

THE ACTIVIST



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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU AND YOURS!

This is the first issue for 2012. This year promises to be a very busy and full on year for all of us.

We have a number of our bigger Collective Agreements expiring this Year. The main Rail industry MECA being the largest. Bring it on we say!

KIWI RAIL D&A WORKSHOPS

KiwiRail will be running a series of education meetings through February (commencing in Northland on Wednesday 1 February) and into March from one end of NZ to the other regarding a proposal to introduce random testing into the KiwiRail-RMTU drug and alcohol program.

The RMTU has been in discussion with KiwiRail since early 2011 over the shape and structure of the proposed drug and alcohol policy, and encourages members to attend the meetings and participate in the discussions.

These meetings will explain the whys and wherefores of the proposal for the company to move to Random testing. Feedback from the meetings will be used to finalise the program structure as it is still under discussion/negotiation.

The final proposal will be referred into the forthcoming Collective Agreement round and will comprise part of any proposed settlement of the collective agreement which is due to expire on 30th June 2012. The proposed settlement (which will

incorporate a revised D&A program which will have random testing at its core) will have to be ratified by "you", the members who are covered by the agreement, as the current collective agreement D&A provisions rule out random testing.

KiwiRail is consulting with those on individual employment agreements in parallel with this Collective process.



TOLL TRANZ LINK WAGE REMITS CALLED

The Toll Tranz Link Collective Agreement expires 30 June 2012. The renewal of the CA will see both the Union and the employer table claims. The RMTU claims come from members who are covered by the CA and have to have been raised and

voted on and carried at a bona fide meeting of the branch.

The RMTU negotiation team shall be led by Northern Regional Organiser Scott Wilson.

The remits will be prioritised by the negotiation team. Regular updates will be disseminated to members.

All remits for the Toll Tranz Link Wageround must be submitted to National Office by Friday 30 March 2012. No late remits will be accepted.

AUCKLAND PORT DISPUTE

Members should go to www.saveourport.com to get the latest on this dispute and to sign the MUNZ online petition. The website will have a volunteer registration form and an opportunity to donate money to the campaign (as well as information!). MUNZ also have a campaign phone number where people can leave contact details if they wish to help. The number is (09) 9510226.

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

Ex CTU Secretary Carol Beaumont has been appointed the campaign co-ordinator by MUNZ. The campaign is made up of a number of components – political/public; industrial, legal and international.

The Union has produced publicity material and website design. Every Auckland household will receive a letter from MUNZ to 'set the record straight' on the dispute. RMTU branches can obtain copies of the letter for distribution locally. The website will have an online petition, a volunteer registration form and an opportunity to donate money to the campaign (as well as information!). We also have a campaign phone number where people can leave contact details if they wish to help. The number is (09) 9510226.

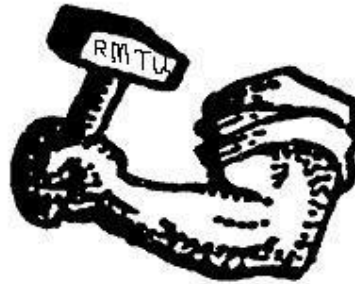
MUNZ have met with the Company to have an initial briefing on the contracting out proposal. MUNZ await further information from the company. MUNZ has repeatedly advised Ports of Auckland of their continued willingness to negotiate a new CEA.

On 31st January MUNZ issued 14 days notice of targeted strike action.

MUNZ activists will be handing out material this weekend – on Saturday 4 Feb and Sunday 5 Feb at the Lantern Festival at Albert Park and on Monday 6th at the Waitangi Day event at Barry Curtis Park in Flat Bush.

MUNZ have spokespersons available to address union meetings/delegate training courses etc and are currently already responding to such requests. Let us know if you want a MUNZ speaker to outline the dispute and the campaign to a meeting in your area.

On Thursday 9 February MUNZ want to commence leafleting at transport hubs (morning or afternoon peak hours) and it would be great if we could have some RMTU volunteers to take responsibility for rail locations. Please advise if you can do this and which location it would be.



