

THE ACTIVIST



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ONTRACK INFRASTRUCTURE (OIL) MEDIATION

The RMTU and OIL attended mediation in Wellington on Tuesday 23 October 2007. The RMTU team comprised; Wayne Butson, Scott Wilson, Lawyers Geoff Davenport and Ben Thompson, delegates – Jerry Hohepa, Albert Barr, Sam Kahui, Kevin Gubb and Buzz Terrey. OIL comprised Peter Chemis Lawyer, William Peet and Nicola Brown. The mediator was Peter Franks.

What occurs in mediation is private and confidential and may not be reported outside of the mediation room and so we cannot divulge any of what went on during the long day. What we can report is that the mediator reports; *"The employer will respond to the union by midday on Friday 26th October and the union will respond to Ontrack by 5pm on Monday 29th October. In the interim Ontrack managers will not discuss the booklet with workers at Tool Box meetings or otherwise and an immediate instruction will be sent to managers with a copy to the RMTU. The mediation is adjourned until 5pm on Monday 29th October"*.

OIL's Nicola Brown advised OIL Managers *"We are currently in mediation with the RMTU regarding the industrial strategy and the 'Building Our Future' booklet. Please do not discuss the booklet at toolbox meetings or in any other forum until further advice. I will contact you again on Monday"*.



FREE MANSOUR OSANLOO

The RMTU as an affiliate of the ITF strongly supports The ITF latest campaigning tool in the battle to seek freedom and justice for Bro. Mansour Osanloo of the Tehran Bus Drivers Union. We strongly urge all members with web access to have a look at *Freedom Will Come - The Story of Mansour Osanloo* a new short film that tells the story of an Iranian trade union leader whose two year fight for the dignity of workers has landed him and his deputy Ebrahim Madadi, in prison and in urgent need of medical treatment. It can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=in-vF2LvITk> and will be ready on DVD soon. More materials and information can be found at <http://www.freeosanloo.org>.

We sincerely hope that you will have time to watch this film produced by Obra Productions and continue to support our campaign. Please forward this email to your co-workers, friends and members of your family. Please visit the following Amnesty International site and sign the petition for Mansour Osanloo.

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/details.asp?ActionID=334>

Watch the video and we know you will become a supporter too!

RMTU MEMBERSHIP DATABASE UPDATES

The RMTU database is an important tool in contacting Union Members or ensuring members are kept up to date with the latest information. National Office staff are concerned at the number of "unknown" or "return to sender" envelopes returned to

National Office and reminds members that if they wish to exercise their rights and participate in the decision making aspects of the Union they should ensure they inform National Office of any change of address or contact details as soon as possible. This includes and any change of designation or employer.

Branch Secretaries hold update of membership forms that you can post or fax in or alternatively for immediate action members are reminded to utilise the update of membership details link on our website www.rmtunion.org.nz.

For example - All rail industry employment agreements expire in 2008 and so there will be ratification votes conducted by mail. If we have the incorrect address, employer info you will not get a vote as you will never receive a voting paper.

Update now!

TAX ON OVERTIME MEAL ALLOWANCES AND RELOCATION PAYMENTS

The government announced today that it will introduce changes ensuring that employer payments for employee relocation expenses and overtime meal allowances are not taxable to the employees who receive them. The proposed changes, which are intended to remove uncertainty over the tax treatment of these payments, will apply to payments made over the last four years, as well as to future payments.

The government has decided to make these payments and allowances tax-free because they are of small private benefit to the employee concerned, hard to measure and not readily substitutable for salary and wages. For full details see:

<http://www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/index.php?view=549>

and

<http://www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/publications/files/G3162.pdf>



NEW WEBSITE PHILIPPINES SOLIDARITY NETWORK OF AOTEAROA

Check out the extensively updated and improved Website of the Philippines Solidarity Network of Aotearoa (PSNA). Click on www.converge.org.nz/psna

- You can read online issues of PSNA's newsletter, *Kapatiran*, going back several years.
- You will find details of Amirah Ali Lidasan's October-November NZ speaking tour.
- In the Archive section, you can find the accounts, speeches and media coverage of previous Filipino movement speakers – such as Denis Maga this year, Marie Hilao-Enriquez in 2004 and Emilia Dapulang in 2002.

- Also in Archive, you can read a detailed account of the long and ultimately successful campaign to free Ka Bel (Congressman Crispin Beltran), the Philippines most high profile political prisoner of 2006 and 07.
- You can link directly to the Stop the Killings Campaign Website, with a photo gallery of a small sample of the murdered and abducted political activists, and extensive details on the Philippines' ongoing human rights crisis, and further link to a major Amnesty International report on that subject.
- And there are links to a wide range of Philippine progressive movement Websites, from unions to women's groups, from human rights activists to peasants' groups.

Please check out their Website and tell your friends about it.

