

THE ACTIVIST



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INAUGURAL WOMEN'S FORUM

An RMTU Woman's Forum is being held in Wellington 21 and 22 April 2015.

"This is a major event for the Union as for the first time a meeting of RMTU women from one end of NZ to the other will be in Wellington for two days to talk about all issues impacting upon women members of the Union".

Wayne Butson said "There is an exciting lineup of inspiring women speakers from overseas and NZ Ports, Police and Women's Refuge to name a few but the most sought after voices at the Forum will be those of our women members".

A full report will be published in Issue 2 of the Transport Worker.

JOIN THE PROTEST

Our friends in the Greens Party have organised a facebook page and protest event to decry the possible withdrawal of the class 30 electric locomotives and the mothballing or removal of the electric traction system between Palmerston North and Te Rapa.

The details are;

Join Julie Anne Genter MP to tell KiwiRail, 'Don't ditch our electric trains!'

When: Wednesday 22nd April, 8am-9am
Where: KiwiRail, 8-14 Stanley St, Auckland. [Click for map](#)

We urge you and your mates, family etc to sign up to the facebook page which can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1582054735381027/>

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS – GENERAL SECRETARY

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 1700hrs. on Monday 17th April 2015. 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

BAY OF PLENTY PORT BRANCH TRAINING 23-24 APRIL

We're running a two day training session next week for our delegates in the Tauranga port branch next week. General Secretary Wayne Butson, Auckland Organiser Stu



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

Johnstone and South Island Organiser John Kerr will join Bay of Plenty Organiser Phil Spanswick in facilitating this training.

Given the focus on negotiations at Tauranga this year this training is an invaluable opportunity for our key delegates to understand the wider issues surrounding bargaining in the industry and their port.

GOVT BLIND TO SOARING PUBLIC TRANSPORT USE IN AUCKLAND

The Government should take note of huge increases in Auckland's public transport patronage figures released today by Auckland Transport and bring forward funding for the City Rail Link, the Green Party said.

"The Government should stop delaying and fund the City Rail Link immediately," Green Party transport spokesperson Julie Anne Genter said.

"The Green Party will be looking for significant increases in public transport infrastructure investment in Budget 2015. Anything less is short-changing hundreds of thousands of commuters.

"At the current rate, Auckland will reach the patronage target needed for Government City Rail Link funding three years ahead of schedule in 2017.

"The Government is forcing Aucklanders to wait for vital infrastructure investment even though public transport patronage figures show that there's a clear need for immediate investment.

"There were a million more public transport boardings in March 2015 than in March 2014 in Auckland. This kind of growth means investment in public transport infrastructure must begin straight away.

"The National Government is too busy with one lane bridges and expensive motorway projects to realise that the best way to get cities moving efficiently is investing in public transport.

"Rail patronage in Auckland set a new record in March 2015 – 1.56 million trips – and so did bus patronage and trips on the Northern Busway. The Government needs to show that it's taking notice," said Ms Genter.

CHANGES TO KIWISAVER

There are changes underway to KiwiSaver, to make it easier for people to use their KiwiSaver to assist with purchasing their first home. Changes include being able to withdraw the Government tax credit, making available more funds. Early withdrawals will be allowed to cover such things as paying a deposit. This is all positive, but we believe it does not go far enough. We believe that KiwiSaver providers should be in the mortgage market, providing second mortgage finance to first home buyers.

It would work something like this: the borrower will use their 5% deposit from KiwiSaver, a bank loan to borrow 80% and will use their KiwiSaver provider for the remaining 15% by way of a second mortgage.

This is positive for the KiwiSaver provider as second mortgages will provide a higher return than Government or local council bonds and it will provide some asset diversification.



NATIONAL MUST TAKE ACTION ON SPECULATORS

The Government must take action on property speculators who are damaging the housing market and shutting families and young people out of the home ownership dream, Labour Leader Andrew Little says.

