

Fire at will extension compromises workers' safety - rail union

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Rail and Maritime Transport Union Friday July 16, 2010.

Extensions to the law that makes it easier for employers to sack workers will put the health and safety of more workers at risk, a transport union is warning.

"Workers in dangerous industries like rail need to have the confidence that they can raise health and safety matters without fear of repercussion," Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

"But the Fire at Will law means that an employer doesn't need to give any reason whatsoever for dismissing a worker. 'Letting someone go' can be the offensive euphemism for getting rid of a worker who stands up for their right to a safe workplace or wants to join a union."

"National has no justification for this unfair law."

"On top of moves to block workers accessing onsite union representation, and creating incentives for employers to underreport accidents, National's agenda for work rights should deeply concern all workers."

Wayne Butson said the predominantly unionised rail workforce would resist moves to remove unfair dismissal protections from their collective employment agreement. But many workers, both in other dangerous industries but in an increasingly casualised workforce in general, needed more protection under law, not less, he said.

"We will vigorously resist these attacks on New Zealanders' rights to fairness at work."

Ends.

For further information: RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson on (027) 496-2461.