not under a recent misnomer the Economic Risk Management Authority, it must

implement urgent and effective environmental and community health standards. It must not recommend anything less than the Environment Court."

"ERMA's draft Code of Practice must urgently reflect the decision of the Environment Court. The most current and detailed evidence available on the safe use of methyl bromide was considered and accepted by the Court," said Mr Browning. "However a strong direction from the Ministry for the Environment that an acute exposure level be incorporated into ERMA's Code of Practice will be necessary for the Code of Practice to be effective."

"MfE must also assist local authorities to ensure that commodity log exports do not come first, over community protection, and that local authority's air plans include ERMA's Code of Practice and are not left impotent in enforcement proceedings."

"Soil & Health is committed to removal of ozone depleting neurotoxic fumigants from our clean green environment and aims for an Organic 2020."



TSSA CONGRATULATES Us

The Transport and Salaried Staff Association (TSSA) of Great Britain held its EC Conference in Scarborough recently. 101 delegates attended representing 72 Branches & SOG's and with members of the Executive Committee, Standing Orders Committee, Local Reception Committee and the paid staff, there was a total of 134 present. The Conference passed the following resolution;

E6: Rail Re-nationalisation

That this Conference welcomes the announcement on 5 May 2008 that the New Zealand government has repurchased the national rail and ferry operations, thus completing the re-nationalisation after years of poor performance under private ownership.

As in the UK, standards of service and the conditions for staff had

deteriorated under private ownership.

Conference congratulates the Rail and Maritime Transport Union of New Zealand on the success of their campaign. A campaign that arose from a visit by their General Secretary to the ASLEF Conference in Scarborough 2002, when he became aware of the UK rail unions' "take back the track" campaign.

Conference notes that change is possible and is determined to redouble the Association's efforts towards the goal of public ownership in the light of this great success. Conference calls on the EC to seek to identify any lessons learned from the successful campaign by the Rail and Maritime Transport Union of New Zealand that could be applied in the Association's campaign here.

High praise indeed and our thanks to General Secretary Gerry Doherty and his team for their recognition of our successes downunder!



STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE WORKERS OF IRAN

Exactly a year ago today (10 July), Mansour Osanloo, President of the ITF-affiliated Vahed Syndicate – the Tehran Bus Workers' Union – was brutally removed from a bus near his home in Tehran by unidentified security personnel. This happened only three weeks after his attendance at international union meetings organised by the ITF and the ITUC in London and Brussels.

Worldwide condemnation led by trade unions and human rights activists, together with Iranian community groups, against the Iranian government for their blatant abuse of workers' rights was strong and immediate.

This international protest grew substantially over the months to culminate in a global action day on 6 March 2008.

More protests continue to

FAIRNESS AT WORK



Time to speak up!

this day.

Mansour Osanloo was sentenced to five years imprisonment on vaguely worded and politically motivated charges of 'acting against national security' and 'propaganda against the state', neither of which constitutes, in practice, recognisably criminal offences.

His imprisonment is related to his activities as President of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company. The sentence serves to oppress the genuine workers' movement in Iran, where state-sanctioned organisations such as the Workers' House and the Islamic Labour Council have failed to represent workers for many years.

Mansour Osanloo and his union continue to act peacefully and democratically. We recognise Mansour Osanloo is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for his conscientiously held beliefs. On this anniversary day, we once again call for the

immediate and unconditional release of Mansour Osanloo.

The ITUC, ITF and Amnesty International welcome the tireless efforts of Vahed Syndicate members and its Executive Board in organising bus workers in Tehran. Despite the obstacles put in their way by the management and the authorities, the Vahed Syndicate's members exemplify how trade union rights are human rights.

We express our deep concern over the acceleration of oppression against the independent workers' movement in Iran. In addition to abductions and imprisonment of union leaders, mass arrests continue at worksites where genuine union activism is growing, as we have seen recently with the detention of 20 workers at the Taft Hapeh sugar factory. The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions reports that in April, 100 workers at the Kian Tyre factory, near Chahardangeh were attacked with electronic batons and were detained for 36 hours. Teacher trade unionists have increasingly been targeted and subject to arrests according to Education International.

We express our profound appreciation to all those individuals and organisations, both inside Iran and across the globe, who have worked continuously to win freedom for Mansour Osanloo, and equally importantly, to promote the independent workers' movement in Iran.

We issue this statement on the first anniversary of Mansour Osanloo's arbitrary arrest to reaffirm our unwavering support for him and for the independent Iranian trade union movement. We must all join forces to achieve our common objective: that workers in Iran be able to enjoy the basic human and trade union rights that all workers are entitled to, no matter where they live. Workers' rights are human rights.

- International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

- International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)
- Amnesty International

NATIONAL RELEASES MORE WORKER POLICIES

Following details last week over their plan to privatise worker accident compensation, National has confirmed that if elected they will implement a new version of their 90-day employment policy.

