

THE ACTIVIST



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NATIONAL PRESIDENT NOMINATIONS CALLED (FROM 2 MARCH)

In accordance with Rule 24 of the Rules & Standing Orders of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union nominations are hereby called from current financial members for the position of National President.

Nomination Forms are available on the Unions Website www.rmtunion.org.nz or from the RMTU National Office by contacting Julia on 04-499-2066, fax 04-471-0896 or julia@rmtunion.org.nz.

Nominations shall be in writing using the correct nomination form, contain the signed consent of the candidate, and be proposed and seconded by financial members (Rule 1) of the Union.

Correctly completed nominations must be received by the National Returning Officer at the National Office of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union, PO Box 1103 Wellington 6140 no later than 0800 hrs on **Friday 20 MARCH 2015**.

The term of office is 2 years (Rule 24.2) and the duties are as contained in Rule 27 of the Union's Rules and Standing Orders.

For the information of members it is advised that the incumbent will be seeking re-election.

In the event two or more nominations are received a postal ballot will be issued from National Office the week commencing Monday 30 March 2015.

Howard Phillips

National Returning Officer

INAUGURAL WOMENS FORUM

The Inaugural RMTU Women's Forum is being held in Wellington 21/22 April 2015

and program planning is well underway by the Steering Committee. Branches that have not advised National Office of their attendee are asked to do so as soon as possible to julia@rmtunion.org.nz.

LYTTELTON PORT CHARGED

We have heard today that Worksafe have laid charges against LPC in relation to the incidents that led to the death of MUNZ member Brad Fletcher and also that involving RMTU member Mark Truscott.

LYTTELTON PORT DISPUTE ENDS WITH UNANIMOUS RATIFICATION OF COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS.

RMTU members who work on the Lyttelton waterfront have ratified a new collective agreement giving them a 7.7% pay increase over three years. Our members in the inland port at Woolston have also ratified a new collective agreement, their first, delivering a 2.5% increase over one year and allowing them access to the medical insurance subsidy hitherto only available to members on the waterfront in Lyttelton.

Nearly 200 members of our members voted in favour of the new agreements following a protracted dispute with the port that resulted in the closure of the container terminal at night on seven consecutive weekends, as a ban on overtime meant safety critical maintenance staff were unavailable. That action had caused significant disruption to port customers, including major shipping line Maersk, and led to ships being diverted away from Lyttelton.

The deals were negotiated in mediation as the RMTU was about to step up the campaign, having issued eight notices of consecutive 24 hour full stoppages. We had also planned to take our message to

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

Christchurch City Council, the 100% owner of the port, via demonstrations and other direct action, if mediation failed.

The agreements represented a big shift from the employer's previous position that only offered a 3% increase over 23 months for waterfront members and nothing at all for the inland port. All increases are fully backdated. In addition LPC have agreed to set up workplace forums to allow us to engage on departmental and port wide issues during the currency of the collective agreements, instead of leaving such matters to bargaining. This was part of one of our key claims and is a model our rail members will be familiar with.

"We're really pleased about the workplace forums. We see it as an opportunity to develop the relationship with the port, and we see this as a new chapter of industrial relations with LPC," said RMTU Lyttelton Port Branch President Andy Kelly.

The Branch wishes to thank all RMTU members who sent messages of support and to acknowledge the backing of the Christchurch Rail branch that turned out in numbers at meetings to underline their solidarity with their comrades at the port.

ERA CHANGES 6 MARCH 2015

The Employment Relations Amendment Act 2014 will come into effect on 6 March 2015. The changes aim to:

- create and uphold an employment relations framework that increases flexibility and choice
- ensure a balance of fairness between employees and employers
- reduce regulation where needed and decrease compliance costs, in particular for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- ensure that businesses that value employee rights can continue to grow.

Changes target the following six main areas:

- flexible working arrangements
- rest and meal break rules
- Part 6A (continuity of employment for specified employees)

- good faith
- the collective bargaining framework (including strikes and lockouts)
- Employment Relations Authority (the Authority)

In short they are all negative in impact to the RMTU and its members.