WEST COAST RADIO'S

In the words of the local's "the radio is shit and the reliability is worse" said Locomotive Engineers based in Westport and Greymouth when talking about the Train Radio system which is the backbone of safe working for the operation of trains under single manning.

In consultation with the Union it was decided that as a major H&S issue it was appropriate to advise KiwiRail that as the agreed standard for the operation of single manned trains was no longer in place that train manning would revert to double manning. This places significant stress on costs and rosters for KiwiRail and has proven as being effective in getting things remedied.

KiwiRail convened an urgent meeting in Westport with the branch and a 10 point plan was agreed. This included a commitment from KiwiRail to bring forward the installation of the new upgraded radio system to the coast.

We will watch developments with interest.

FIRST ISSUE 2011 - TRANSPORT WORKER

Please send in all contributions, branch notes, pictures, gossip or funny stories to wbutson@rmtunion.org.nz or

fax to 04 4710896 or post to Box 1103 Wellington.

WE NEED THEM BY 18 FEBRUARY!

KIWI RAIL – VEOLIA MECA CLAIM REMITS

The KiwiRail MECA expires 30 June 2012.

Remits are coming in steadily for the wageround. Several themes are developing along occupational lines which will be challenging to address as many are contradictory. For example some branches have passed remits for positions to move to a single rate for a role whereas other branches have passed remits calling for the current scale to be extended. The final wash-up will be interesting.

All remits for the KiwiRail Wageround must be submitted to National Office by Monday 13 February 2012. No late remits will be accepted.

BUILDING CONSENTS SOUND A WARNING BELL OVER JOBS AND SAWMILLS

Building work needs to pick up to keep workers in employment and ensure local sawmills stay in business, a union for wood processing workers said today. Building consents data for the 2011 calendar year out this morning shows a decline in residential and non residential building consents from the previous year, despite a small pick-up in December. It was also announced today that after cutting staff numbers from 53 to 5, NZ Sawn Products' sawmill in Fielding is now up for sale.

"Today's news is bad for both workers and wood processors," said Robert Reid, General Secretary of FIRST Union (formerly NDU).

"A healthy construction industry helps keep workers in construction jobs and ensures that New Zealand's wood processing industry has a market for its goods, in addition to its exported products."

"We are still not reassured that New Zealand has enough wood processing capacity to fill the demand which will come from the Canterbury rebuild over the next few years."

"It would be a travesty if Canterbury were to be rebuilt using Chilean and Canadian timber, while local sawmills lay off workers and downsize."

"We need stronger leadership from the government to ensure the survival of the wood processing industry, including a more strategic approach to procurement for the Canterbury rebuild and looking at a lower domestic log price to enable wood processors to manufacture in New Zealand."

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY – 28 APRIL

We are hopeful that there will once again be many ceremonies and services held to commemorate this very important Day throughout NZ by RMTU members. The RMTU and its membership pioneered the marking of the day here in NZ by Union's.

The purpose of this notice is to enable anyone wishing to organize or to attend a service to put it in their diaries. Please distribute this to your contacts who may be interested in attending or organising a short commemoration.

We can assist to organize speakers, local dignitaries or politicians. In many cases representatives of the families of killed workers attend and speak if they wish.

We expect trains to as usual stop at midday as a mark of respect wherever they are (clear of bridges, tunnels etc as per the rules) for 1 minute.

CRUSADERS TAKE THE TRANZ

The Crusaders squad travelled on KiwiRail's TranzAlpine train from Christchurch to Greymouth on Wednesday, two days before their pre-season match with the Highlanders.

Acting Team Manager Angus Gardiner says "The train is a great way for the guys to see some of the spectacular scenery that the Christchurch to Greymouth journey offers and it offers them more space and freedom to move around".

The Crusaders joined more than 150 other passengers on the TranzAlpine that day.

NO TRACK WARRANTS BY CELLPHONE

All Locomotive Engineers and other rail service vehicle operators are reminded that Track Warrants must not be taken or issued by cellphone communication. The primary method of issue is the train radio network and so if communications are such that the radio network is not fit for purpose then to ensure quick remediation of the radio network fault warrants must not be taken by



cellphone. This is national Union policy as approved by Conference.

