

THE ACTIVIST



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WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY – 28 APRIL

There will be many ceremonies and services held to commemorate this very important Day throughout NZ. Especially amongst the RMTU and its membership as we pioneered the marking of the day here in NZ by Union's.

The purpose of this notice is to enable anyone wishing to attend the service to put it in your diaries. Please distribute this to your contacts who may be interested in attending.

We have been advised that there will be a Workers Memorial Day commemoration service this year in Blackball on the West Coast. This gives us the opportunity to honour the Pike River Miners on this International Workers Remembrance Day. The service of approx 30/45 minutes will be held at the Blackball Working Class Museum at 1.45pm. In the Working Men's Club if wet.

Speakers will probably include representatives from the EPMU, NZCTU, NDU and the ICEM.

Local dignitaries and Representatives of the families will be invited to attend and to speak if they wish. The local CTU may also pay tribute to the Pike River Miners in song.

RMTU will of course be holding ceremonies as usual in most locations throughout NZ. Members are urged to attend. We expect trains to stop at midday as a mark of respect wherever they are (clear of bridges, tunnels etc as per the rules) for 1 minute.

ERA AND HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENTS – 1 APRIL 2011

As you know the Department of Labour has updated its Employment Relations web pages and publications to take account of the changes to the Employment Relations and Holidays Act from today (1 April).

The new content and revised website may be of use to members and delegates.

It is available here: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/er/>

MANUFACTURING SURVEY CONFIRMS MORE JOBS AT RISK IN WOOD INDUSTRY

A union for wood processing workers believes several hundreds more jobs in the industry are at risk, following a further drop in wood manufacturing reported this morning.

Statistics New Zealand's just released manufacturing survey reports an overall 3.3% increase in the volume of manufacturing sales in the December 2010 quarter.

However, bucking that trend is a 4.2% drop in volume of sales for the wood and paper product manufacturing industry, following falls in the previous two quarters.

The National Distribution Union says that while exporters of raw logs are making money, with log prices at record highs, value-added wood processors are being put out of business.

"The NDU raised the issue of wood processing job losses with the Forestry Minister and industry representatives at

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

Parliament in January," NDU General Secretary Robert Reid said.

"We estimated at that meeting that at least 1,129 wood processing jobs had been lost since 2008."

"However we fear further jobs are at risk, based on the emerging second quarter prices for logs."

"In the first quarter of 2008, the price for A grade unpruned logs was around \$NZ60 per tonne. The prices being quoted to NZ wood processors for the second quarter of 2011 are \$NZ125 to \$NZ130, which equates to the global price minus shipping and other costs," Robert Reid said.

"These prices may be great for the raw exporters of logs, but they are unsustainable for New Zealand value-added wood processors."

"Even at the first quarter 2011 price of \$NZ100 per tonne, many wood processing companies told us that they will have to cut back production and lay off workers if the log price does not return to a realistic level."

"Global log prices are being pushed up China and India, but New Zealand's competitors for soft wood such as Russia, Canada and Chile all have a two tier pricing system for logs with local manufacturers able to secure logs at a much lower price than the global log prices."

"While there is talk about making greater use of New Zealand wood in the reconstruction of Christchurch, this will all be hot air if there are no local wood processors left to manufacture the wood required."

"It seems our "do nothing" government has given up its economic sovereignty under the WTO and free trade agreements to intervene in the setting of the price of logs. The union will therefore take the case for a lower domestic log price to the forest owners," Robert Reid said.

TEACHERS TO VOTE ON POSSIBLE AGREEMENT

PPTA members throughout the country will meet to decide whether to ratify a settlement of the secondary teachers' collective agreement.

PPTA and the ministry of education have been back in negotiations since the beginning of this year and agreement has been reached on a proposed settlement to be put to all members for ratification.

Branch meetings will be held over the next two weeks to enable members to consider the proposal and vote on it.

PPTA president Robin Duff would not discuss details of the settlement until members had voted.

"With the situation the country is in at present, it would be good to achieve a settlement and return to some sense of normality" he said.

NOMINATIONS CALLED

In accordance with Rule 24 of the Rules & Standing Orders of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union nominations are hereby called for the full time position of General Secretary.

Nomination Forms are available 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 and contain the signed consent of the candidate, and be proposed and seconded by financial members (Rule 1) of the Union.

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 Monday 4th April 2011.

The term of office is 4 years (Rule 24.1) and the duties are as contained in Rule 29 of the Union's Rules and Standing Orders.

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

Howard Phillips

National Returning Officer

RMTU PORTS FORUM

The 2011 RMTU Ports Forum will be held in Wellington on 17-18 May, the usual Venue - St John's Church Willis Street and accommodation at Central City Apartment Hotel Victoria Street.

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

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

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

YOUNG WORKERS WILL BE HIT HARD BY NEW LABOUR LAWS

The youth union movement, Stand Up believes the 90 day law is not the answer to creating sustainable employment opportunities for young people.