PORTS FORUM

The Union's Ports Forum is being held in Wellington 9 & 10 June 2015. Port Branch Secretaries are asked to formalise their representation and to advise numbers of attendee's to National Office via julia@rmtunion.org.nz as soon as possible to assist with Venue and Accommodation planning.

The national Union will bear the cost of 1 rep from each port branch to the Forum. Additional participants are at the branch expense.

Suggestions for agenda items are encouraged from branches, please forward to pspanswick@rmtunion.org.nz.

REPORT IT!

Disgraced American President Richard Nixon put it this way in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal: 'it's not the crime, it's the cover up' and we agree.

Nixon resigned after his attempts to conceal his involvement in a dirty tricks campaign against his Democratic party opponents led to the collapse of his presidency. What destroyed public confidence in him was the fact he attempted to cover up his crimes.

Failing to report an incident at work hardly seems on a par with the leader of the so called 'Free World' trying to hide his involvement in criminal activity, but if it means management lose "trust and confidence" in you it can lead to some very serious consequences – like losing your job.

There was an incident before Christmas that two of our KiwiRail members failed to report. A train was damaged and the damage wasn't discovered until some weeks later. An expensive and time consuming investigation isolated the time and place of the incident and so our two members found themselves

facing an allegation of serious misconduct. What management were most concerned about was the failure to report.

It's very difficult for your union to defend you if you make a mistake but then don't report it. On the whole, unless you've been recklessly and deliberately negligent, we can in most cases mount a strong argument that you should keep your job if you make a mistake and report it. The task of defending you is far harder if you try and cover up the mistake and get caught out doing so. Especially if what you are covering up could have exposed other workers to additional job risk.

Last week there was another incident in the South Island and our members immediately reported it. The conversations we've been having with management are very different this time.

We appreciate that it's embarrassing if you mess things up but it's better to be embarrassed than to potentially lose your livelihood. Your 'peers and Union delegates won't judge you – we've all made mistakes – so seek advice and if in doubt – report it!

NATIONAL NOT BEING STRAIGHT ABOUT THE ECONOMY

John Key and Bill English need to be straight with New Zealanders about the damage their failure to diversify the economy is doing, after new figures show export growth plunged due to a collapse in dairy exports, says Grant Robertson.

"Dairy exports fell over 30 per cent compared to January last year, dragging total export value down by over nine per cent. This is a blow to a nation that relies on increasing export values to grow the economy, create jobs and boost wages.

"National has promised for 7 years to lift exports from 30 per cent to 40 per cent of GDP. The latest drop in exports confirms the trend that exports are now under 30 per cent of GDP. National's economic policies have failed in this crucial area.

"This is driving a low-value economy which leads directly to low wages and bad jobs.

"We cannot get wealthier as a country by selling houses to each other and milk to one market.

"Not only has National increased the reliance on dairy products, the figures today show the 30 per cent fall in value of those exports was accompanied by an almost three per cent rise in volume of dairy exports. Productivity is going out the window.

"National campaigned on economic management and cherry-picked statistics to paper over the cracks. It's time John Key and Bill English were straight with Kiwis: the economy is extremely fragile.

"New Zealand needs a long term plan to deliver sustainable and diverse export growth. National says it has one – this is yet another issue they aren't telling the full truth to the public," says Grant Robertson.

VACANCY – RESIDENT CUSTODIAN, QUEENSTOWN – NZR WELFARE TRUST

The position of Resident Custodian at the Trust's Queenstown complex will shortly become vacant – Kathleen and Ross Owens have decided to relinquish the position. Kathleen and Ross have done a great job at Queenstown. Many members have appreciated their friendly and professional service and we all wish them well in their new ventures.

The Custodian is the Trust's representative at Queenstown and liaises with members staying at the complex. The appointee will be expected to manage and maintain the facility and undertake minor maintenance work. A list of responsibilities is available upon request to the Trust Office. The Custodian is required to live on site and a two-bedroom unit is available to the appointee.