FINAL REMINDER -ERNEST WILLIAM FILE SCHOLARSHIP

The Ernest William File Scholarship was established in 1978 by members of the Locomotive Engineers Association as a tribute to Ernest William File, the retiring General Secretary of the Association. The Scholarship was continued and expanded by the Combined Union of Railway Employees and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union has continued to support the scholarship on the same basis as in the past.

The scholarship is open to male or female applicants in two groups, those who are the children of a Locomotive Engineer and those who have a parent who is a member of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union at the time the application for the scholarship is made.

The scholarship is tenable for a maximum period of three years at any University/Tertiary Institution in New Zealand, by a scholar who is undertaking full time study for his or her first degree/qualification and the value of the scholarship is \$1500 a third of which shall be applied in each of the three years during which the scholarship is tenable.

Although applications closed as at 31st January of any year the Scholarship Committee will not meet until mid February. This allows a window of opportunity for any further applications. If you require a form or any advice regarding the required information please contact the Head Office on (04) 499-2066

IEA'S AND TFR

A number of RMTU members employed by KiwiRail on an Individual Employment Agreement (IEA) have raised with us the increase in employer subsidy payment required for the Govt Super Fund membership. The GSF was closed in 1991 and so this only applies to employees of KiwiRail who were employed within Rail prior to this time and who have remained members of the fund.

TFR stands for total fixed remuneration. This means the cost to KiwiRail is a certain amount and all payments to super schemes etc whether employee or employer payments come out of the worker's salary. Almost all KR IEA's got a 2% wage increase last year and so if they are in GSF and are TFR'd then they will be getting less in the hand per fortnight.

Members need to carefully consider and seek advice before signing off on changes to their IEA's as it is things like this which bite you later.

\$15 MINIMUM WAGE WOULD HELP INEQUALITY, AND STIMULATE THE ECONOMY

CTU Secretary, Peter Conway today said that the government has a golden opportunity in the next few weeks to make New Zealand a fairer place, to help low income families cope with increases in the cost of living and to stimulate the economy, by increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour when it announces its decision on the annual minimum wage review.

"A small inflation adjustment to the minimum wage is not enough. We are asking that the government raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Doing so would be a very significant step in addressing income disparity by raising the income of those most vulnerable to low pay, and the easiest way to compensate low income workers for increases in the cost of living."

"Further, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 would give low income earners a much needed boost that they missed out on in the tax cuts of last year that greatly favoured high income earners. We should remember that tax cuts last year increased the difference in take home pay between someone on \$30,000 a year and someone on \$150,000 a year by \$135 per week, and had an even worse effect on low income earners when coupled with the GST hike," said Peter Conway.

"Low income households were hit harder than higher income people by the increase in GST by having to pay a greater proportion of their income in GST. Increasing the minimum wage to an appropriate level would



help rebalance this equation and put more money in the pockets of low income families who are more likely to spend it creating much needed economic stimulus.”

“Any number of measures of living standards show that a significant proportion of New Zealanders experience hardship on a daily basis and are evidence of the widening gap between rich and poor. The CTU believes the government can make New Zealand a fairer place by increasing the minimum wage to \$15, doing so will improve the relativity of the minimum wage to the average wage and provide a more equitable distribution of income,” said Peter Conway.

Peter Conway said that lifting wages overall in New Zealand is vitally important – the minimum wage is one tool, but so is improved innovation and productivity provided the benefits are shared, and extended availability of collective bargaining through industry standards.

HILLSIDE RECRUITING

Some of our guys made redundant in July 2011 have a chance to return to the Hillside in an arrangement negotiated by the RMTU.

KiwiRail chief executive Jim Quinn said in November 2011 extra urgent assembly and repair work going through the workshops had made it necessary to employ contractors and to raise current staff overtime hours.

Hillside members stated their disapproval at contractors being engaged shortly after more than 40 of their workmates had been sent down the road. We all believed that their redundant workmates should have first refusal of the positions.

Adverts will be appearing shortly for the fixed term positions.

