

THE ACTIVIST



Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) - 5 September 2008

STRIKE NOTICES WITHDRAWN

The strike notices issued by the Union on behalf of members against C3 (Toll Owens.) and Port of Tauranga have been withdrawn following a round of talks with the employers. Packages for settlement will be presented to members at stopwork meetings as soon as the documentation is finalised.

ONTRACK MECA UPDATE

The result of the ratification ballot taken during the report back meetings is now known. The proposed settlement has been **rejected** by more than 33.0% of the members who voted in the ballot at the meetings. Ontrack has been advised of the outcome of the ballot and we are in discussion with Ontrack on alternatives.

We are hopeful that we will be able to package a revised proposed settlement offer for the consideration of members soon.

KIWI RAIL - VEOLIA MECA UPDATE'S

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

The parties met in Wellington 2-4 September 2008. It has become apparent that there is a significant gap between the expectation of members as understood by the delegate negotiators and the employer's ability to meet those

expectations, as expressed by the employer negotiators.

Whilst talks have not broken down, it has nonetheless been agreed that a series of joint briefing meetings be conducted which will provide an opportunity for the employer and worker negotiators to speak directly to members in the major locations. It is expected that the employer's and Union reps will address meetings and answer questions. The Union negotiators will then hold a closed session with members. During this closed session the Union will be seeking a renewed mandate.



Currently the parties are jointly developing the briefing material to be presented to members. The locations to be visited are; Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton, Mount Maunganui, Stratford, Whareroa, Palmerston North, Napier, Wellington, Picton, Westport, Greymouth, Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.

It is expected that members in outlying locations will be able to travel to their nearest location to attend a meeting. Week commencing 22 September 2008 is being targeted for the meetings.

Joint Communication to Veolia Transport Staff/Union Members re: Progress in Collective Agreement Bargaining

The RMTU and Veolia wish to advise staff and members of the status of the current bargaining process for the renewal of the collective agreement.

The parties met again in Wellington over 2 - 4 September 2008 with agreement or resolution being reached on a number of the remaining Union and Company claims.

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

We are now down to a few remaining key issues for each party which need to be agreed. These are the "big ticket" items for both parties; however, progress continues to be made on reaching a resolution on these critical areas.

No dates have been set yet, but it is planned that the parties will meet again in Auckland in September to continue talks and offer proposals on how to resolve the remaining issues.

A further update will be provided at the conclusion of those talks.

UNITED GROUP RAIL WAGE TALKS UPDATE

The parties have achieved a provisional settlement of the CA. The precise wording of the terms of settlement is being developed by the employer for submission to the Union. Once the terms of settlement are agreed and we have a draft of the proposed collective agreement a round of ratification report back meetings will be conducted as per normal. A variation will be that it is proposed that we will conduct the ratification ballot by voting at the meetings and NOT by postal ballot. This will enable us to conduct the process quicker and members to get their increase and backdating quicker. The parties are targeting the week commencing 15 September for the meetings to occur.



INDIAN LEADER DIES

The RMTU regretfully advises members that we have received word that Bro. J.P. Chaubey, General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) has died after a brief illness this week. He was 85. Bro. Chaubey had been the General Secretary of AIRF since 30th May 1975. Bro. Chaubey had joined the Indian Railway in 1946 and in 1950 he was elected as the Assistant Secretary of the local branch of the union. In 1962, Bro. Chaubey was elected as Vice President of AIRF and was the Treasurer of AIRF from 1963 to 1975.

Bro. Chaubey was the strongest pillar of the Indian Railways Trade Union Movement which he served with selfless dedication and led for six decades. His simple lifestyle and missionary zeal will be remembered for a long time to come. With his demise, the Indian Trade Union movement has lost one of its doyens.

The RMTU records its deep sadness at this news and regrets the loss to our Indian brother and Sister Railway workers. Our General Secretary Wayne Butson has come to know the leaders of the AIRF very well as a result of his involvement with the International Transport Federation and is deeply saddened at the news.

