

THE ACTIVIST



Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) 18 February 2010

BALLOTS IN THE POST – KIWI RAIL GROUP AND VEOLIA

All ballot papers left the Unions national Office on 12 February 2010. If you have not received your ballot paper, and you work for either a KiwiRail Group company or Veolia Transport Auckland, by 19 February 2010 then please contact the Union on 04 4992066.

Make sure you cast your vote and post it back to us ASAP.

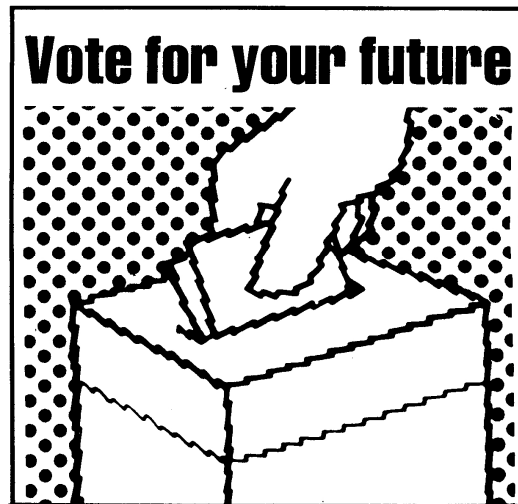
REMEMBER.....

If **YOU** are in favour of there being one Collective Employment Agreement covering all rail workers in NZ then vote **YES** to the ballot question:

"Are you in favour of the RMTU bargaining for a single collective employment agreement with Kiwirail Mechanical Services Limited, Kiwirail Freight, Ontrack(NZRC), Ontrack Infrastructure Limited, and Veolia Transport?"

The RMTU recommends that you VOTE YES as soon as you receive your ballot then send it back immediately.

NATIONAL'S ACC CUTS WILL RIP OFF WORKERS



The Rail and Maritime Transport Union says latest moves to cut back on ACC cover for injured workers amount to the stripping back of a public asset ahead of privatisation.

"ACC works for injured Kiwis, and we want to keep it that way," RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson said today, following the release of a select committee report considering ACC legislation changes.

"The National government is attempting to portray ACC as in financial trouble and in need of major reform, despite advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers and others about how efficient and cost effective a scheme ACC is."

"National simply proposes to shift the real costs of accidents and injuries from employers to New Zealand workers and their communities, to make ACC more attractive to Australian insurance firms if they get their way and privatise it."

"We already know that workers and society bear the brunt of workplace injuries as it is, and the changes outlined in the select committee report will only make it worse." (See note).

Mr Butson said the RMTU had particular concerns about moves to:

- cut cover for part time and seasonal workers,

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

- permit ACC to disregard a workers' previous income when assessing return to work
- deem workers vocationally independent when they're ready for 30 hours work, down from 35 hours
- force holiday pay to be counted and abated against weekly compensation if a worker loses their job, and
- weaken hearing loss provisions

"This bill is the latest in a series of attacks on ACC by National. It is not necessary and should be stopped now," Wayne Butson said.

RUMOURS ABOUND IN PICTON.

Rail members of the Marlborough branch are furious at indications that a contracting company may have been awarded a contract over their own company.

Speculation is that the Interislander division of Kiwirail has decided to use a contracting company Higgins Tow Services to undertake the Monday night transferring of 20' and 40' containers from Rail wagon to Trailer and vice versa within the Terminal sites at Wellington and Picton.

In correspondence with the RMTU Interislander management stated that they are in the "situation analysis stage" in regard to the possibility of suspending a Monday night return freight sailing i.e. 2205/0205 Aratere. The freight on this ship may be able to be transferred onto the earlier Kaitaki Sailing"

The rumors indicate that the contractor will have the Monday night work until the "tere" goes into dry dock for 5 months and then they will undertake the full operation. The work in Picton will be done at the Terminal as opposed to the CT Site in Spring Creek, due to the haulage cost quoted by Toll Tranzlink being too expensive (at 40% more than the actual cost) there is even a rumour that other haulage firms were not invited to tender.



**JOBS,
JUSTICE,
CLIMATE**

Our members are concerned that the CT site has not been fully consulted with, or given the opportunity to put in a submission, especially as they are willing to alter their roster so as to accommodate the Monday night work.

Further to this it appears that Kiwirail Freight management have been left out of the decision making process altogether. Our members are and are talking amongst themselves on how KR Freight can accommodate both the Monday and the 5 months into their current rosters.

The RMTU position is that RAIL must be undertaken by Kiwirail employees, and warn the Interislander management that our members are ready for a long and hard fight if any RAIL work is contracted out.

MINIMUM WAGE IS GOING UP TO \$12.75

The new minimum wage rates will come into effect on April 1, 2010.