Applicants should provide a curriculum vitae and covering letter to the Trust's Office by Friday, 6 March 2015.

NEW OWNER – TOLL NETWORKS

Australian owned Toll Holdings has recommended shareholders accept a \$6.5bn takeover offer from Japan Post to create one of the world's largest logistics companies.



The Japanese behemoth, a state-owned global postal and logistics player, unexpectedly offered \$9.04 a share for Toll, a 49% premium to the company's share price.

Under the proposal, the Melbourne-based transport logistics giant will be run as a division within Japan Post but will keep its Toll branding,

Toll Group's chairman, Ray Horsburgh, recommended the offer to shareholders.

A shareholder meeting to vote on the offer will be held in May, with the deal also requiring approval from the treasurer, Joe Hockey, under Australia's foreign investment laws.

Toll has a global network spanning road, air, sea and rail routes, with significant operations in Asia, making it attractive to Japan Post as it looks to expand its global operations.

In New Zealand Toll operates a number of companies, including Toll Networks Ltd, where the RMTU has members across the country. We will be watching events as they unfold. Our view is this takeover bid represents a further example of the trend towards consolidation of supply chain companies – more evidence that unions need to operate across the supply chain and work together with our brothers and sisters overseas, an approach the RMTU has taken for a long time now.

BUSINESS NEW ZEALAND TARNISH THIS COUNTRY'S REPUTATION ATTACKING HUMAN RIGHTS

As part of the global day of action in defence of workers' right to strike, the CTU called on Business New Zealand to stop campaigning to undermine basic human rights when it represents New Zealand at the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Business New Zealand is part of a campaign by international business lobbies to see the right to strike removed from international labour law.

"The right for a worker to safely withdraw their labour is fundamental to ensuring fair and decent work standards," says CTU Secretary, Sam Huggard. "I think most Kiwi businesses respect their employees and I do not think they would support Business New Zealand's attack on employee's human rights in other countries."

Business New Zealand has been part of a transnational campaign to obstruct the ILO hearing the worst cases of human rights abuse against workers, holding the process to ransom until governments and unions concede that the right to strike shouldn't be protected by ILO Conventions.

"There are many countries where workers who take strike action find themselves imprisoned, persecuted and even killed," says Huggard. "Brave workers from countries like Colombia and Guatemala have travelled to the ILO to be heard, only to return home denied a chance to speak and exposed to even greater risk of persecution when they get back."

CTU has raised its concerns with Business New Zealand directly. Now, as Business New Zealand prepares to travel to the ILO in Geneva at the end of February, the CTU has set up an online tool so members of the public can email 20 of Business New Zealand's largest members, make them aware of what Business New Zealand has been doing in their name and ask them to tell Business New Zealand to stop.

Already more than 20,000 email messages have been sent.

"Business New Zealand has been deeply involved in the strategy. All New Zealanders – employers and employees – will want to stop our proud international reputation being tarnished further."

The CTU's online tool is available at www.union.org.nz/our-right-to-strike.

The CTU's action coincides with activity around the world on the 18th of February, including events in South Korea, Argentina, Switzerland, Colombia, Israel, France, Latvia, Albania, Slovakia, Morocco, Thailand, Bangladesh, Botswana, Ecuador, Cambodia, Pakistan, Philippines, Paraguay, Indonesia, Canada, Hong Kong and Turkey.

FOUR YEAR DELAY FOR PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TO HEAR TPPA CONCERNS

The CTU and fifteen other organisations have finally, four years on, had the opportunity to present orally to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee select committee regarding serious concerns workers, health professionals, development groups, digital innovators, environmentalists and many others have about the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA).

CTU President Helen Kelly commented on the delay "We are at a loss to understand why there was a four year delay our petition, signed by the CTU and 15 other organisations, but much has happened since that makes the matters workers are concerned about even more urgent."