WAGE INCREASES NEED TO KEEP ON COMING

Wage rises as indicated by latest data out this morning need to keep on coming, the Council of Trade Unions said today.

"With inflation forecast to reach 5 percent by September, annual wage increases of 3.5 percent are modest," CTU Economist Peter Conway said, following

today's Labour Cost Index release by Statistics NZ.

"Workers have been facing rising food and fuel costs and therefore will be looking for reasonable wage increases to keep afloat."

"Treasury estimate that labour productivity rose by 3.1 percent in the March 2008 year and this means that wage rises are unlikely to impact on inflation to any great extent." *

"The labour market is still relatively 'tight' with employment growth of 2.5 percent for the year. This means that wage rises of a similar size can be expected over the rest of the year."

For those actually receiving a wage increase in the last year, the average increase was 5.8 percent and the median 4.1 percent, Peter Conway said. Reasons given for wage increases included the cost of living and increases due to collective bargaining by unions.



NEW ZEALAND LABOUR (38%) CLOSES THE GAP ON NATIONAL PARTY (44.5%) AS ELECTION LOOMS.

Roy Morgan, Sept 4 2008.

This is the latest result from the Roy Morgan New Zealand Poll conducted with 841 electors over the period August 18 - 31, 2008: September 04, 2008

In early September 2008 the New Zealand Roy Morgan Poll shows National Party support at 44.5% (down 3.5%) only 6.5% ahead of the Labour Party 38% (up 4%) — the closest the two major parties have been for nearly a year, since October 2007 when the National Party led 45% cf. 40.5%. If an election were held now New Zealand would have a Coalition Government likely to be led by the National Party.

Support for the NZ First Party of Winston Peters has dropped significantly in the wake of the party funding scandal with NZ First down 4% to 2.5% — the lowest result for NZ First since September 2007.

Support for the Greens was 8% (up 0.5%), Maori Party 3.5% (up 1.5%), ACT NZ 1.5% (unchanged), United Future 1% (up 1%) and Others 1% (up 0.5%).

Gary Morgan says: "Helen Clark's Labour Government has closed the gap on the National Party as Election Day draws nearer. Since trailing by 21%, 30.5% cf. 51.5% in late June, Clark has closed the gap to only 6.5%.

"The first cut in interest rates in five years in July, down 0.25% to 8.00%, has driven the strong increase in the Roy Morgan New Zealand Consumer Confidence Rating — and given renewed strength to the electability of Labour with the prospect of further rate cuts to come.

"The lack of a clear policy direction from the opposition National Party has given Helen Clark and Labour renewed hope of winning an unlikely election victory as the National Party has yet to make the case for

why it deserves to form the next New Zealand Government.

Electors were asked: "If an election were held today which party would receive your party vote?"

This latest Morgan Poll on voting intention was conducted by telephone with a New Zealand-wide cross-section of 841 electors from August 18 — 31, 2008.

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 REMITS: 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.

ANZ NATIONAL STAFF RELUCTANTLY ACCEPT BAD OFFER – BUT STRIKE ANYWAY

Union members in ANZ National have reluctantly agreed to put the bank's offer of a less than inflation pay rise and no changes to their debt sale targets to a ratification vote next week because the bank has told them it will not change its offer.

Union members in Auckland, Wellington and many provincial areas took strike action and staged pickets outside major branches and the bank's head office.

"Getting the bank to improve its offer was always going to be a tall order. While many staff have taken strike action today in protest against the bank's offer, the majority of members have said that the cost of ongoing action is too high," said Andrew Campbell Finsec Campaigns Director.

"The bank's promise of fair real wage increases has not been met. Most ANZ National staff are feeling the pinch of current price rises. It is these staff who produce the billion dollar profit the bank makes and support the \$2.5 million dollar salary package bank CEO Graham Hodges enjoys," said Campbell.

"Despite ANZ National being the beneficiary of a business tax cut and saving tens of millions by shipping jobs to Bangalore the

bank still won't reinvest what it should in its New Zealand workforce," said Campbell.