"There are a number of options the Government could take to prevent property speculators building up large housing portfolios and pushing up house prices.

"At the moment first home buyers or those who want a rental property for retirement are being shut out of the market by lending restrictions that should be targeted at property speculators who sometimes own 10 to 20 houses and sit on them.

"But the first thing the Government has to do is admit there is a housing crisis. As long

as John Key and Nick Smith keep their head in the sand, property speculators will run rampant, average house prices in Auckland will top \$1 million and the home ownership dream will turn into even more of a nightmare.

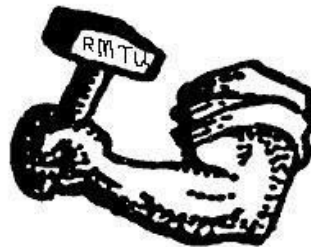
"The solutions need to focus on Auckland. There is no point in a family trying to buy a house in Wanganui, where house prices are dropping, being subject to lending restrictions designed to lower house price inflation.

"One solution could be focussing LVRs on Auckland speculators, rather than on the regions, families or first home buyers.

"Another would be those buying multiple properties needing a higher level of equity for subsequent purchases.

"The most important action is to simply build more houses to increase supply. The Reserve Bank deputy governor was right yesterday to say the Government is taking far too long to get houses built so demand needs to be tackled too.

"Nick Smith said he has 'no magic ideas' this morning. That's because National won't even admit there's a crisis," Andrew Little says.



HEALTH AND SAFETY, AND ROSTERS, UNDER ATTACK

Currently within KiwiRail Freight a merciless struggle is being waged between the company and organized labour. A roster optimization project is being undertaken by KiwiRail which is seeing longstanding working arrangements and "jobs" or shifts being reviewed and systematically abolished. "This is impacting significantly on the sociability of the rosters, work life balance of workers and their families and goes beyond what is fair and reasonable, by a ruthless screwing of the scrum by Freight" says Wayne Butson.

The Freight Rail Operating Manual prescribes the rostering rules for Locomotive Engineers and for yard staff within Freight. These rules have been developed over time by negotiation and joint initiatives looking at the effects of shiftwork and sleep patterns. Dr Phillipa

Gander a renowned international expert on the topic did a major amount of this study work during the 1980's. This work saw a manual written and protections put in place, which made some of the insanely bad rostering practices in place at the time unlawful. The Manual (and other contributing factors) was revisited again as circumstances arose, for example following the fatal Waipahi head on train collision in 1999.

The latest round of roster optimisation sees rosters being constructed on the basis of taking work within the roster up to the absolute maximum and minimum tolerances and the total removal of any and all recognition of the need for rosters to have a mix of work types and hours of work. In our view KiwiRail's approach smacks of looking for the cheapest option. In doing so, the health, and core employment philosophy in our MECA, is being disregarded. A recent roster review in Wellington saw a very good and productive daytime shift removed from the master roster to give but one example. How does this fit with providing a healthy and safe workplace? How does this fit with the agreed and core philosophies in our MECA, which includes:

- Providing a healthy and safe workplace; and
- Recognising employees' contributions and family responsibilities.

In the recent MECA the parties agreed to form working groups to review both the freight and passenger Rail Operating Manuals. What should have been a co-operative working party will now be a battle ground of positional bargaining by either side, we are picking. In short the job just got much harder.

The actions of KiwiRail represents a company turning over every stone to find savings – at any cost! That includes at the cost of your health and safety. In our view the Government has given very clear instruction to the KiwiRail Board to cut costs and is starving the company of funds (yes, money has gone into rail but if you take out the Auckland and Wellington metro systems, there is not much left) and as labour is the largest fixed cost of the business you can

rest assured that YOU will be in the cross hairs at some stage.

The question is do we roll with the punches or do we fight hard to preserve your health and safety? Rail history shows that the latter is the way to go. The RMTU believes that it is time for members to think about whether they just curl up into a ball whilst their being kicked or whether you take a serious look at your health and safety, and what these attacks on your rosters mean for your health and safety.

