

THE ACTIVIST



Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) 10 October 2012

GISBORNE LINE

The RMTU condemns the Government's decision to mothball the Napier to Gisborne Line. The RMTU has donated funds to the local group to assist with the review that they wish to undertake to challenge the Government's choice. It is ironic that there is no money to repair the line and yet there is money to improve the highway.

More lines have been closed or mothballed under this Government than during the years of privatization.

All eyes now turn to the North Auckland line which is in the Government's sights for mothballing or closure.

KIWI RAIL MEDICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

KiwiRail have responded to the RMTU's concerns regarding access to medical information by HR managers or other management staff.

They have deleted wording in the Periodic Medical Questionnaire that said HR Managers and management staff would be able to view individuals' medical information. The preamble has been corrected to say "All information provided in this questionnaire and obtained in any medical assessment will be handled in the strictest confidence."

Completed questionnaires and medical assessments will be stored offsite in a secure location. Pursuant to the Privacy Act 1993 you have the right to access and correct your personal information at any time.

The 'Predict' database used by KiwiRail is designed to prevent unauthorised disclosure of medical information. KiwiRail HR or other managers receive information relating to

whether a person is fit or unfit for duties they are not permitted to access or receive individual medical information.

The RMTU now has no objection to employees completing the questionnaire to ensure the process of periodic medical assessments continues.

RMTU TRANSPORT WORKER DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions to the final issue for 2012 of our flagship publication "The Transport Worker" is 19 November 2012. Please send all branch notes, letters to the Editor etc to wbutson@rmtunion.org.nz or Box 1103 Wellington.

POVERTY PAY WON'T GIVE YOUNG WORKERS SKILLS OR JOBS

"The Government's plan to cut pay for 16 to 19 year olds won't create any jobs or give young people any skills," said Service and Food Workers Union Nga Ringa Tota national secretary John Ryall today.

"The minimum wage is already too low for anyone to live on, and forcing our young people onto even lower rates will condemn them to poverty."

John Ryall said calling the wage a "starting out wage" was a red herring.

"There is no evidence that reducing the pay rates for some workers to do the same job creates jobs or gives young workers skills," he said.

"This is simply about providing cheap labour in a country where wages are already too low and low-paid workers of all ages are struggling to survive."

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

John Ryall said all workers in New Zealand should receive a living wage.

"Every worker, whatever their age, should receive enough to pay their bills, put food on the table and live a decent life," he said.

VEOLIA CA 2012-2015 SETTLED AND RATIFIED

Following a series of report back and ratification meetings last week, the proposed terms of settlement have now been ratified by members, results below. These terms of settlement include a three year term with general increases of –

- 1.8% year 1 (all year 1 increases backdated to 1 July 2012 unless otherwise specified),
- 3% year 2 and
- 3% year 3,

Other features of the Terms of Settlement include –

- Tea & Coffee and Meal allowances specific increases
- Train Manager sector increases
- All integrated ticketing (AIFS) roles now in the Collective Agreement
- Shift workers annual for all current members as at 1 July 2012, then as per CA threshold from there
- New additional paid sick clauses
- New Leave without pay provisions
- Parental leave clarification
- Hours of work and meal/rest break changes
- Amendments to Redundancy, fixed term employees and Consultation clauses

Also Working Groups during the term of the CA –

- LE - classification structures, training programs and payments, rostering etc.
- Injury Management Agreement – review
- Drug and Alcohol policy – review
- Rostering for non-driving roles – review

As the majority of members have voted in favour of this proposed settlement, the RMTU will be signing the renewed Collective Agreement with Veolia Transport

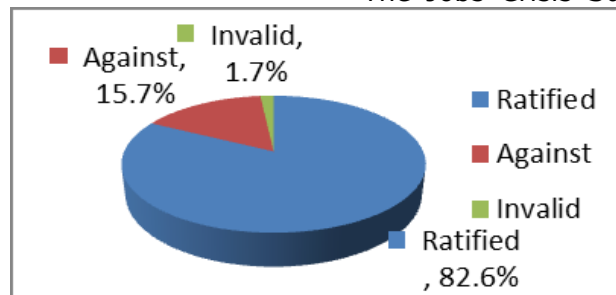
KIWI RAIL MECA UPDATE

The parties are again making progress and expect to be in a position to meet within the next 2 weeks. The Union is hopeful of getting in front of members during November 2012.