"It is concerning for both staff and bank customers that ANZ National is now aligned with the shrinking number of banks that won't even contemplate changes to their debt sale target system," said Campbell.

"Union members remain committed to making ANZ National a better bank and will continue to work towards changes to targets, improvements to staffing levels and achieving fair pay increases for workers. It is disappointing ANZ National is not committed to these goals too," said Campbell.

TRANSPORT WORKER ISSUE 3

Issue 3 is at the printers. Watch out for a huge issue coming your way soon! 28 packed with good shit and lots of info!



INTERNATIONAL

Asciano

Port and rail operator Asciano has appointed investment bank ABN Amro to advise it on \$1 billion asset sale options, as the loss-making company seeks to obtain cash to pay down its debt. According to The Australian Financial Review, the company came to look into the sell-off option as it was no longer able to use a project finance avenue to fund its development plans. What this may mean for our RTBU and MUA brothers and sisters is unknown.

Rail in Adelaide

The Australian Federal Government is set to start a study on the rail freight movements across the Adelaide region, in a move to create a better functioning rail network. Federal Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese has said: "We've set aside \$3 million to undertake and complete the study into how

Adelaide's freight rail network can be made to work better, including assessing the feasibility of relocating the city's main freight rail line north of the Adelaide Hills. A discussion paper outlining available options is expected to be released in May 2009.

Unclogging Melbourne



The Clifton Hill rail bridge project to unclog a major bottleneck on Melbourne's rail network is progressing well, Victorian Premier John Brumby has said. "We know our metropolitan rail network is more popular than ever before and that is why works such as these add extra capacity and remove pressure points help cater for more growth and services," Mr Brumby said. The Clifton Hill project forms part of the state's \$20 billion infrastructure upgrade plan over the past eight years.

BREAKS AND BREASTFEEDING BILL WELCOME BUT WHAT ABOUT THE DRIVERS?

The Council of Trade Unions has welcomed legislation passed yesterday guaranteeing minimum tea and lunch breaks, and provisions for women to breast feed at work, but is extremely concerned that meal breaks are being denied to truck and bus drivers following an amendment by New Zealand First.

"The law fills a big gap in our minimum employment provisions. It will contribute to standards of decency at work, mother and baby health, and will improve workplace health and safety," CTU president Helen Kelly said.

"Unions regularly hear of workers being denied proper breaks and of work requirements interrupting breastfeeding so this new law is absolutely essential."

"The amendment promoted by New Zealand First however, denying transport workers the two paid tea breaks during an 8 hour shift, is completely without foundation and is outrageous in an industry where safety is a real issue."

"Bus and truck drivers will be very concerned that they are being treated as second class workers by a party that claims to stick up for working people."

The CTU is now calling on the Minister of Transport to amend the regulations covering drivers to include these two breaks, Helen Kelly said.



NZ SHEEP NUMBERS

Under the heading of "Did You Know".....

Drought and dairy expansion have had a significant impact on sheep numbers which will be down 11 per cent this year to 34.2 million.

OLDER WORKERS ESSENTIAL PART OF THE WORKFORCE

"Older workers are an essential part of our workforce, and will increasingly be so as people work longer due to better health and for the social and economic benefit from work," Council of Trade Unions president Helen Kelly said today, welcoming the release of "Valuing Experience: a practical guide to recruiting and retaining older workers".

"This guide is a great contribution and resource for better understanding the needs of older workers, and utilising and valuing their skills and capabilities."

"Older workers can face negative attitudes and discrimination, and so positive and proactive approaches which will benefit workers and employers are needed and welcome."

"People have different needs at different times of their life, and good workplaces will recognise this and adjust for changes. For older workers, it may be about flexible work or less physically demanding work."

"The guide sets out some of the issues facing older workers and employers and provides a great tool to use in trying new approaches and new ideas," Helen Kelly said.

ETS BILL A GOOD COMPROMISE - CTU

The CTU welcomes the progress being made in Parliament on the emissions trading scheme.