There are many clauses and rights that you have via the Collective agreement and the ROM that you can choose to implement and enforce and which help you to be able to perform your role and duties in a healthy and safe way. To name a few provisions in existence, there is;

- Maximum Footplate time and not shift length
- Maximum shift length and being back booked off in the depot by your rostered book off time
- Short notice shift change is by agreement
- Contact and utilisation times adherence for standby shifts
- The choice of working extra work periods
- The choice as to when you elect to take alternative days (lieu days)
- Meal break at the mid point of the shift and 2 ten minute breaks at the quarter and three quarter points of the shift
- Electing to spend a Stat Day with your family rather than working as it is your choice

Fatigue kills. Rosters without balance, kill. A workplace that fails to recognise health and safety, and which fails to recognise employees' contributions and family responsibilities, is not the workplace KiwiRail has committed to provide under the MECA.

You have a responsibility to yourself, and your families, to ensure that the protections in the MECA, which form part of you being able to work in a healthy and safe way, are complied with. The RMTU will not stand by

and see your health and safety eroded by these attacks on rosters. One of the solutions is to make sure that you utilise the other rights you have, including those above, as part of ensuring you are doing all you can to avoid fatigue, and to work safely and return home to your families after work each and every time.

The health and safety of our members is the paramount concern of the RMTU. It is time when we must all pull together.

PROPERTY PRICES

The past year, to March 2015, has been good for the residential property market investor. According to the Real Estate Institute, Auckland's median price has jumped by 13% to \$720,000. Nationwide, the median price is \$475,000.

This is largely being driven by the Auckland effect. If Auckland is excluded from this figure, the median house price, across the country, is \$350,000. The growth in the past twelve months has been uneven - the main areas being, Auckland, Christchurch and Tauranga. Low growth areas in house value growth include Invercargill, Dunedin and Hastings.

CHINESE LOCO'S FAIL AGAIN

We have heard from members that 3 of the DL's have had motor failures. KiwiRail altered the maintenance schedule so that there is more time between scheduled servicing. 9331 is at Hutt with a power assembly failure, 9187 is at Westfield following a piston breaking and sending shrapnel around the engine bay damaging all sorts of components and 9377 is also laid up. Given the troubled history of these locomotives you really have to question the sanity of senior management and the Board for them to be considering replacing the electric loco's with more Chinese loco's. We still have the Gen 2's waiting to go through Hutt to remove the asbestos and the class remain unable to do maximum line speed and other well documented shortcomings in the vehicle.

PORTS FORUM

The Union's Ports Forum is being held in Wellington 9 & 10 June 2015. Port Branch



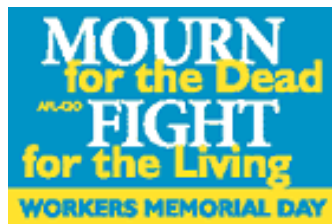
Secretaries are asked to formalise their representation and to advise numbers of attendee's to National Office via julia@rmtunion.org.nz as soon as possible to assist with Venue and Accommodation planning.

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.

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY – 28 APRIL

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



In 2015 the Universal 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.

The RMTU has commissioned and distributed to all branches its own WMD poster with a hazardous substance theme "Ban Asbestos". Please post these posters on all noticeboards and include the details of your local event in the space provided. In KiwiRail asbestos is a particular focus as many worksites have been identified as having asbestos containing material which is delaminating and releasing the fibres to atmosphere. Many buildings are clad in Galvbestos and the material is in an appalling state.

The International Transport Workers Federation is also asking transport Unions to take action on fumigation and toxic gases in shipping containers as part of the Hazardous Substance theme. Under a campaign banner of Container safety they have also generated materials publicising

the campaign and these have been distributed to all Port Branches.

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 on the 28th 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.