PSNA believes that its work is important and invites New Zealanders to join. It only costs \$15 per year, payable to PSNA, Box 2450, Christchurch, New Zealand.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE 07

Branches are reminded that the annual delegates' conference (AC) is being held at the Porirua Police College 30, 31 October and 1 November 2008. AC is the governing body of the Union and is the forum where we debate what we have achieved during the year and set the direction and priorities for the Union for the following 12 months. For example;

- It's where membership fees are set and where remits are debated and are won and lost on the force of logic of speakers.
- The Unions rail sector ratification process for collective agreements within the rail sector is a hardy annual for debate as another example.

Branches need to elect their conference delegate at the forthcoming AGM's (see Union rule 23). It is essential that National Office is advised ASAP of the name(s) and details of conference delegate(s) so that we can obtain early travel bookings to get the cheapest fares.

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 at the branches expense (a debit on your branch account).

See Union Policy rule 111 for (sub) branch allocations for delegates to conference. National Office pays all costs for one delegate from a branch and any additional observers are funded entirely by the branch (a debit on your branch account).

Various distinguished speakers including international guests from the MUA, RTBU and TWU will be speaking at conference. We have been advised that Deputy Prime Minister Dr Michael Cullen is now unable to be the opening speaker and the Hon. Harry Duynhoven Minister for Transport Safety will instead speak for the Government and give Dr Cullen's speech.

See you there!

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ELECTION BALLOT RESULTS

At the close of nominations three members of the National Management Committee were elected unopposed. Our hearty congratulations to Aubrey Wilkinson (North Island Ports), Ruth Blakeley (South Island Ports), and Tim Spence (South Island General).

Ballots were required for the three other positions and the candidates were Wally Wallbutton and Steve Peacock, seeking to represent North Island Rail, Albert Barr and Phil Bosworth standing for the North Island General and Doug Blakie, Grant Donaldson and Marty Duncan standing for the South Island Rail position.

At the close of ballot on Monday 15th October the winners are;

North Island Rail Representative

Papers issued:	1123	
Papers returned:	270	
Peacock, Steve	116 VOTES	42.96%
Wallbutton, Wally	154 VOTES	57.04%

Mr. Wallbutton is declared elected

Election of North Island General Representative

Papers issued:	874	
Papers returned:	286	
Invalid	2	
Barr, Albert	143 VOTES	50.00%
Bosworth, Philip	141 VOTES	49.30%

Mr. Barr is declared elected

Congratulations to Wally & Albert and our commiserations and sincere thanks to Steve and Phil for putting their names forward.

SOUTH ISLAND RAIL REPRESENTATIVE



During the running of the South Island Rail Representative ballot, several issues were brought to the attention of the Returning Officer in relation to the ballot paper. It was alleged that it was confusing and ambiguous. The Returning Officer has determined that there is merit to the complaints and on that basis, the ballot will be rerun. Ballot papers will be issued shortly.

And....

The two other members of the NMC, as of right under the constitution, are national president Jim Kelly and general secretary Wayne Butson. The first meeting of new representatives and final meeting for the outgoing representatives will be at the final NMC meeting held in Wellington in December 2007 and we look forward to the newly elected rep/s joining the "between conference" decision making body of the Union.

KIWISAVER OFF TO GREAT START

The latest figures on KiwiSaver enrolments are encouraging, the Council of Trade Unions said today, following an announcement that 212,794 people had joined a KiwiSaver scheme.

"The figures don't show us as yet the average income level of those signing up to KiwiSaver though, and it will be important to assess this information also," CTU economist Peter Conway said.

"The CTU has submitted that there should be a 2 per cent minimum contribution from workers rather than the current required level of 4 per cent. This will help lower paid workers join up."

"A number of employers are agreeing to an initial 2+2 deals which reflects the fact that it is easier for workers to come on board at that level of contribution."

This can be done using the transitional provisions in the KiwiSaver legislation, so that in April 2008 the worker puts in 2 per

cent and the employer 2 per cent, going up to 3 per cent each in 2010, and 4 per cent each in 2011.

"The New Zealand Nurses Organisation recently reached a deal on this for 20,000 DHB employees, and unions are encouraging other employers to do so as well," Peter Conway said.

UNION MOVEMENT FAREWELLS ROSS WILSON

200 delegates at the CTU biennial conference in Wellington this afternoon paid tribute to outgoing CTU president Ross Wilson.

CTU secretary Carol Beaumont said "Ross has been spectacularly successful in unifying the New Zealand union movement and leading a positive, constructive and active union agenda."

"In all Ross' work at the CTU, whether it is in health and safety, wage campaigns, international

representation, the state sector or Maori economic development, he has been a very effective advocate for working people in this country."

Today the conference elected Helen Kelly as new CTU president. CTU secretary Carol Beaumont and vice president Maori Sharon Clair were re-elected, and Richard Wagstaff was elected vice president.

NOTE: Ross has been president of the CTU since 1999, after 8 years as CTU vice president. He had worked for two decades prior to 1999 with rail and maritime workers, with involvement in the National Union of Railway Workers, the Harbour Workers' Union and the 1995 amalgamation of several rail and port unions into the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, which Ross was the first General Secretary of, a role he held until taking up the CTU presidency.