The adult minimum wage will increase from \$12.50 to \$12.75. This applies to all employees aged 18 and over and includes those aged 16 and 17 who are not new entrants or trainees.

The training and new entrants' minimum wages will increase from \$10.00 to \$10.20 an hour.

Visit the DOL website for further information on the minimum wage or your minimum employment rights.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, NOT ENOUGH FOR JOBS

There is very little new in the Prime Minister's statement on economic growth and what he announces misses significant opportunities to boost jobs and broaden the tax system, said CTU Economist Bill Rosenberg.

"The Prime Minister glosses over the steep rise in unemployment revealed just last week, and his statement does precious little for those out of a job or whose jobs are at

risk," said Rosenberg. "The recession is not over for many New Zealanders. Instead he threatens making it harder to access the unemployment benefits for those unfortunate enough to be out of a job for any length of time. The signalled reforms on this and other benefits are a worry given National's record on benefit cuts. Creating jobs will get people off benefits but there is not enough on this in the speech."

"The Prime Minister signals an increase in GST to 15 percent and continued tax cuts for the well off. This will only further encourage the development of the 'emerging underclass' he speaks about. The priority should be to reduce inequality, not increase it."

"The Tax Working Group put asset taxes on the agenda, but the government appears to have wiped them off just as quickly. We need a Capital Gains Tax or other form of property tax (excluding the primary home) to broaden the tax base and level the playing field on investment. It is good that the government is still looking at options for changing the way property is taxed – probably looking at depreciation and write-off of losses – but it has missed an opportunity to make significant changes in our tax structure."

"The Prime Minister again hits at workers through changes to the labour laws, undermining holiday entitlements and fair treatment of Personal Grievances. We won't get closer to Australia by attacking employment conditions. Labour laws did not cause the recession and they will not hold back any recovery."

"A further positive approach would be to include unions in industry development initiatives and in improving health and other public services, recognising the contribution workers make to economic development."

2010 BARGAINING AT PORT MARLBOROUGH.

Two years have gone by quite quickly for the Port members in the Marlborough Branch, with their Collective due to expire at the end of June. Branch Representatives Debbie McManaway, Grant Herbert and George Laird met with CEO Ian McNabb for

a pre negotiations meeting. It was an amicable meeting in the spirit of Goodfaith, with both parties indicating their desire to have the collective negotiated before the expiry of the current agreement and posing together for a photo.

HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENTS FOR ANZAC DAY

This year Anzac day falls on Sunday 25 April. This means that those who normally work Sundays will receive a paid day off on Anzac day. Alternatively if you do work on Anzac day, you are entitled to time and a half for the hours you work and an alternative holiday (if Sunday would be otherwise a working day for you). Visit the DOL website, for more information on alternative holidays (days in lieu).

Please note that Anzac Day is also a restricted trading day. Most shops selling retail goods can not open until 1pm on this day. Certain shops may remain open. For more information view the DOL website information on Shop Opening Hours.

WEST COAST BRANCH

National Office received the following report from the Westcoast Branch; the first of the two serious issues out lined below will be dealt with by the H&S Exec for resolution immediately once the HSAT on the coast escalates the issue to it.

The second issue was dealt with by the 2nd issuing of a HM2 form, so well done to all members involved. It is a shame that escalation to National Office is needed to get safety work undertaken.

That the state of the check rails on Bridges between Westport and the 121 km in the Buller Gorge are in a pretty sad state and have not been touched for years, there is doubt that they would hold a passenger carriage travelling across a bridge should a derailment occur, now I know for a fact that when we had a coal wagon derail and dragged for many Kms a few years ago, it travelled across bridges between the 124 km and Tiroroa, only one bridge had the check rail replaced as it was torn off as the wagon went across, all others have just been left

Just thought this is an issue if Passenger Trains are to travel thru the Gorge.

The Buller Gorge scrub is out of control, it basically requires trimming from the 124.5 km from tunnel 6 all the way thru to and including station limits Inangahua, trees along the rock walls have shaped themselves to the profile of the coal wagons in places it is overhead as well, inside scrub is so bad in places that should one have to walk the train, one couldn't do it. Approaching Inangahua broom is so bad you cannot see the station warning board or Arrival signal.

BELGIAN RAIL DRIVERS STRIKE AFTER DEADLY CRASH

Belgian train drivers went on strike Tuesday in protest at working conditions after the collision between two rush hour trains in which 18 people died.

The SNCB rail company said the spontaneous walkout had been widely followed and many cancellations and delays would follow.

An investigation was launched into the cause of the crash, which happened at the height of the morning rush hour, with suspicions of driver error as well as a lack of safety equipment on one of the trains.