EPMU CALLS SUMMIT TO TACKLE JOBS CRISIS

The Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing will hold an urgent summit on Friday aimed at tackling the jobs crisis and building a future for manufacturing in New Zealand.

The Jobs Crisis Summit comes in response to the string of high profile redundancies over recent months and the emergence of a 'trades drain' to Australia as record numbers of Kiwis cross the Tasman looking for work.



The summit will bring together businesses, unions, economists and political parties to look at what practical steps the Government can take to stem the flow of job losses and support high value manufacturing.

The political panel will feature Green Party co-leader Russel Norman, Labour's finance spokesperson David Parker and New Zealand First leader Winston Peters.

The business panel will feature Peter Conway from the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Nick Inskip from the Heavy Engineering Research Association, technology entrepreneur Selwyn Pellett, John Walley from the New Zealand Manufacturers & Exporters Association, and Hugh Whitaker of the University of Auckland.

EPMU national secretary Bill Newson says the summit is a sign of the emerging consensus that the Government needs to take a more active role in the economy.

"No one who has seen the mass redundancies of recent months or the numbers of Kiwis heading to Australia can be unaware of the deepening jobs crisis in this country and the need for a new approach.

"Every day we're seeing redundancies and the impact these have on communities all over New Zealand. At the same time we're talking to employers who tell us they don't want to lay people off and are looking for any support they can get to keep people in jobs.

"The common thread through all of these redundancies is the hands-off approach of the last 30 years, which says the Government should keep out of the economy, leave our exchange rate to be set by speculators and accept the decline of manufacturing in this country as somehow inevitable.

"Our union is part of a growing consensus that the hands-off approach to the economy is broken and we need the Government to step up and support our manufacturing sector and the jobs it provides.

"There are alternatives, and as a country we need to discuss them. This summit is about bringing together the new consensus and we welcome anyone interested in the future of our country to join us in planning a new way forward."

Since 2008 nearly 40,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost to the economy.

Workplaces hit by mass redundancies in recent months include Solid Energy's Spring Creek and Huntly East mines, Norske Skog's paper mill in Kawerau, the Tiwai Point aluminium smelter, Axiam Metals, Nuplex Industries, Flotech, Summit Wool Spinners, Goulds Fine Foods, Fisher & Paykel Appliances, Kiwirail and the Christchurch Engine Centre.

TRANSITION HEAD (BULL HOOK) UPDATE

Over the last 18 months there have been 21 recorded injuries relating to the manual handling of transition heads, half requiring medical treatment. The RMTU requested information on injuries caused by manual handling of transition heads under the

Official Information Act. Wellington and Christchurch having the highest recorded injuries.

Lower back strains, shoulder strains, pinched nerves and a severed finger tendon are examples of injuries requiring medical attention from manual handling of transition heads.

The RMTU is critical of KiwiRail for failing to meet their obligations under the Health and safety in Employment Act to manage the risk of harm associated with transition heads. The introduction of the new wagon fleets in February 2012 has required workers to lift, carry and fit transition heads at a much higher frequency than previously. The bull hooks weigh between 26-30kg and operators are sometimes required to perform up to 20 transition head changes per shift. The manual handling process involves bending, lifting and twisting movements. The hazard is worsened by wearing the remote controlled operator packs which require the operator to lift the transition head away from the body or carry it low putting strain on the lower back.

The RMTU is also scathing of KiwiRail for reviewing the safe operating procedures for transition heads without RMTU representation. The union has subsequently commissioned Rheumatologist Dr Richard Wigley to visit the Wellington Shunt yard to observe the manual handling of transition heads and review the KiwiRail 'safe handling DVD'.

Reporting of discomfort and pain is the key for building the safety case against using transition heads. Recently a recommendation from the Wellington shunt yard to simplify the reporting form was adopted by Kiwirail. The new form is only 1 page and is specific to reporting discomfort and pain from manual handling of bull hooks. The RMTU strongly urges workers to ALWAYS report discomfort and pain and injury.