"TPPA negotiations have reached a critical point. Trade Ministers from all the countries will be meeting in March to make the decisions that could well finalise the agreement. There are still many controversial and important issues that negotiators have not been able to agree on because each country has too much at stake. There is extreme pressure on them to complete the negotiations. We need to make sure they don't make a deal we will all regret in years to come."

"Over the past four years public concern about the TPPA has risen sharply and has become widespread throughout the community. Much public concern has centred on the secrecy surrounding the negotiations. In no other area of government would a legislator or minister ask people to "just trust us" over something so crucially important, that could affect the daily life of every New Zealander, that contains policies which elections could be won and lost over. Significantly; once ratified, it is almost impossible to reverse. It is more like a constitution than ordinary legislation, but the process for information, consultation and debate is medieval compared to the way this Committee routinely deals with legislation." Kelly said.

"We are seeking the following actions from the select committee; firstly that this Select Committee conducts an inquiry into the effects of this proposed agreement before it is signed and too late for all practical and political purposes to change. But secondly, such an inquiry must be informed by the detail of the agreement. Informed public debate is also impossible without that detail. That is why we are calling for the Government to publish online all documents and to ensure that other information relating to the process is freely available to all civil society before the deal is signed." Kelly said.

"The TPPA negotiations are now matter of extreme urgency if the New Zealand public is to have an informed say in one of the most important international treaties this country has ever contemplated." Kelly said.

NEW D&A RECOMMENDATIONS

The Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) has issued four recommendations to curb drug and alcohol use in the transport sector and says it will keep a watching brief on the issue each year until regulators respond. TAIC's new *Watch List* publication also highlights its concerns in two other areas: it wants to see operators of aircraft, boats and ships making more use of locator and tracking devices, and it wants a licensing system for recreational boating skippers so they can demonstrate an understanding of safe boating.

TAIC says that whilst the MOT supports zero tolerance of operator impairment the arrangements made by operators within the transport sector are uneven and are not adequate to manage the risk. They go on to say that in 10 years to the start of 2014, TAIC has investigated eight rail, maritime or aviation incidents in which a safety critical person has tested positive; 41 people died in the incidents.

TAIC says regulators and operators need a set of measures to prevent substance impairment in people who perform safety critical tasks in the aviation, rail and maritime sectors including recreational boating. Their conclusion is that "*the risk of performance impairing substances contributing to further transport accidents and incidents will remain unacceptably high*"

until the regulatory environment deals properly with this safety issue".

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY – 28 APRIL

International Workers Memorial Day is 28 April 2015. The day is about remembering those workers, especially RMTU members, who have been killed whilst at work.

In 2015 the theme for the day is "removing exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace" Hazardous substances are found in almost every workplace in NZ and many workers have no protection against the possible effects, despite the fact that tens of thousands of workers have their health destroyed by asthma, dermatitis, lung disorders and cancers because of exposures.

All Branches are asked to commence formal arrangements for services at memorial sites.

All members are requested to attend a memorial service organised near them.

As usual we ask all members to stop what they are doing at midday to "Mourn the dead – Fight for the living" and to think about how important personal safety is to us all and the importance of going home safe at the end of our days' work.

As usual we will be requesting Rail employers to approve all train and other operations stopping at midday on the 28th for 1 minute.

Please advise us of all services to be held on the day?

RMTU MEMBERSHIP DATABASE UPDATES

The RMTU membership database is an important tool in contacting Union Members or ensuring members are kept up to date with the latest information. We are concerned at the number of "unknown" or "return to sender" envelopes returned to National Office as part of this year's officer elections. We remind members that if you

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 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 national Union elected positions are up for election this year and so there may be votes conducted by mail. If we have the incorrect address info you will not get a vote as you will never receive a voting paper. **Update now!**

COMPANY DIRECTOR SENTENCED TO HOME DETENTION FOR SAFETY FAILINGS

The Director of a house-moving company has been sentenced to four months home detention, and his company fined \$60,000, after a house he was transporting brought down a power line. The power line was left live on the side of the road, killing six lambs, five ewes and two sheep dogs. The shepherd narrowly avoided being electrocuted in the incident.