In a joint statement Infrabel, which runs the Belgian rail network, and SNCB, which runs the trains, said the death toll stood at 18 with 95 injured.

Eleven of the injured were said to be in serious condition.

Emergency workers suspended after nightfall a search for more bodies in the mangled wreckage of the carriages.

Brussels train crash: 'We were knocked down like ninepins'. "We don't think there are any more victims in the trains," said crisis centre official Anja De Wolf. "But there could still be more bodies trapped under the carriages," she said.

The high-speed crash, one of the worst rail accidents in Belgian history, happened at around 8:30 am (0730 GMT) as commuters headed to work in the capital.

Groggy survivors wandered around in a state of shock or burst into tears as they were taken to a nearby sports centre to be treated. The Belgian Red Cross issued an appeal for blood donors.

"The shock was terrifying, it knocked us down like ninepins," said a survivor who gave her name only as Sylvie as she emerged with an injured arm.

Late Monday Infrabel and SNCB in their statement revised talk of a head-on collision, saying the trains had hit laterally "for unknown reasons".

Some carriages were hurled onto their sides in thick snow near Halle, about 15 kilometres (nine miles) southwest of Brussels.

The accident, which involved 250 to 300 commuters in the two trains, left thousands of travellers elsewhere stranded as Eurostar and Thalys suspended international services to and from Brussels.

Lodewijk De Witte, governor of the Flemish Brabant province, said the bodies of 15 men and three women had been recovered.

One of the two train drivers was said to be among the victims, though identification of all the bodies could take another day, the governor said.

Firefighters who helped pulled the bodies out of the train wreckage also collected fragments of clothing from the site to help with the grim identification process.

The crash on a key line caused widespread rail disruption, with all Eurostar high-speed train services to and from London cancelled along with Thalys rail services to France, Germany and The Netherlands.

Disruption was set to continue on Tuesday and perhaps beyond as the official probe sifts through the wreckage.

SNCB said it would take at least three days to get train services running normally again.

As the crash investigation got underway, De Witte said one train had apparently failed to stop at a red light and hit the other at high speed.

The train line where the crash happened is fitted with a security system designed to halt trains automatically at a stop sign.

However one of the trains was not equipped with the system, according to Marc Descheemaeker, a senior official with the Belgian rail company SNCB.

Prime Minister Yves Leterme cut short a trip to the Balkans to head back to Belgium. Belgian King Albert II similarly interrupted a holiday in the south of France to visit the crash site with Leterme in the afternoon.

Messages of aid and condolences also came swiftly from the European Union, which has its headquarters in Brussels.

EU president Herman Van Rompuy, himself Belgian, spoke of his "great shock and sorrow," while European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso said his executive stood ready to help.

TOLL TRANZ LINK WAGEROUND REMIT CALL

All branches are requested to forward remits from Tranz Link members to national Office from their branch. The remit call will close on 1 March 2010.

The core negotiation team for the RMTU shall comprise Jacqueline Poole (Chch), Jack Hingaia (Southdown) and Todd Valster (Organiser). The Union will be serving initiation notice for the renewal and renegotiation of the CA on the employer soon. Watch for the employer notice in response to the notice in your workplace shortly thereafter. Under the ERA the employer must advise all workers that an initiation notice has been received from the RMTU.

HUTT WORKSHOPS OPEN DAY

The Open Day is to be held at Hutt Workshops on 28 February 2010. The open day is between the hours of 11am and 4pm. (Alternative date due to weather is 7th March 2010)

Entrance to the site during the open day is via the Bell Road gate only! No access from Elizabeth Street. Gold donation on the day with the proceeds being forwarded to the recipients chosen by the Lions Club. So far

it is Wellington Free Ambulance and one other.

A flyer is being developed and will be distributed as soon as available.

This is a major chance for the workshop to highlight the work they currently do and what they are capable of doing. There will be displays from several suppliers e.g. Fletchers, BOC gas, Steel and Tube etc.

Ontrack have offered the new tamper, heavy rail vehicles and the like for a static display. They are also trying to get the KA and a few other steam locomotives to also display. There will also be a display board of union info and it will highlight the work of the RMTU Hutt branch, the delegates and H&S reps do.

The Lions Rotary Club is doing the volunteer work of car parking, organising entertainment etc

**SO IF YOU'RE IN THE
WELLINGTON REGION
MAKE SURE YOU DIARY IN
AN ATTENDANCE!**

FIRST ISSUE 2010 - 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 NOW!