IMF SHOWS IT'S TIME TO STOP FIGHTING YESTERDAY'S WAR

The IMF's latest World Economic Outlook report (WEO) shows that New Zealand needs to move beyond using a 20 year old monetary policy and join the modern world



to protect jobs and the economy, Green Party Co-leader Dr Russel Norman said today.

The WEO report notes "declining inflation rates, growing slack, and sizable fiscal adjustment in the advanced economies argue for maintaining very accommodative monetary conditions, including unconventional measures".

The IMF notes that most of our trading partners are using tools that lower their currencies and address financial stability issues, and says "the concern is that the vast acquisition of assets by central banks [as a result of quantitative easing] will ultimately mean a rise in the money supply and thus inflation. However, as discussed in previous WEO reports, no technical reason indicates this would be inevitable. Central banks have more than enough tools to absorb the liquidity they create."

"National has defended its do-nothing approach to the high New Zealand dollar on the basis of the risk of inflation, but as the IMF notes inflation is not the risk facing the world, or New Zealand," said Dr Norman.

"National's high dollar strategy is slowly bankrupting New Zealand and costing Kiwi jobs.

"While the rest of the world adopts modern monetary policy, the National Government is doing nothing. That's costing thousands of manufacturing jobs and leaving New Zealand deeper in debt," said Dr Norman.

New Zealand's current account deficit is already at 5% of GDP and rising, and our net debt is at 75% of GDP and rising.

"Our trading partners are artificially lowering their currencies thus making ours higher. That makes it harder for our exporters to compete and results in local businesses being undercut by imports," said Dr Norman.

"The National Government claims that the high dollar is a good thing because it means cheaper flat screen TVs. The truth is that it is reducing our export earnings, costing jobs, and creating an unsustainably wide current account deficit that New Zealand funds by borrowing more overseas or selling assets to foreign buyers.

"National can scare-monger about inflation to justify its high dollar strategy that is

killing manufacturing, but inflation isn't the problem - jobs and New Zealand's growing overseas debt is.

"The question is whether New Zealand continues to do nothing and lose jobs as the actions of other countries destroy our manufacturing sector because we won't change our 20 year old monetary policy, or whether we join the rest of the world in the 21st century.

"The Greens have proposed a suite of measures to put downward pressure on the New Zealand dollar that includes lowering interest rates, introducing new tools to stop housing bubbles, and quantitative easing.

"Together, these policies would save jobs, give our manufacturers a fighting chance, reduce the amount we borrow from overseas, and get New Zealand's natural disaster safety net back in place," said Dr Norman.

RESULTS OF AUCKLAND BUS DRIVERS BALLOT

Bus drivers have voted against a revised proposal from NZ Bus for their collective employment agreement.

The vote was 51% against ratifying the proposed settlement, and 49% in favour.

Drivers voted by secret ballot at their different bus depots over the past week and a Company lawyer was present to supervise the counting of the vote.

Spokesperson for the bus unions, Karl Andersen, said that the voter turnout was very good. There were very few union members that didn't vote.

"After careful consideration of the offer, drivers are still of the view that they don't earn enough to provide for themselves and their families," he said.

Karl Andersen said despite some movement from NZ Bus, both the amount offered by the company, and a delayed implementation of pay increases, was still a core issue for drivers.

The unions are considering their options at the moment and will make some decisions about next steps early next week, he said.



H&S REVIEW TASKFORCE – CALL TO ACTION

Follow this You tube link to promote the Health and Safety Taskforce submission process. It's a call for action from Helen Kelly:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Paw3ejHGcE>

SUPPORT DHL WORKERS IN TURKEY

For over 100 days sacked workers have been standing outside DHL warehouses in Turkey resisting unfair dismissals.

The workers report that over the last year around 20 of them have been dismissed for attempting to organise a union. They also say that local DHL management continues to approach them individually telling them that they must resign from the union or they will lose their jobs.

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TÜMTİS, the union that represents the workers, has made attempts to engage local management and seek a resolution to the ongoing dismissals.

The workers are demanding that they are reinstated and allowed to exercise their rights in line with international instruments and the company's own corporate responsibility policies.