Peter Conway, CTU Economist said today that unions have been focused on a range of issues including adequate protection for industry and jobs, transitional support for

those affected, assistance and compensation for those on low incomes, the involvement of workers in energy efficiency programmes and developing the right set of skills for workers in a more sustainable economy.

"In addition, the CTU has argued that climate change policy should be broad-based and not rely too substantially on market-based mechanisms such as emissions trading. Community and work-based education campaigns and other energy conservation measures as well as adequate, stringently enforced regulations are needed to work alongside emissions trading."

"The CTU also recognises that although New Zealand can do little on its own about global emissions, we should 'do our bit' and also note that our export trade could be adversely affected if we are seen by the rest of the world to be slow to take action on reduction of emissions."

The compromise worked out between the Government and other parties in Parliament incorporates major issues of concern to unions, Peter Conway said. "This includes the one-off electricity rebate to all households in 2010, the one-off cash payment to families who are in receipt of benefits, superannuation and Working for Families tax credits in 2010, the \$1 billion dollar energy efficiency fund, and the contestable innovation fund of 150,000 units a year."

"The National Party in Government signed up to the Kyoto Protocol in 1998. Ten years down the track it is time for New Zealand to make a decent start on action. This Bill is not perfect and there will continue to be debate about climate change – but the risks of not taking concrete steps outweigh any disadvantages," Peter Conway said.

WORLD POVERTY LEVELS

Under the heading of "Did You Know".....

The World Bank has recalculated the number of people facing extreme poverty. The Bank now estimates the global number of extreme poor in 2005 to be 1.4 billion, or 25.7 percent of the world population, as compared to 930 million using their previous method of calculation. In addition to this upward revision of 470 million people the Bank estimates that approximately 100 million more people have fallen into extreme poverty because of the recent surge in food prices.

ACC LEGEND REMINDS OF THE VALUE OF THE SCHEME

"Hearing ACC legend Sir Owen Woodhouse speak this morning at the ACC Futures Conference in Wellington was a very powerful reminder about why we need to value and keep our accident compensation scheme," Council of Trade Unions president Helen Kelly said today.

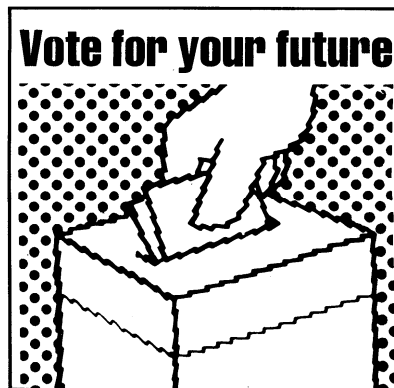
"This iconic New Zealander, who was largely responsible for the design of ACC, spoke about the fundamental principles of the scheme:

comprehensive entitlement, complete rehabilitation, real compensation, community responsibility and administrative efficiency."

"He reminded us that the scheme was conceptualised as a social security scheme, not an insurance scheme, and that this idea needed to be revitalised rather than forgotten."

"He spoke of the grim circumstances injured workers faced in getting compensation before the scheme was introduced and how the incentives that drive the scheme, including rehabilitation, play a big part in New Zealand having an lower average loss of work days through accidents, than in comparable countries."

"The overall message from the day was that the ACC scheme is world class: efficient,



effective and broad in its coverage and benefits."

"While both the National and Act spokespeople at the conference continued to advocate privatisation this was against all the research presented, and they were unable to offer any convincing reasons about the benefits of private insurance, or reassurances about the risks to this very good scheme."

The CTU congratulates Sir Owen on his farsightedness and acknowledges his significant role in designing this world class ACC scheme, Helen Kelly said.

WELLINGTON TRAMWAYS UNION REJECTS GO WELLINGTON PAY OFFER AND ELECTS UNION EXEC

At Wednesday's stopwork meeting The Wellington Tramways Union rejected Go Wellington's latest inadequate pay offer and elected a new union executive.