CA FOR IEA'S – RAIL

The RMTU is growing concerned at the effect on members of KiwiRail's moves to get all members on IEA's onto standard

agreements. In other words KR is collectivising on their terms individual conditions with the workers having no unified strength. This imbalance in bargaining strength can be changed. Providing a good number of members who are currently employed under an IEA authorised the Union to bargain on their behalf for a management collective agreement we could begin to level out the bargaining inequity.

Food for thought and entirely in your hands.

GOVERNMENT CUTS DEEP INTO ITS PRINCIPAL ADVISOR ON MAORI ISSUES

The National-led Government's squeeze on the public sector is set to cut deep into the crown's principal advisor on Maori issues says the PSA.

Staff at Te Puni Kokiri were shocked when they were told that around 50 jobs could go from the public service agency.

“Like other government departments TPK has already suffered significant cuts, but this is a relatively small agency that does a big job,” says PSA National Secretary Brenda Pilott.

“Over 60 positions have gone in the past three years and \$8 million cut from its budget. We understand the department has made \$3 million in savings in a range of areas like hiring fewer consultants.

“The Chief Executive said in his briefing to staff today that there was a shortfall of \$5 million and that the agency was looking to find that by cutting jobs.

“There is concern that some regional offices may be cut. We are yet to see a detailed proposal on where the cuts will be made, but there is absolutely no doubt in our members' minds that the loss of 50 jobs is going to impact heavily on the agency's advocacy, social and development work it does on behalf of Maori people.

“TPK provides a Maori perspective on all policies that Government is considering and its regional networks are important in



keeping that advice grounded. Just this week we have seen TPK move quickly into action over issues to do with Treaty principles and asset sales.

"The Government keeps asking public service departments to do more with less. It simply can't be done anymore.

"The PSA was invited to the staff briefing today and we expect to be closely involved in the change process with the Department over the next few months," says Brenda Pilott.

RMTU PORTS FORUM

The 2012 RMTU Ports Forum will be held in Wellington on 14 and 15 March 2012.

The Union is keen to hear ideas from port branches on what topics, content or speakers they would like to hear from/do at the Forum.

The Forum will follow the usual format, with each branch reporting briefly on local issues and activities. In particular, a number of ports are involved in Collective Agreement negotiations, so the discussion will be interesting.

Port branches please advise National Office who your representatives will be as soon as possible so that bookings can be made. Registration forms will be circulated to Port Branch Secretaries.

BIM ON PROCUREMENT SHOWS GOVERNMENT'S DO-NOTHING APPROACH TO JOBS

It is laughable that the government procurement agenda was initiated at National's 2009 Jobs Summit, given it now has nothing to do with creating jobs, FIRST Union said today.

The Economic Development Ministry's Briefing to the Incoming Minister updates on the Ministry's work on government procurement.

"The briefing shows that this government and its department has completely missed the point on procurement," said Robert Reid, General Secretary of FIRST Union, which represents over 3,000 workers in textiles and wood processing.

"Procurement was raised as one of the top 20 issues at the Prime Minister's much touted job summit in early 2009. But we have seen little practical support to domestic manufacturers since."

"Today's briefing reveals the government procurement agenda is all about saving a few dollars to the crown, rather than using the government's significant purchasing power to support local industry."

"Like so many other countries overseas, we desperately need government procurement arrangements that encourage domestic industries such as textiles, wood processing and rail engineering."

"Most other trading nations have strong requirements for government procurement."

"The United States requires its soldiers to be kitted out in American made uniforms and Australian infrastructure projects often have a minimum local content provision."

Industries like textiles and wood should be firing up to meet the needs of the Canterbury rebuild, Robert Reid said.

"Instead they are downsizing and laying off staff, while this government sits back and does nothing."

ADDITIONAL SICK UNDER ATTACK

The additional paid sick leave clause in the KR - Veolia MECA is under attack by employers in the Union's view. The RMTU completed a 2 day hearing in the Auckland Employment Authority in the week prior to Christmas where we were challenging the veracity of the employer not granting additional paid sick leave under the applicable clause.