Arthur Britton's company, Britton Housemovers Limited, was sentenced today in the Hastings District Court on charges under the Electricity Act 1992, and Health and Safety in Employment Act.

On 18 December 2013, the company was moving a house under Britton's direction along Herbertville

Road in Herbertville. The house crashed into the power line which then snapped and fell onto the roof of the house. An employee used a wooden stick to move the power line into a roadside ditch.

Several sheep walked into the ditch and were electrocuted. Two sheep dogs then ran after the sheep and they were also electrocuted. The shepherd reached out to grab the dead sheep but was pulled back at



the last moment by the farmer, narrowly avoiding electrocution.

The house-moving convoy moved on, but the farmer and the shepherd chased after the convoy and told them what had happened. Following a verbal dispute, a Britton Housemovers employee returned to the scene to put cones down. Even after this argument, no Britton Housemovers employee called the appropriate authorities – they were called by the farmer.

"Electricity is unforgiving. Leaving a live line on the side of the road and not notifying anyone is unacceptable - the shepherd and others in the vicinity could have been killed," says Brett Murray, General Manager High Hazards and Specialist Services.

"This company was involved in a similar incident three years ago. There is no excuse for their behaviour and they were very lucky that the farmer's quick thinking stopped a possible death.

"Britton and his company did so many things wrong in this incident. Home detention and a large fine sends a clear message to others. It is also worth considering the consequences for this company if there had been a death."

LWOP – PUBLIC HOLIDAYS (KR)

A strange interpretation from KiwiRail's pay office is, in our opinion, disadvantaging members that take leave without pay over a period that includes public holidays. The pay office is stating that because the member did not intend to work then they are not entitled to be paid for the Public Holiday.

The RMTU/KR Collective Agreement provides for payment or an alternative day in most situations whether it was going to be a working day or not, this of course is in addition to what is provided for in the Holidays Act.

Putting that aside, in a situation where a member is on paid leave in a period that includes public holidays, they too have no intention to work the public holidays but they are paid for them with no leave debited. We will be working on this one and

are keen to hear if this has happened to you. Please contact your delegate or RMTU Organiser.

FORESTRY PRIVATE PROSECUTION UPDATE

The NZCTU's first private prosecution for the death of a forestry worker has been set down for 5 days in Rotorua in July. This case relates to the death of 19 yr old Eramiha Eruera Pairama who was killed by a falling tree in a forest near Taneatua in Jan 2013.

No fixture dates have been set for the second prosecution relating to the death of Charles Finlay when he was crushed by a log near Tokoroa in July 2013 or the third prosecution relating to the death of Wayne McMurtrie who was struck by a tree he was felling in the Houputo Forest in June 2012.

KIWI RAIL'S \$12 MILLION ASBESTOS BILL

KiwiRail says the sidelining of 40 of its locomotives last year because of an asbestos problem cost it about \$12 million.

KiwiRail removed the freight locomotives from service after the manufacturer confirmed the highly toxic material had been sprayed on metal sheeting in the engine room.

Its chief executive, Peter Reidy, said KiwiRail also reached a confidential settlement with the manufacturer of the trains.

"It's a mixture of lost revenue during the period, which was at the end of our peak season. Secondly, the cost of refurbishing the vehicles," he said.

"And, we had to do that - when Iain Hill, and I met with our Chinese partners, we have a confidential settlement with them and we're quite comfortable with the outcome in terms of where we are today."

The RMTU is gobsmacked at this outcome. So in summary we have situation where even after the confidential settlement it has cost KiwiRail \$12m in balance sheet cost, plus the fact they were built in China caused the closure of a workshop, plus we still have the gen 2 DL's to be cycled through Hutt Shops to have the asbestos removed. Where

is the accountability? Who has lost their job in senior management over this issue? In our view the workers as always will pay the cost as that \$12m will have to be recovered from somewhere and so there is your accountability.