The new policy would focus on workers in small businesses, and could affect up to 200,000 people every year. National's plan would remove the right of these workers to appeal against being unfairly dismissed in the first 90 days on the job.

Their 2006 policy, in a Bill from National's Wayne Mapp, provoked a significant response from workers throughout the country and big turnouts at union rallies in Auckland and Wellington. The Bill was dumped after only the 5 MPs from United Future and Act joined National in voting for it at second reading.

On Monday CTU President Helen Kelly asked what sort of party had policy that advocates legislating for unfair workplace practice.

"You wouldn't see small shops be given the right to opt out of consumer protection laws, or small property owners opting out of tenant protection laws, so why would any government legislate to allow small businesses to opt out of fairness in employment?"

"National's right to unfairly sack workers would be given to the 96 per cent of all employers who make up small businesses, and could affect up to 200,000 workers every year. Currently all businesses can dismiss workers when it is justified and fair including on day one, but why specifically legalise unfair behaviour – it is beyond belief."

NZEI President Frances Nelson said: "many teachers and principals move to gain



promotion but this policy would create an environment which would hamper their career paths, as they'd be reluctant to move to a new job where there was no certainty of employment for the first 90 days. It would make it even more difficult for small, rural or remote schools to attract experienced staff."

The EPMU said that at a time when New Zealanders need to raise their wages to deal with skyrocketing costs of living the National Party is pledging policy that would do the exact opposite.

Later in the week, National's Shane Arden was reported as saying that KiwiSaver employer contributions needed 'adjusting' for small businesses.

"Who is going to want to work for a small business in New Zealand, when under National a second class of worker is created with less rights and choices than others?" Helen Kelly said.

"There is already a strong interest in KiwiSaver from workers, 700,000 of whom have made personal financial decisions based on information available on KiwiSaver. If National are going to scrap employer tax credits, they should tell workers sooner rather than later. It is important information for voters and democracy demands they come clean."

Audio/video: Click here to hear the CTU on Radio NZ's Checkpoint this week, or click here to see the CTU in Maori Television's Te Kaea news programme.

NEW ZEALAND IS IN TUNE WITH THE TIMES - BRITAIN'S LAGGING – THE GUARDIAN – SEUMAS MILNE

Use the following link to read an excellent article in the UK newspaper *The Guardian* or just type in the heading of this story into your browser.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/jul/03/newzealand.transport>

NURSES LAUNCH ELECTION AGENDA - SAFE STAFFING TOPS THE LIST

Nurses are calling on all political parties to declare their support for policies they say are essential to giving the public the health services they need.

"New Zealand Nurses Organisation supports the direction of the government health strategies, the continued commitment to universally affordable and accessible public healthcare and a publicly funded injury prevention, rehabilitation and accident compensation scheme. However, NZNO believes that more needs to be done to support and develop the nursing workforce, the key delivery agent of the health system," the union's manifesto, launched this week, said.



The union is calling for a commitment to ongoing Government support for the joint NZ Nurses Organisation/District Health Board work on

safe staffing and its extension throughout the health sector.

NZNO CEO Geoff Annals said nurses are the largest group of health professionals and make up the front line of health service delivery.

There is a continued need for Government commitment to build on the work already done and to see Safe Staffing initiatives extended to other sectors in the Health system, he said.

PRIMEPORT IS DEFENDING ITS MANAGEMENT COSTS

The RMTU's Timaru Port Branch president Peter Clemen's has criticised the port company as having "too many chiefs and not enough Indians". The Port Company gave the Union advice that it wished to axe 30 jobs at the port saving an estimated \$1.5 million in wages, in a bid to keep the company viable after it lost more than 40 per cent of its container trade earlier this year.

Last week our members were told who was redundant yet despite the restructure PrimePort still employs nine management staff who earn over \$100,000, costing \$1,340,000 overall. Members were told there would be an ongoing restructure of management.

The board of six costs \$151,057 annually in fees and expenses. The Port Companies Act states there must be a minimum of six directors. Primeport Timaru has 6. PrimePort is 71.4 per cent owned by the Timaru District Council's company Timaru District Holdings.

According to PrimePort's annual report, of the nine staff over \$100,000, one staff member earned between \$100,000 and \$120,000, two between \$120,000 and \$130,000, one between \$130,000 and \$140,000, two between \$140,000 and \$150,000, two between \$170,000 and \$180,000 and one between \$240,000 and \$250,000.



union
KIWISAVER
campaign

KIWISAVER CLARIFICATION WELCOMED

The Council of Trade Unions has welcomed moves to amend employment law to ensure workers get their fair share of KiwiSaver entitlements. "New Zealanders have shown a strong interest in KiwiSaver, with over 700,000 members joining since the scheme started last year," CTU president Helen Kelly said. "KiwiSaver has been a great success, and the amendments the government will introduce will help clarify that KiwiSaver employer contributions are a new entitlement workers can expect, and not something their employer can trade off."