Since then we have had a worker denied any paid additional sick leave despite them having exhausted their sick leave and having been in hospital for 4 days for treatment. The company said that they must exhaust **ALL** leave balances before they would even think about granting additional sick leave. The result of this could be that following a serious illness a worker could be faced with having no annual, sick, lieu, long service or any type of leave for months before they get a renewed allocation. We think this is wrong and we know that this was not the intent or the application of the clause up until

recently. We believe that the employers have collectively decided to attack this provision within the MECA. This will be an issue in the coming wageround as will be the medical retirement provisions which we have been told that KR will be seeking change to.

Watch this space.

DISAPPOINTING COMMENTS FROM THE EDUCATION MINISTER ON OFFICIAL ONLINE LEAGUE TABLES

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa is calling on the new Education Minister to guarantee the Government's decision to establish official league tables of secondary schools will not be extended to primary schools.

When then-Minister Anne Tolley introduced controversial National Standards into primary schools in 2010, she pledged that the Government would not publish league tables.

Following a visit to Australia, the new Minister Hekia Parata has said the government is considering establishing a new website to compare the performance of secondary schools and she is open to parents being able to rate the performance of schools and teachers.

"That's a very different position and is disappointing given Anne Tolley's earlier comments," says NZEI President Ian Leckie.

"International experience shows that league tables unfairly and inaccurately label children, schools and their communities and do nothing to improve student achievement. We would sincerely hope and want guarantees that there are no such plans to extend such a system to primary schools - certainly not one which is based on unreliable National Standards information".

Secondary school NCEA results are nationally moderated and parents and schools have a clearer understanding of what they mean.

"The issue for primary schools is that National Standards aren't moderated and there is huge variation in the way schools are implementing them. It would be a case of junk information in and junk information out. Officially publishing that information on a government-sponsored website would be misleading for parents and potentially

damaging for school communities."

"Schools want to be held accountable but that

accountability cannot be based on a measure which is neither fair nor accurate, and is very narrowly focused."

NZEI would welcome the opportunity to meet with Ms Parata to outline its concerns and seek guarantees that student achievement data based on National Standards will not end up on an official website aimed at comparing school performance.

GOVERNMENT STACKS THE CHARTER SCHOOL DECK WHILE PUBLIC KEPT IN THE DARK

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa says the government is stacking the charter school deck while keeping the public in the dark about how charter schools will work in New Zealand and how they will actually make a difference to student achievement.

The Associate Education Minister and sole ACT MP John Banks has said the first charter school will be up and running in south Auckland by the end of the first school term and he has appointed former ACT Party leader Catherine Isaacs to oversee the charter school implementation group.

"Once again we are seeing a total lack of transparency in this whole process and an agenda driven by politics and business rather than education and children," says NZEI President Ian Leckie.

"Firstly the government and ACT completely blindsided the public by announcing charter schools as part of their coalition deal, and now it is moving to unfairly stack the deck of the committee set up to establish them."



"The charter school agenda was clearly more advanced than the government cares to admit," he says.

Despite the speed at which the government is moving on charter schools, the public and communities where these schools will be established, have seen absolutely no details on how they will be set up and run.

"We are not being told why and how these schools will make a difference to underachieving kids. Exactly what will a charter school do that is different and how does giving taxpayer money to a business to run a school improve student achievement? These are all questions the government is failing to give New Zealander the answers to," says Mr Leckie.

New Zealand students and schools do better than those in any of the countries where charter schools have been established. The balance of overseas experience shows that charter schools do nothing to raise educational achievement and can take money away from existing schools and undermine communities.

NZEI believes the children who are missing out on educational success the most are facing the combined hurdles of poor health, bad housing, troubled families and poverty. These aren't problems schools can fix on their own, and they certainly aren't problems that charter schools can fix.

NZEI continues to call for any move to establish charter schools to go through a parliamentary select committee process so the public and educators can make submissions and see the issues fairly debated.



ITF LAUNCHES FISHERS' CONVENTION GUIDE

The ITF will launch a free guide for fishers' trade unions to the ILO Work in Fishing Convention tomorrow. Available in Arabic, English, French, Indonesian, Spanish and Tamil, the new guide is designed to explain how the convention can help fishers worldwide, and why it is so important that unions help persuade more governments to ratify it.