ZERO HOURS MUST STOP

New Zealand unions are calling attention to the spread of "zero hour contracts," where workers have to be available for work, but have no hours guaranteed, particularly in the fast food industry.

Unite Union National director Mike Treen, for example, reports that zero hour contracts are now the norm in the industry. "McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, Starbucks, Burger King, Wendy's - all of the contracts have no minimum hours, and so people can be - and are - rostered anywhere from three to 40 hours a week, or sometimes 60 hours a week, and it depends a lot on how you get on with your manager," he recently told the news media.

According to First Union, zero hour contracts are beginning to creep into the retail, finance and transport sectors. "This is happening even in some of our well-known stores and supermarkets in the country and a zero hour contract means that you are at the whim of that employer," said General secretary Robert Reid.

The Council of Trades Union has warned that the contracts can be illegal in certain circumstances, but few make it to court. "It's a big step for workers to take their casual contract to court and say 'hey, I don't think this is fair.' " So they're very unusual, and they're not classified as zero hours contracts under case law because that's a new term," said CTU lawyer Jeff Sissons.

TOTAL INCOME SHARE DECLINES

Workers' share of total income has declined since the late 1970s, while real wages have not kept up with productivity gains, according to a recent study by the Productivity Commission. The study "Who benefits from productivity growth" found that labour's share of total income fell from

about 65 per cent in 1978 to 57 per cent by 2010. "This is an important part of the story of growth in income inequality in New Zealand.

The fall in the labour income share is well known and has been happening in most countries around the world. However it was particularly strong in New Zealand," said CTU Economist Bill Rosenberg. He said the Commission's work is important in that it finds that a large part of the fall in the labour share of income was due to the high unemployment, the introduction of the Employment Contracts act in the early 1990s and other factors that "led to a loss of bargaining power for employees."

Labour's spokesperson on Labour Issues Iain Lees-Galloway agreed that "good labour laws mean everyone gets their share of a stronger economy."

HOUSE MARKET STILL STRONG

So far this year, agents in Auckland have been reporting that the demand for housing is still strong. There are more buyers than houses available. Auckland is experiencing strong immigration growth from three sources. There is internal immigration from provincial New Zealand and cities such as Wellington. There are those people returning from travelling and working overseas and of course new immigrants. We suspect that even more New Zealanders would like to return, if the exchange rate was more favourable.

Gone are the days, when those returning New Zealanders, received a nice windfall on their overseas savings. Other factors are driving the market, including the lack of supply of both dwellings and land suitable for building. This will continue certainly for the rest of this year and maybe into next year as well.

INTEREST RATES

Over the past few months many countries have reported low or in some cases negative inflation rates. This is due to sluggish growth, low interest rates and a substantial drop in oil prices. New Zealand is experiencing its lowest inflation rates since the 1950s.

Our nearest neighbour is probably in recession and has begun cutting wholesale interest rates. That puts us in a difficult position, as interest rates are higher here than in Australia and it is pushing our currency up. It is almost at parity. If Australia cuts its rates again, which they probably will, our currency may appreciate further. This is hurting our exporters to Australia. This is serious, as that country is our second largest export market. Rationally our Reserve Bank should be starting to cut our interest rates but believes that may add more fuel to the already overheated Auckland property market. At least all this is positive for those with mortgages - interest rates will not be increasing this year.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SUNDAY 8TH MARCH 2015

International Women's Day is recognised, celebrated and supported by thousands of organisations and individuals across the world. For the ITF family it is about helping to secure rights for women, and raise their visibility and participation in the union movement.

It's an opportunity for unions all over the world - men and women - to stand together, support their female members and address the issues facing women transport industry workers in every sector.

MINIMUM WAGE NOW THE MAXIMUM WAGE FOR THOUSANDS

"The announcement today of a fifty cent per hour increase for the thousands of workers now completely reliant on it as the pay setting mechanism shows a disrespect for the families of this country," says CTU President Helen Kelly.