5 KEY FEATURES MAKE UP WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE - CTU

"As a union movement we should be leading the debate on the future of work. Te Huarahi mo nga Kaimahi, launched today, sets out what we are doing now to build the workplace of the future and looks at the challenges going forward," CTU president Helen Kelly said today.

"We think there are five features that will define decent work and the modern workplace."

"It will be high wage and high value; it will be highly skilled; workplace practices will be based on fairness and respect; industries will be well networked and the importance of public services understood; and it will be healthy, safe and sustainable."

"The publication tells a story about why unions have become so involved in ways to improve working lives, through traditional bargaining and lobbying for law changes, but also through social partnership and direct projects that invest in better workplaces."

The booklet was launched at the Council of Trade Unions biennial conference, which concludes in Wellington this afternoon. It is available here: <http://union.org.nz/policy/te-huarahi-mo-nga-kaimahi>

CTU CALLS FOR \$15 MINIMUM WAGE

The CTU today called for an increase in the minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour. The policy position was announced at the launch of the CTU political strategy in Wellington this morning.

"The CTU has set out a strong case for a \$15 minimum wage in our submission to the Annual Review of the Minimum Wage," CTU secretary Carol Beaumont said.

"Low wages are not just bad for workers. They are damaging to our economy. They

hold back investment in capital and technology to improve productivity. New Zealand workers are putting in more hours of work than almost any other OECD country – yet our wages and productivity levels are among the lowest."

"Wages are 30% lower than Australia and we need a concerted effort to lift pay, and it's not just about the government lifting the minimum wage.

"This involves ongoing investment in skills, infrastructure and modernising work practices."

"It involves strengthening the rights for workers to be covered by industry and multi-employer collective agreements."

"And it involves a lift in the minimum wage to a level that is two-thirds of the average wage. We do not want to see growing wage disparity and indexing the minimum wage to the average wage is an effective way of doing this," Carol Beaumont said.

UNIONS POLITICAL ROLE HUGELY IMPORTANT

"Unions are the political voice for workers. That is a huge responsibility and if we are not recognized as the legitimate voice for workers then there is unlikely to be an effective voice for them," Council of Trade Unions president Ross Wilson said in opening the CTU conference in Wellington.

"Rebuilding a social democratic programme has at times been a struggle for all of us. We all saw the challenge to governmental power with the strike of capital in 2000 over the re-nationalisation of ACC and the Employment Relations Act (ERA), and the doom and gloom predictions for the economy – whether it was ACC renationalisation, the ERA, the health and safety legislation, or the Holidays Act.

"And we know the reality – sustained economic growth and the lowest unemployment for 30 years.

"We know that the extremists are still at work, Don Brash's emails in The Hollow Men are evidence of that, and that there remains



a high level of employer hostility to unions - particularly in the private sector.

"We saw that last year with the all-out attack by the largest corporate in Australasia, Woolworths Australia, which was a challenge to, and a test for, the whole union movement.

"It is now a proud chapter in our history that we all rose to the call for solidarity and mobilised overwhelming public and financial support.

"Over and above our daily struggles we have a national interest to consider; the national interest of developing effective policies and strategies to provide decent work and incomes for working New Zealanders, and for our children and grandchildren."

FAIRNESS AND RESPECT AT WORK UNION POLITICAL STRATEGY WILL MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Enhanced work rights, strong public services and higher wages. These are the three policy planks of the political strategy announced today by the Council of Trade Unions leading into election year 2008.

CTU president Helen Kelly said the political strategy was about fairness and respect at work and in our communities.

"2008 is an important year," she said. "Unions have proved they can campaign well and win on the issues that matter to working people.

"Our political strategy sends a strong and unequivocal signal that there is a very significant role for unions in politics."

"The CTU wants to know where all political parties stand on the protection and enhancement of work rights, stronger public services and higher wages. And importantly, we want to know what they plan to do about them."

The CTU today set out the agenda for working people on which it would base its campaign in election year.

"It centres on unions doing our politics differently, recognising specific political roles for union members, and backing up our political strategy with union activism around the core themes of work rights, public services and higher wages."

"Our role is to represent the views of our members. 350,000 members and growing steadily. We are the largest democratic movement in New Zealand, and that's a powerful mandate."

"In the last 20 years we have seen considerable swings in politics that have had a significant impact on workers and their families. Workers know that governments can make a big difference to their working lives, and we expect a government that supports working people and their families and stands up for people like us."

"We are strong, we are in good heart and we are proud to represent working people."

Helen Kelly said unions had worked all year developing the basis to the political strategy. This included talking to members and researching the views of working people.

The strategy was launched today at the final day of the Council of Trade Unions biennial conference in Wellington.

BITS AND BOBS'

- Organiser Henry Fagaiava has suffered a family bereavement when the father of his partner dies over the long weekend. We express our sincere condolences to Maria, Henry and the rest of the family at the tragic passing of Maria's father.
- Leonie Stieller returned from 5 weeks leave over Labour Weekend and has been on sick leave ever since. Who says holidays are good for you?

Let's be safe and look after one another!

PROUD to be RMTU!