"The Government has been selling the 90 day law to young people as a job creation initiative, yet, our youth unemployment is currently one of the highest in the OECD despite the 90 day fire at will law already being in place for small businesses. We want to see sustainable job opportunities for young people, what we're getting instead is reduced rights at work." says Sleep.

Sleep continues "Young people are the most vulnerable and will be the hardest hit by the 90 day legislation due to many

young people being under prepared when they head into the labour market."

Stand Up also believes many tertiary graduates will be left high and dry as wage and salary earners begin to think twice before shifting into a new job because of the law changes that come into effect today.

Stand Up spokesperson James Sleep says "The 90 day fire at will law will create a sticky labour market, where job security will be on the minds of wage and salary earners who might choose to remain in their current position rather than having to go on a 90 day trial period in a new job."

"We also think this will lead to young graduates finding it even more difficult to get work in the area they studied for as there won't be the jobs available to them." concludes Sleep.

FOR THE RECORD – ASSET SALES

Our beloved Prime Minister has stated on more than one occasion that the justification for Selling Publically Owned Assets (SOE's which include Transpower, Meridian, Mighty River, Air NZ, KiwiBank, NZ Post etc) is because NZ's national debt level is too high – some 85% of gross domestic product. He also has said that the only other developed countries with a foreign debt level the size of ours are the likes of Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain. The facts don't support his statements and therefore they are wrong and a "spinning" of the facts.

Firstly the NZ COMBINED private and public debt adds up to around 85% of GDP. Our Govt (Public) debt is a fraction of this amount at around 18.8%. This country's public (Govt) debt level is nowhere near that of the PIGS. It is reported that the projected 2011 GOVT (Public) debt levels for Portugal = 88.8%, Ireland = 107%, Greece = 150.2% and Spain = 69.7 and additionally we have Britain at 83.5%, Italy 120.2% and Germany at 75.9%. Clearly on these numbers Key is gilding the lily. 18.8% is way below what any of the other countries have and even the cot cases



aren't embarking on wholesale privatisations.

STOP PRIVATISATION – IT DOESN'T WORK!

HARSHEST WELFARE CHANGES ON THE TABLE

Social Development Minister Paula Bennett confirmed in Parliament today that she is seriously considering even the most extreme of the Welfare Working Group's recommendations, including associating benefit receipt with contraception, the Green Party said today.

"I asked Paula Bennett whether she would reject the Welfare Working Group's harshest recommendations in light of the Christchurch earthquake and she refused to do so," Green Party Co-leader Metiria Turei said.

"In doing so, she confirmed that she is considering the sinister recommendation that women on the Domestic Purposes Benefit be given long-acting contraception in conjunction with 'information about expectations' of benefit receipt.

"The clear implication is that benefits could be linked to contraception, a policy that borders on eugenics. The Minister refused to rule this out today.

"In another move that would seriously hurt sole parents and their children, she refused to rule out abatement rates and work-tests that would require sole parents to work 30 hours per week for less than they currently receive.

"Finally, she refused to rule out cutting benefits off completely when people fail to meet work-test requirements three times, even in Christchurch," Mrs Turei said.

Mrs Turei said the Welfare Working Group's recommendations looked incredibly harsh and inappropriate in light of the devastating earthquake in Christchurch, which had highlighted the compassionate and supportive power of communities.

"The Minister said herself that the earthquake in Christchurch highlights why

we need state support: for 'people to fall back on when they really need it.'

"Thousands really need it right now in Christchurch, and thousands more really need it around the country when unforeseen circumstances like a factory closure or the loss of a partner turn their lives upside down.

"We know that the current system works well at providing temporary support for people in such circumstances: 70 percent of people on the unemployment benefit move off it in less than a year.

"In light of this, and in light of the earthquake, the Minister should reject this report for its extremist, punishing recommendations. There is no place for them in a compassionate Aotearoa," Mrs Turei said.

LAW CHANGES KICK IN 1 APRIL 2011

DOL have released a new guide to the changes to the Employment Relations and Holidays Acts that are coming into effect from 1 April. This guide is now available on their website. It explains how the new changes work and how to apply them. More details are also available on the following topics:

- cashing up one week's annual leave,
- the extension of the 90 day employee trial period, and
- transferring public holidays.

Anzac Day - You may have noticed that this year Anzac Day (25 April) falls on Easter Monday. Anzac Day will be recognised on the Monday and will not be transferred to any other day. This also means all shops must close their doors until 1.00pm on 25 April, unless they meet certain exemptions. For more information visit the DOL website.

Minimum wage - From 1 April 2011 the adult minimum wage will increase to \$13.00 an hour, and the new entrants' minimum wage and the training minimum wage will increase to \$10.40 an hour. More information on the minimum wage can be obtained our website.

Union access to worksites legislative provisions also change.

RAIL LOBBY GROUP PLEA FOR HELP AND PARTICIPATION

"Kia ora to all members of the Rail and Maritime Transport Workers Union.