We need your support to make DHL take responsibility for its operations in Turkey and abide by its commitments as a global employer.

As a first step:

1. Raise the issue with DHL management and tell them to recognise the union (TUMTIS) and reinstate the sacked workers.
2. Send a message of solidarity to the workers via info@tumtis.org (even if you have no members at DHL)
3. Send an image that we can share with the workers

Details of the dispute are available on the ITF

website <http://www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/respectatDHLturkey.cfm>

MAKING FUN OF TPP: NATIONAL CARTOON COMPETITION LAUNCHED

The 16th round of the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations will be held in Auckland from 3-12 December, presumably at Sky City as that was the venue of the December 2010 round.

A Trans-Pacific Partnership Cartoon Competition has been launched to encourage the country's satirists and graphic artists to engage creatively with the many issues.

"The TPP is a cartoonist's dream: secret negotiations, big Pharma vs. PHARMAC, tobacco wars, te Tiriti vs. corporate treaties, US-China power struggles, Fonterra = NZ Inc., more backroom deal-making at Sky City, criminalised librarians, and internet users..." according to Jane Kelsey, who has organised the competition.

The co-sponsors are Scoop Independent News (publishers of Scoop.co.nz), the Society of Authors, the Bruce Jesson Foundation and BizDojo, who will also host an exhibition of the cartoons in Auckland during the negotiation.

The competition offers three prizes of \$500.

1. A Best Cartoon award will be judged by prominent journalist Finlay Macdonald.
2. The People's Choice award will be voted for online using Facebook; and
3. The Biz Dojo Co.Space is sponsoring a special student's award, which will give the winner a scholarship to use their facilities.

Overseas artists are welcome to contribute, but will not be eligible for the prizes.

All the entries will be exhibited online at the newly launched It's Our Future (<http://www.itsourfuture.org.nz>) web site, and in the exhibition space at BizDojo in Karangahape Rd, Auckland from 1 to 7 December.

Artists will be asked to release their cartoons for use under Creative Commons license and once entered may be used on Scoop.co.nz



as part of its coverage of the TPPA negotiations (see also:

<http://community.scoop.co.nz/category/tppa/>

Artists entering the competition can elect whether to allow their cartoons to be auctioned on-line. Proceeds from this will support the competition and It's Our Future campaign.

Entries should be sent via It's Our Future website, which also hosts information and links on the TPPA and its implications for New Zealand.

OTIRA TUNNEL SAFETY REVIEW COMPLETED

A working party drawn together from KiwiRail staff and representatives of the RMTU has just completed a review of safe working practices for train operations in the Otira tunnel.

Their report, received by General Manager Safety and People, Matt Ballard, reviews the current operating practices and makes recommendations for engineering, operational and procedural improvements.

The working party was chaired by Hazel Armstrong a lawyer specialising in H&S and ACC and comprised representatives of RMTU members who worked in the Otira tunnel, company management personnel, and RMTU H&S Organiser Karen Fletcher,

Matt Ballard said he was encouraged by the collaborative approach to the review. "The report provides a framework for the ongoing safe working in the tunnel in conjunction with existing and recommended additional measures."

Wayne Butson, of the RMTU says "that the working party and the report are illustrations of what can be achieved by the Union and the Company working together to maximise the safety of workplaces within rail. Now the report is finalised the focus moves to implementing the recommendations and using the methodology of working collaboratively on other safety concerns so as to ensure that KiwiRail is able to achieve zero harm workplaces. These things don't happen by CEO's signing pledges it arrives through us all taking responsibility for each

other to be safe. Employers cannot deliver safer workplaces alone, it is only by employers, workers and their representatives working together that we can obtain the culture shift so as to ensure all of those who come to work in the morning go home safe at the end of the shift. Lastly I want to thank all of the working party participants for their contribution and a special thanks to Hazel Armstrong for her strong leadership through the review".

Rail operations manager Aaron Temperton said the report findings were encouraging. The working party obtained new information about the exposures in the tunnel such as noise and fumes which enabled us to review existing measures and processes. Its recommendations will provide a platform for us to further enhance and develop the existing protocols to give the assurances that we are providing a safe environment for our staff to work in and around.