"In most cases workers and employers are getting on with the job - people are joining, and employer contributions are coming through. And for the first few years, the employers of many workers will have their compulsory contributions fully covered by the employer tax credit." "This clarification has been necessitated by some employers who have from the beginning not regarded KiwiSaver as an extra entitlement."

It reflected a problem created by a relatively small number of employers, particularly where there was no union presence, Helen Kelly said.

TRANSMISSION GULLY COSTS WILL NEVER END

Reports on Tuesday that the cost of Transmission Gully cannot be met by the local and regional councils come as no surprise to the Green Party, Wellington Transport Spokesperson Sue Kedgley says.

"The gully route is an insatiable drain on transport funds and no one is willing, or able, to stump up with such vast amounts of money. I predicted this situation just two weeks ago," Ms Kedgley says.

"The Government is already spending six times more on roading than it does on superior options such as rail, which are far more efficient, safe and needed than roads.

"It was reported yesterday that Wellington's city council has observed a 20 percent drop in traffic on Wellington roads. Perversely, this is being used as a reason to can planned bus lanes. Yet, those 20 percent of commuters are now on bikes and in buses and trains. And where is the money going? Onto motorways.

"It is absurd for the Wellington Mayor to suggest that even more Government funds should be poured into such an obvious white elephant as Transmission Gully.

"It is time for councils to recognise public transport is priority. With petrol now costing \$2.18 a litre, what commuters are crying out for is better public transport, better cycle and walking facilities and an end to this obsession with motorways."

ENVIRONMENTALISTS BLOCK AUSTRALIAN COAL PORT

Environmental protesters in Australia have brought the world's biggest coal terminal to a standstill by blocking railway lines and chaining themselves to rail cars. Police have arrested approx 37 people who chained themselves to a train and rail tracks at the port in Newcastle, 100km north of Sydney to

protest over the impact of burning coal on climate change. This caused three trains scheduled for Sunday to stop before getting to the terminal, meaning about 20,000 tonnes of coal could not be unloaded.

Could this happen here on the Midland Line?

TRANSPORT WORKER ISSUE 3

The deadline for all branch notes, letters to the editor or other contributions (including photos) is 11 August 2008.

Contributions from Branches who have been absent to date would be particularly welcome as would individual letters from members on topics they feel strongly about.

BITS AND BOBS

- Commuter rail links to Helensville in northwest Auckland are resuming, for the first time in 28 years. Years of lobbying by people living in Helensville persuaded Auckland Regional Council members to introduce a one-year trial that will cost more than \$1 million. The ARC aims to attract 40 new passengers per trip. It will provide a direct link between Helensville and West Auckland centres such as Henderson and New Lynn.
- State-Owned Enterprises Minister Trevor Mallard told Television One's Agenda programme on Sunday that a local assembly operation was "probably a very logical thing to do from a currency perspective" and that the Cabinet was being asked to approve a scoping study. He said the location for such an operation was likely to be KiwiRail's Woburn workshops. Auckland Regional Council chairman Mike Lee has said that rocketing fuel prices were forcing an acceleration of the "renaissance" of rail, and he appealed for political consensus on ways to equip New Zealand and its workers to meet that challenge. He said his council had led the way by sponsoring the rebuild of a fleet of rolling stock at KiwiRail's Hillside workshops in Dunedin.

- SouthPort has record cargo volumes and a raised profit forecast. Hopefully our members will share in the gains
- May saw record tonnages carted on the Midland Line Coal Route. 257,000 tonnes of coal were moved by RMTU members from the West Coast to Lyttelton Port.
- RMTU branches refuse to participate in 45 wagon coal train talks until KiwiRail actually puts in place what it has agreed to provide to our members. Greymouth branch secretary Paul Foskett said "let's get the 30 wagons working properly before we talk about 45 wagons". The RMTU believes that track warrant is unsuitable for the safe operation of 45 wagon trains and we want CTC operation implemented on the coal route.
- Ports of Auckland Wiri inland port may actually work after Finance Minister Michael Cullen pledged \$6m of funding to assist in having the route access to the site improved. Train operation around Westfield/Wiri is becoming very difficult as train frequency and narrow corridors bites in.
- Where were the truck protests when the Government announced its approval of longer heavier truck trials? The RMTU is wondering how the truckers are going to apportion the 4 cents rates increase across 20 tonnes of mixed freight? We need to dig out 6 feet of foundation on our roads to make it safe for our cars to drive on the highways don't we!
- In court proceedings it was released that ONTRACK has made reparations to the Smith family and Rachel Rowlings of \$277,000.00. No amount of money makes up for a life lost at work but post the Ministerial Inquiry into H&S in the rail industry of 1999 it is gratifying to see that the families are now getting decent compensation.

LET'S BE SAFE OUT THERE AND REMEMBER

"WERE STRONGER TOGETHER"!