Jon Whitlow, ITF fisheries section secretary, said: "Commercial fishing is one of the

most dangerous and unregulated types of work there is. The ILO Work in Fishing Convention 2007 aims to ensure that fishers worldwide have access to decent working and living conditions."

He continued: "Convention 188 was a landmark – but it needs to be backed and understood. This guide sets out to explain it from a user's perspective, and also why it needs support. Although adopted, it needs to be ratified by 10 ILO (International Labour Organization) member states, eight of which must be coastal ones. That target hasn't been reached yet. We believe that it is essential that more countries ratify, and that fishers' unions have an important role to play in persuading them to do so."

He concluded: "This publication is intended to help unions, their members, and anyone else interested in improving the lives and safety of those working in this often dangerous industry gain the deeper understanding of the convention necessary in order to help them lobby more effectively for its ratification."

The guide can be downloaded at www.itfglobal.org/infocentre/pubs.cfm/detail/33050

For more about fisheries please see www.itfglobal.org/fisheries/index.cfm and www.itfglobal.org/fish/index.cfm

EDUCATION SHOULD NOT BE A GOVERNMENT CASH COW

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa says education should not be used as a cash cow and the government would be mad to accept Treasury's latest advice.

In its briefing to the incoming government Treasury has suggested radical reform to free up money, including increasing class sizes and student-teacher ratios and closing down schools.

"This type of reform would be a huge step backwards for our education system and I don't think schools, parents or communities would be willing to accept it. It is ill-advised advice," says NZEI President Ian Leckie.

"Parents and schools fought long and hard to lower class sizes and student ratios in recent years particularly in the junior classes, and

they would not want to see all that good work undone."

"It's disappointing to hear the Finance Minister say class size doesn't matter when parents and teachers, who see what happens in classrooms everyday, know that children get more out of teaching and learning when they are in smaller groups and can get more one-on-one attention".

"Having bigger classes would also do nothing to improve teacher quality," he says.

Closing down schools would hit communities hard, particularly if there was no educational benefit in doing so.

"Closing a school down impacts heavily on students and families and shouldn't affect a child's right to attend their local school. Treasury's proposal is purely a money-making scheme for a wholesale sell-off of valuable school property and land which would come at the expense of local communities," Mr Leckie says.

"Surely education should not be a cash-cow for the government. If Treasury really wanted to free up money in education and improve teacher quality it would reinstate the teacher professional development that the government has taken away and stop wasting tens of millions of dollars on National Standards".

NZEI says worryingly the Ministry of Education's briefing to the new Minister also signals school closures as well as the erosion of school board control over property.

TRANSPORT BIM PREDICTS LIKELY BUDGET BLOWOUT

The Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Transport shows that the existing transport funding shortfall is likely to grow massively if oil prices are high, the Green Party said today.

"The Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Transport shows heavy spending on new motorways is a poor investment in New Zealand's future," said Green Party Transport spokesperson Julie Anne Genter.

"If oil prices remain high and economic growth is low, which is highly likely, we will see a massive blowout in the transport budget."

Data in the Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Transport shows that over the past few years, actual transport expenditure has been exceeding revenue from petrol taxes and road user charges and that this shortfall is likely to get worse with high oil prices and slow economic growth.

"The gap between transport revenue and planned expenditure could grow to around \$1 billion per year by 2025," said Ms Genter.

"As oil prices rise, people turn to buses, trains, walking and cycling, but this Government is planning to blow the budget on uneconomic motorways.

"The Green Party supports an urgent reprioritisation of new motorway funding to better buses and trains, and safer walking and cycling.

"A smart green transport plan will help New Zealanders get where they need to go, be better for our economy, and save us all money," said Ms Genter.

References: \$1 billion gap between transport revenue and expenditure by 2025: see Figure 18 on page 29 of http://www.transport.govt.nz/about/function/s/Documents/BIM2011_Policy_challenges_upcoming_decisions_FINAL.pdf

Bits and Bobs

- Next Thursday RMTU national Port Officials are meeting in Tauranga to draft a national waterfront plan for the RMTU for submission to the Port's Forum in March.

Let's Be Safe Out There & Remember.....

**"WE'RE STRONGER
TOGETHER"!**