As part of the study external experts carried out measurements of air quality in the tunnel, which showed that in normal operating circumstances the air quality and level of particulates was within acceptable guidelines, while highlighting those operational exceptions, such as when a train stalled or failed that would require additional safety procedures. They also measured noise and heat. The findings were given to the Chief medical officer who has recommended changes to post incident and routine medical checks for staff regularly working in the tunnel, including contractors.

NEW IDEAS TO MANAGE THE EXCHANGE RATE WELCOMED

The CTU strongly supports taking initiatives to bring down the exchange rate, says CTU economist Bill Rosenberg reacting to the proposal from the Green Party this morning.

"Alongside broadening Reserve Bank objectives to include the level of the exchange rate, we need to have a range of tools available to suit the circumstances, combined with policies aimed at the underlying trends that lead to overvaluation of the New Zealand dollar. We have seen too many exporters and firms competing with imports laying off staff and moving



production elsewhere in recent weeks. Another – up to 40 jobs at risk in the Christchurch Engine Centre – was announced just on Friday citing the high dollar as a cause," he says.

These tools could include macro-prudential policies that more actively control bank short term funding from overseas, or a financial transactions tax on incoming funds. Underlying policies that would support a lower dollar by discouraging property speculation include a capital gains tax or other assets tax excluding the primary home, and limits on loan to value ratios for mortgages. However loan limits need to be accompanied by much stronger housing policies to ensure first home seekers are able to find affordable good quality homes.

"The government should also be actively working internationally to build support for such policies, which would strengthen their effectiveness. Unfortunately US proposals in the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement negotiations on financial rules could make exchange rate management much more difficult."

"The Greens proposal for using 'Quantitative Easing' to fund the Christchurch rebuild, refinance EQC and help take pressure off the exchange rate is a very interesting one and deserves serious analysis and consideration. Clearly there are risks and benefits in all such policies, but the downside of current policies are all too apparent and Quantitative Easing should be among the options considered. At a time of low inflationary pressures because of stagnating household incomes and higher debt repayment, the risks are much less," Rosenberg concluded.

TRADE DRAIN

Technicians and trade workers in the 20-29 age brackets are leaving the country for Australia in record numbers, creating a New Zealand "trade drain," charged NZ Labour's deputy leader and education spokesperson Grant Robertson. "The government's lack of investment in apprenticeships or other skills training programmes is exposing the gap being left in the economy. Along with the absence of a coherent economic plan, it's a fatal combination", he said.

In the 12 months prior to June, a record 53,763 people left New Zealand for Australia for better paying jobs. Professionals made up 11 per cent and the number of technicians and trade workers nine per cent. But technicians and trade workers 20-29 years old accounted for the greatest numbers, 14.4 per cent of the total. "This is a disaster", said Robertson. "New Zealand is on the way to a skills crisis."

WE JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN

New Zealand workers really just want to have fun on the job, at least according to a survey conducted by HR consultancy Clarian Human Resources and Massey University. The survey found that "having fun at work" is the most important thing for job satisfaction among New Zealanders.

Fifty per cent of the workers in a survey of 612 people listed "fun" as their top priority with pay seen as the second-highest priority. Employers thought pay was the second-lowest factor, while 71 per cent of employers said their product and brand reputation was the most important factor in attracting quality employees.

"We're seeing uncertainty in the economy, business strategies and operational tactics, and in employees' states of mind relating to their choices for the future", said Clare Parkes, managing director of Clarian. "While organisations have heavily invested in 'right-sizing' their headcount to accommodate the changing market forces, this leaves employees lacking clarity on what their future options are since the concept of career is no longer available to them in the traditional linear manner."

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO SEND CLEAR MESSAGE ABOUT MIGRANT WORK ABUSE

The abuse of migrant workers risks becoming a scandal of similar magnitude to the exploitation of foreign fishing crew if the government fails to step up its enforcement and prosecution of employers who breach our labour and minimum wage laws, Labour's spokesperson for Labour Issues and Immigration, Darien Fenton, says.



"Revelations that 65 businesses are being investigated for breaches related to the employment of foreign students is just the latest chapter in a whole book of reported migrant worker abuse this year.