KIWI RAIL GROUP – VEOLIA MECA UPDATE

To MECA or NOT Ballot papers, as required by the ERA 2000, will be leaving the Unions National Office 12 February going to all members who are covered by the Collective Agreements within Ontrack NZRC, Ontrack Infrastructure, KiwiRail Mechanical services (previous United Group), KiwiRail Freight (Previous Toll) and Veolia Transport Auckland. It is essential that members cast their vote quickly and send the completed ballot paper back in the reply paid envelope supplied. **Only the ballot papers returned will be counted!** We need a strong vote in



favour to demonstrate to the employer how serious we all are to become "stronger together".

Please note that each trading company is a separate ballot and so each company ballot must be carried in order for the members within that company to be included within the MECA bargaining. Any company ballot not carried will cause the Union to be required to initiate for a single Collective agreement for that enterprise.

We have sought a written assurance from KiwiRail that KRMS will have full backdating of any settlement to 1 April 2010 and await receipt of that confirmation. We have a verbal assurance to date.

UNION CLOTHING BAN REMOVED

Under the sounds familiar heading - *RTBU Members in Victoria's V/Line Infrastructure recently reported being told by management at toolbox meetings that RTBU clothing and logos were banned on the job and that disciplinary action would be taken against those who did not conform. RTBU Victoria State Secretary Trevor Dobbyn reports that discussions with senior management have cleared the issue up. It seems that what V/Line meant to say was that clothing issued by the company should be worn on the job, but that did not exclude the wearing of union badges or logos or clothing such as tee shirts as well. So that should clear that matter up and no one need fear retribution from management if they wear RTBU stuff on the job.*

RMTU members may recall that we had a similar falling out with Toll and then CEO David Jackson over the same issue. It must be an Australian anti union thing.



YOUTH UNION MOVEMENT OPPOSES DOUGLAS'S ATTACK ON YOUNG WORKERS

The New Zealand youth union movement, Stand Up, is calling on the Government to steer clear of Roger Douglas's Private Members' Bill which directly attacks young workers by reinstating youth rates.

Stand Up convener James Sleep says this is yet another attack on young people by the Government's support partner ACT. Roger Douglas's assertion that the reintroduction of youth rates is the answer to youth unemployment is simply ridiculous, said Sleep.

"Youth rates discriminate against young workers on the basis of age. Employers expect exactly the same level of work from sixteen and seventeen year olds as from eighteen year olds. Sixteen and seventeen year olds don't get to do their jobs 20 percent slower, or work 20 percent fewer hours. So why should they be paid 20 percent less when they are doing exactly the same job as an older worker?"

Sleep believes Douglas's magic bullet to solving youth unemployment is fundamentally flawed.

"If Mr. Douglas really cares to solve youth unemployment he should spend his time lobbying

the Government to invest in comprehensive initiatives that create jobs and education opportunities for the thousands of young New Zealanders seeking work."

Sleep says ACT must not put the blame on young people for the Government's failure to create these opportunities for young people to get ahead.

"ACT wants to take money out of the pockets of young people as a response to a lack of Government action over youth unemployment. That is appalling."

Sleep says that if the Government decides to support Mr. Douglas's Bill then it is working against its commitment to deliver for hard working New Zealanders and it will prove the Government is out of ideas on how to reduce the high youth unemployment rate.

INTERISLANDER WORKING PARTY

The Interislander working party has met 3 times and held one set of report back meeting with members. There is a lot of work to go through and our representatives are doing a sterling job.

The latest meeting had members of the working party observing the Wellington Terminal "outside" operation including the marshalling of both rail and cars and the line;

"It was good to see again what the Wellington guys do and link this to the discussions" said Picton Terminal Representative Tania Haraki.

Of interest to the team is the possibility of establishing a skills matrix and qualifications for Terminal staff; however what is put in place must be of true benefit to the membership.

HEALTH CHECK TOOL FOR THE GENDER PAY GAP

A free "quick health" check is now available for employers and their staff in monitoring pay and employment equity in New Zealand business.

The new self-assessment and monitoring tool (<http://www.neon.org.nz/payequitymonitoringtool/>) launched today by the Human Rights Commission allows companies and organisations to work out whether they have a gender pay gap and what they can do about it. New Zealand has had a gender pay gap between men and women of about 12 per cent median hourly rates for the past decade.

BITS AND BOBS

- The Wellington City Transport Collective Agreement for our Operations Controller members is due for renegotiation. The union has sent though an initiation notice, there is a claims meeting next week and then hopefully talks will commence. The union is looking for an improvement on the last talks in 2008 which were

extremely drawn out and required DOL assistance.

- The Port Taranaki RMTU Harbour Workers CA is up for renegotiation, expiry 31 March. Claims meetings are planned and the union will be seeking to commence these talks in March. There have been many challenges, in recent times, due to the fall off of cargo work at this Port. A new Port Taranaki / RMTU Launch Masters CA is now in place going through to 2011.

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

"WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER"!

28 April

ILO - World Day

for Safety and Health at Work