This is a call for you to join a broad network of people working to save those of our railways that are under threat of 'rationalisation', to offer your skills, knowledge or time, or just to be kept informed of what's happening, please send an e-mail to: thewayforward2011@gmail.com and to learn more, go to our web-site: <https://sites.google.com/site/thewayforward2011/>

Please forward this message on to others who may be concerned and if you know someone who may want to get involved but who doesn't use the internet, please give them our telephone number.

Our input into this will be crucial in deciding the best way forward for transport in New Zealand. Contact: Alan Preston (campaign co-ordinator) Mangawhai Village, Northland, New Zealand [tel:\(09\)4315389](tel:094315389) mob/txt: 02102377242 or thewayforward2011@gmail.com <https://sites.google.com/site/thewayforward2011/>

NO TRACK WARRANTS BY CELLPHONE

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

Where The #*@\$ Are These LE's Please!!!!!!

The following ex members left the Loco Engineers Trust Fund and they are entitled to a refund of contributions. Anyone knowing the current contact details for any of the persons listed below please contact them and urge them to contact Julia @ RMTU National Office on 04 499 2066 or julia@rmtunion.org.nz.

Francis Keith Amy – left 13/03/1982

Jack Barry Ellis – left 02/01/1982

Donald Stewart Fraser – left 27/03/82

Frederick B V Groves – left 05/07/85

Leslie Arthur Koschel – left 14/04/79

James Allister MacLean – left 06/04/84

Patrick John Page – left 03/03/87

Les John Rabone – left 16/12/84

Michael T M Ryan – left 15/06/85

Grant Gordon Wild – left 21/09/85

BAD FOR ALL, WORSE FOR MĀORI

The Council of Trade Unions Runanga says employment law changes coming into force today will impact particularly heavily on Maori workers.

The law changes include the extension of the 90 day "fire at will" trial period, restricting workers' access to their unions and weakening rules on employers' requirements to follow proper processes when dismissing workers.

CTU Vice President Maori Syd Keepa said the changes will particularly affect people at the margins of the workforce, such as in low paid, casual and low skilled jobs, where there are many Maori workers.

"What Maori workers want now is a decent plan to create jobs and lift incomes, not policies to make it easier for employers to sack them," Syd Keepa, CTU Vice President Maori said.

Syd Keepa said Maori unemployment is at 15.5 percent, and he doesn't accept arguments that the laws were about helping firms to create jobs.



"A job exists because there is work to be done, not because the person is easier to fire," he said.

"Workers are feeling the pinch right now with rising costs in petrol, food and other items. These changes are a kick in the teeth for all workers, and Maori in particular," he said.

FAIRNESS AT WORK – 1ST APRIL

This is a short summary of activity in addition to on the job meetings, petitions and pledges.

Helen Kelly made a media statement today. See

<http://union.org.nz/news/2011/fairness-work-goes-tomorrow>

The CTU is running ¼ page adverts in four main daily papers and extensive radio advertisements (Radio Network TRN which is ZB, ZM, Hauraki etc) on 1st April.

We have released another YouTube. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCScDLHAn00> and send on to as many as possible, put up on Facebook etc.

Some areas are leafleting the public (e.g. Palmerston North).

We have revised the website with new material. See www.fairness.org.nz for details.

There are leaflets on the website. See:

"Things Got Tougher" leaflet
"Things Got Tougher" A4 leaflet based on ads

The website also includes the following statement:

What We Want

Working people and their unions across New Zealand are seeking the following changes to ensure everyone enjoys fairness at work.

Rights at Work

We express our strong condemnation of the attacks on rights at work.

We call on employers to ensure that all workers have the right to appeal against unfair dismissal.

We seek guarantees that workers can maintain access to unions on terms that are not less favourable than have applied in recent years.

We demand that employers do not seek to undermine good faith in collective bargaining in ways that bypass union representation.

Wages

We call on the Government to lift the minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour.

We express our strong opposition to price increases including higher GST and demand that wage increases take account of the higher cost of living.

Job Security

We reject employment laws that undermine job security – such as the 90-day no rights provision.

We demand that the Government takes more action to reduce the high number of people are unemployed.

Public Services

We call on the Government to protect our public services, not sell assets that belong to the people, and support our public servants rather than attack them.

Political Parties

We call on political parties to promote policies that provide fairness at work and decent jobs for all including strong public services, all workers have the right to appeal against unfair dismissal, workers access to unions, a minimum wage of at least \$15 an hour and improved collective bargaining rights.

BITS AND BOBS

- Wayne Butson and new SI Organiser John Kerr toured the South Island branches this week. Great to catch up with members.
- The KR Networks roadshow finished this week and by and large got a very positive feedback from members who

were glad to see the 3 years of work come to an end.

- Our JRU brothers and sisters have expressed gratitude for our NZ\$10k donation toward the rebuilding challenge they will have for their members in the north east of Japan.

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

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