"The government has, until very recently, been prepared to sit back and wait for the complaints to come in, rather than taking a proactive approach of inspections and enforcement.

"Because there is no collating of reported minimum wage or other labour law breaches of workers here on work or student visas, there is no way of knowing how widespread the problem is.

"We do know however that, over the last three years, only six employers have been prosecuted by the Department of Labour for breaches of minimum wage laws - resulting in median fines of between \$2,500 and \$5,000.

"This won't do. In the next couple of years, we will be bringing in 15,000 migrants for the Christchurch rebuild. There has to be an assurance from the Government that this will not become another opportunity for bad employers to exploit migrant workers.

"It can demonstrate it is serious about clamping down on this sort of illegal behaviour by sending a clear message that employers abusing New Zealand labour laws will face the maximum penalties.

"The issue is not only about the standards we expect for all workers in New Zealand, but also our international reputation as a place to study and work in," said Darien Fenton.

INCOME SURVEY SHOWS STAGNANT INCOMES FOR MOST NEW ZEALAND FAMILIES

Most household incomes did not rise during the year to June 2012, according Statistics New Zealand's Income Survey released today. "This is further confirmation of the hardship that many New Zealand families are facing", says CTU Economist Bill Rosenberg. "On top of stagnant incomes, continued high unemployment levels, with continuing news of layoffs, are making it

difficult for many people to make ends meet."

Statistics New Zealand points out that the values it reports come from a survey and changes in incomes and pay rates can only be regarded as "significant" if they exceed the error in the survey. If they are not statistically significant we cannot be sure they are different from no increase.

While many small increases are reported, few are significant. "Essentially, most incomes have been stagnant over the year to June 2012. Neither median weekly incomes from all sources (\$560), nor from those receiving wages and salaries (\$806) showed an increase that is statistically significant. Median hourly earnings at \$20.86 were stagnant too. The change in median weekly incomes from wages and salaries is the smallest since June 1999," says Rosenberg. "Similarly, average hourly earnings at \$25.07 per hour showed the smallest percentage increase since the survey began in 1997, with a non-significant increase of 30 cents."

"Understandably in this climate, the survey shows increasing dependency on benefits and Working for Families, with a significant increase of 3.0 percent in the number of people receiving such income, with the biggest increase being in the 65+ age group," says Rosenberg. "Similarly, one of the few groups experiencing a significant increase in hourly earnings was the part-time 15-19 year old age group whose median hourly earnings is exactly the minimum wage, which rose from \$13.00 to \$13.50 over the year. Many income increases have been dependent on government action during the year," Rosenberg says. The 20-24 year old age group and those in part time employment saw statistically significant increases in their median weekly incomes. Rosenberg says that it is very likely that these increases are also influenced by the increase in the minimum wage.

"In addition we see another indication of growing income inequality: while median weekly income from wages and salaries rose insignificantly (to \$806), one of the few reported significant increases was the average weekly income from wages and salaries which rose 2.7 percent to \$922. This indicates that those on higher incomes are



receiving larger income increases than people on lower incomes. The Ministry of Social Development's Household Incomes Report released in August showed an increase in inequality in 2011. It looks like we had another increase in the income gap in 2012."

The median hourly earnings for females remains at 90.7 percent of median hourly earnings for males, the same as 2011. The ratio is 93.8 percent for full timers.

THE UNION REPORT WITH SYD KEEPA & LAILA HARRE

Issue 1: How significant a step between Maoridom and the Union movement was the Tauranga hui last month?

Issue 2: Solid Energy jobs on the line - what should Government do to protect them?

Issue 3: How does publishing National Standards on line help parents make decisions?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM1gX89Kdls&list=UU7Jit_xt-bd0g_Z8CIneUeg&index=1&feature=plcp