According to company figures drivers in Wellington had their annual income reduced by 19% in 2007 as a result of shift changes desired to restrict access to penal rates. The company's current pay offer stands at only 6.2% and in addition the company wishes to introduce a draconian complaints procedure for drivers. This offer was rejected by 208 votes to 23 and drivers also voted to take limited industrial action if the company didn't come up with an improved offer.

The stopwork meeting also elected a new executive for the Wellington Tramways who represent drivers at Go Wellington, Valley Flyer in the Hutt Valley and Mana Newlands buses out in Porirua and the Kapiti Coast.

Kevin O'Sullivan was elected the new Wellington Tramways Secretary. The former secretary Phil Griffiths passed away suddenly in June of this year. Kevin worked alongside Phil for 15 years as the Wellington Tramways President.

"Wellington bus drivers have held onto conditions such as double time on Sundays

which most other drivers lost after the employment contracts act and deregulation of the bus industry in the late 1980's", said Kevin. "I hope to continue the good work of the Wellington Tramways Union that happened under Phil's leadership".

Former Victoria University Student politician Nick Kelly was elected as the Wellington Tramways President. This position was held by Engineers Union official Paul Tolich in the 1980's.

"It's important that drivers stand together and fight for better pay and conditions for themselves and all other workers. Previous attempts to divide Wellington drivers by employers have failed such as the attempt to introduce a flat rate contract at Go Wellington in 2007" said Nick. "I am optimistic that this unity will continue in the future".

Long serving driver and Tramways Delegate Chris Morley was elected as the Vice - President.

Also at the stopwork union delegates at Go Wellington were elected.

2008 is the 100th anniversary of the Wellington Tramways Union. The new executive team intends to fight for a better life for drivers in Wellington as the union has done for the last century.

NZ EMPLOYER SIZE

Under the heading of Did You Know.....

Latest statistics (for February 2007) were released this week and show that 97 percent of enterprises employ fewer than 20 people and 89 percent employ fewer than 5 people. However a whopping 68 percent of enterprises have no employees at all. SMEs (fewer than 20 staff) employ 31 percent of all workers. That means that 69 percent of the workforce is employed by the other 3 percent of enterprises.

BILLBOARDS WON'T LIFT WAGES - CTU

The National Party's billboards would be more honest if they spelt out how they were going to lift wages, Council of Trade Unions President Helen Kelly said today.



"National has released an industrial relations policy which cuts worker and union rights, is completely silent on lifting wages, and coupled with other policies will leave workers much worse off."

"The wage gap with Australia grew by 50.4% in the 1990s and by 1.6% from 2000 to 2007, and so it is a bit rich that National is now suggesting they are the ones to fix this problem."

"Given it is now clear that tax cuts will be paid for by high road tolls, possible cuts to KiwiSaver, cuts in public services and privatisation of state assets, this makes the lack of a wages policy even more concerning. Workers will end up worse off, with more user-pays, and if work rights are reduced and wages don't increase we will simply see a repeat of the 1990s".

"New Zealand wages are too low, and any government with a serious plan to lift wages should strengthen workers' rights to be covered by multi-employer collective agreements to address wages on an industry basis, not dismantle collective bargaining provisions by allowing for collective agreements to be set up by employers with an interest in keeping wages down."

The CTU advocates the high road approach – of regularly raising the minimum wage, increasing the numbers of workers addressing pay and conditions across industries, and modernising the workforce through investing in skills, plant and machinery and lifting productivity, Helen Kelly said.

NZ POPULATION

Under the heading of did you know.....

The estimated resident population of New Zealand was 4,268,600 at 30 June 2008, Statistics New Zealand said today. The population increased by 40,300 (1.0 percent) in the June 2008 year, compared with 43,700 (1.0 percent) in the June 2007 year. The main contribution to population growth during the June 2008 year came from natural increase (excess of births over deaths) of 35,600, up 2,000 on the previous June year.

LET'S BE SAFE OUT THERE AND REMEMBER.....

“WERE STRONGER TOGETHER”!