"The increase comes in on 1 April, and will barely cover the loss of the two ten minute tea breaks that occurs on 6 March across NZ workplaces. That means people could be working 4.3% longer in an 8 hour day for the same pay."

"Over 300,000 workers are now on or near the minimum wage as collective bargaining

rights have been decimated, insecure work arrangements have become widespread and unfettered migration has been allowed to flood low paid, low skill work areas. What Government is clearly saying today is - expect more of this."

"The Government's own press release wrongly suggests higher minimum wages in NZ will cost jobs when a large body of research suggests this is a false link, but regardless its own statement that a rate of \$15.50 would cost 5000 jobs suggests they should have at least moved to this rate. Last year 22,000 foreign student visas and 15,000 working holiday visas were issued with all of these workers being able to take low paid jobs in this country. If a small reduction in these numbers meant real relief in wages for the low paid, this should happen immediately."

"Yesterday new figures were released for a living wage, with the rate identified at \$19.25. The mean-spirited increase announced today means thousands of hard working families facing another year of struggling to make ends meet. The economy can afford higher pay increases. From the bottom of the recession in 2009 to 2013, productivity rose 10.1% but real wages rose only 1.5%. Workers are due a big catch-up."

TIME FOR GOVT TO GET ON BOARD CITY RAIL LINK

Today's announcement that construction work on the City Rail Link will begin this year is a further sign that the Government needs to get on board with immediate funding, the Green Party said today.

"While today's construction announcement is a positive step, if the Government continues to delay funding the people of Auckland will be waiting another decade for decent train services," said Green Party Transport spokesperson Julie Anne Genter.

"Auckland rail patronage has grown 20 percent in the year to January 2015, with over a quarter of a million more monthly train boardings than the same time last year, well ahead of Auckland Transport's 4.9 percent growth target.

"We need more frequent trains to accommodate this growth but the rail system

can't handle more trains until the City Rail Link is built.

"More Aucklanders than ever before are using trains so construction of the City Rail Link cannot begin too early.

"The Government's transport priorities are all mixed up. Why would it spend billions on expensive motorways when traffic volumes are declining, and delay funding rail when rail use is growing?" Ms Genter said.

RIGHT TO STRIKE UPHELD – BUT NEEDS DEFENDING

Following a worldwide trade union campaign to defend it, the right to strike has been re-affirmed at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva.

ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) general secretary Steve Cotton explained: "Unions and employers meeting at the ILO have upheld the general right to strike. Two critical provisions are recognised: the constitutional principle of the right to strike, as well as the jurisprudence on it of the last 60 years."

He continued "There is no doubt that without the huge mobilisation efforts of the

global union federations and trade union organisations worldwide, the basic human right to withdraw your labour could have been removed. It is down to all of our efforts that the attempt was defeated – and it will be down to all of us to ensure that it is protected. Even as this victory has been won, attacks on the right to strike at national level continue.

"We will all remain vigilant. We will not surrender this basic guarantee of freedom. In particular we will be closely watching the March meeting of the ILO Committee of Freedom of Association, which will be studying right to strike cases, including ones submitted by the ITF and its unions."

ITF president Paddy Crumlin stated "The right to strike to protect economic and industrial access and respect in the workplace is essential. Thanks to the efforts of good women and men and their trade unions the attempts by neo-liberal employers to remove it have been defeated. But there is no guarantee that they won't try again, including at national level."

He concluded: "Those employers who tried to crush this basic right have seen the attempt thrown back in their face. Trade unions, with the support of progressive and democratic organisations, drew a line in the sand. That line has not been crossed. Today we can pause for a moment to congratulate ourselves on the worldwide mobilisation that made it so – and then ensure that the next attempt is similarly defeated."

For more details see www.right2strike.org

BITS AND BOBS

- Matangi 4472 has been repaired and released back into full operating service. This Matangi Unit was the vehicle involved in the May 27, 2014 collision with the stop block at Melling station.

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

SAFETY FIRST!