BITS AND BOB'S

- The RMTU has initiated bargaining for a Collective Agreement with Toll Carriers for new members we have recruited in the South Island. The recruitments follow Toll purchasing Northern Southland Transport and moving the workers into the Toll rail distribution sheds in the South Island.
- The Queensland Government has announced it will sell \$1.5bn worth of shares in QR National, reducing its stake in the freight business from 34% to 16%. The deal involves a share price of \$3.47 which is higher than the original sale price and provides a windfall gain of \$400m to the Queensland Govt.
- RMTU members in Port Nelson ratified their Collective Agreement settlement today.
- Both KiwiRail and the RMTU have made their closing submissions on the Team Leaders dispute arising out of the Tranz Metro restructuring. The dispute has at its core the issue of whether Team Leaders under the new structure fall within or outside of coverage of the MECA. The dispute has wide implications within the rail sector if the RMTU loses the fight as presently almost all Team Leaders and Gangers fall within coverage.
- The RMTU is initiating bargaining for a Collective Agreement for the planners at Port Napier following recent recruiting success.
- NZ labour unions fear more workers will be laid off after more than 500 jobs were cut in the latest round of layoffs. Recent job cuts announced at state coal firm Solid Energy will reduce its staff by 25 per cent to 1360 from 1899 at the beginning of 2012. Government-owned KiwiRail, meanwhile, began consultation after confirming that 158 jobs will be eliminated from its infrastructure and engineering division around the country. The Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU) led a march on parliament last month to protest the closing of Solid Energy's Spring Creek and Huntly East operations and to plead for a \$36 million one-off payout to keep the mines open. The EPMU also told the news media that paper maker Norske Skog is expected to announce soon 120 job cuts. In other recently publicised cuts, Rio Tinto's Tiwai Point smelter will eliminate 100 jobs by November, and North Island Mussel Processors 220 fulltime and seasonal staff.
- More than 400 primary school teachers from across the country attended New Zealand Educational Institute's (NZEI) annual conference in Rotorua October 1-4, where they expressed their displeasure over the government's proposed education standards. Minister of Education Hekia Parata defended the policy changes on national standards, charter schools and league tables but faced heated questions from teachers. NZEI president Ian Leckie said it was unlikely that teachers will favourably accept the new policies. "We've got some very different views about what is going to make the biggest difference in New Zealand education," he said.



International experts who spoke at the conference criticised the imposition of national standards, saying they do not work. Pasi Sahlberg from Finland's Ministry of Education said none of the countries with top performing educational systems have policies in place which the government is proposing. He said Finland got to the top of the rankings doing the opposite of what is now happening in New Zealand.

- Maori union members and iwi leaders endorsed a call to halt national asset sales and to negotiate water rights. Council of Trade Union Maori Vice President Syd Keepa reported that more than 200 iwi leaders and CTU Maori members attended a one-day assembly (hui) at Baypark on Tuesday, September 18, where they "resolved to both strengthen the relationship between unions and iwi to progress the rights of workers." Syd said Maori workers and their unions called for the Government to stop assets sales and for iwi to work together to define and negotiate Maori proprietary rights and interests over water. "They strongly urged iwi not to enter into negotiations with the crown until proprietary rights and interests were addressed. This is consistent with the 'common interest' recognition dominating the mood of the occasion", he said. He called the hui "historic" and it also recognised the role of iwi leaders in the settlement of the recent dispute at AFFCO. The RMTU had a large group attend including rail members of TKM.
- NZ Unions welcomed the release of the Health and Safety Taskforce's Issues Paper last month. The Government in April authorised creation of the taskforce to undertake a review of the nation's workplace safety and health conditions. The Issues Paper identified areas of policy that require change in order to improve the country's workplaces. "It's a disgrace that on average 100 people per year are killed at work. If there is something all New Zealanders would agree on it is that every worker who leaves home at the start of their working day should return home safe and healthy. This is a fundamental starting point", said Council of Trade Union President Helen Kelly. The CTU urged

New Zealand families to contact the Taskforce with their ideas and experiences. "We have five times the rate of workplace injury in NZ than that of the UK. Over 6,000 New Zealanders make notifications about serious harm in their workplace each year. The issues paper asks why this might be and what is needed to stop this including considering the role of government, employers, unions and workers as well as the adequacy of the legislation," she said.

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

- Maintain situational awareness at all times;
- Ensure all are aware of the work to be performed;
- Make safety your first priority;
- Make sure you will go home safe and sound at the end of your shift;
- Make sure your workmate will go home safe and sound at the end of their shift;
- Do not allow yourself to be distracted.
- Do not make assumptions

We're Stronger Together!