We have been advised that services are to be held;

Napier - The Memorial Tree behind the Seafarers Mission at the port company entrance @1000hrs

Hutt Workshops - 28 April @ 1145hrs

Chch Memorial Site - Science Alive Reserve @1145hrs

Dunedin – The Memorial Garden @ 1145hrs

MCDONALDS PICKET IN CHRISTCHURCH BENEFITS FROM TECHNOLOGY

Within 8 hours of it being announced, the UNITE Union's picket at McDonalds in Linwood had the support of more than a dozen Lyttelton Port Branch RMTU members who committed to attending in order to back our brothers and sisters fighting against zero hours contracts.

How did we do it? Ask Lyttelton Port Branch Secretary Heiner Benecke: '180 out of 210 Branch members are accessible via text messaging using a \$2 App; we can also get 120 members via e-mail. Using this technology we can mobilise our members at short notice – this is the same software that put thousands of people on the streets in the great protests against austerity across Europe and we're using it here'.

We'll be explaining how this works more fully at our forthcoming ports forum as this is

technology is something we need to use in other Branches.

RESERVE BANK SCATHING OF GOVERNMENT

The Reserve Bank's most scathing critique to date of National's inability to handle the housing crisis shows the Bank is sick of having to pick up the pieces, Labour Leader Andrew Little says.

"John Key continues to deny there is a housing crisis – to the shock of anyone trying to buy their first home. That's why he refuses to do anything.

"Now the Reserve Bank deputy governor Grant Spencer has weighed in, saying 'housing market imbalances have become more accentuated, especially in Auckland'. That's Reserve Bank language for, 'We have a Housing Crisis'.

"He has been scathing of National's response, saying 'the shortage of housing is getting worse'. He says the Special Housing Areas have led to few completed homes and the shortage increased over the past year to between 15,000 and 20,000 houses. That gap will take years to plug.

"The Reserve Bank is still gamely trying to stem the flow of problems in the housing market by looking at options to make it riskier for banks to lend to investors than the average family looking to buy a home.

"But as we saw with loan to value mortgage restrictions, Reserve Bank tools can be too blunt and hurt first home buyers and the regions. The Bank is rightly wary of weighing in.

"It's the Government's job to fix the housing crisis. That's what the Reserve Bank is saying today. John Key hasn't listened to anyone else. Hopefully he will listen to Mr Spencer," Andrew Little says.

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!**

DRAFTS RELEASED FOR H&S REGS

MBIE has released the first four exposure drafts of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations. They cover:

- General risk and workplace management
- Major hazard facilities
- Asbestos
- The transfer of recently made regulations to the new law.

The worker participation exposure regulations will not be released until later in the year. We will let you know when they are released.

You can find the exposure drafts at this link: <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/what-we-do/workplace-health-and-safety-reform/development-of-regulations-to-support-the-new-health-and-safety-at-work-act/exposure-drafts-of-phase-one-regulations>

The CTU will be preparing submissions on the general risk and workplace management regulations, as well as the major hazard facilities regulations and asbestos regulations. Submissions close on 15 May



2015. We will circulate a submission on those three exposure drafts to affiliates as soon as possible.

In addition, the CTU also has representatives on joint MBIE/WorkSafe Guidance Groups. These representatives will attend full-day workshops, run by MBIE and WorkSafe, and will consider the exposure drafts and provide feedback.

The CTU also proposes to hold an information and feedback session on those areas of regulation for affiliates who are interested in attending. They are likely to be in the week starting 28 April and will be between 1 and 2 hours each. We will send meeting invites and details for the CTU information and feedback sessions soon.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about these exposure drafts or would like to discuss them, please feel free to call the CTU's Krissy Thompson on 027 318 1346.

SOUTHDOWN ROSTERS

Southdown CT site has been working through changes to rosters for both the Gatehouse and the Yard operations. This has been a lengthy process due to inaccurate information being provided by KiwiRail and a general reluctance to involve the delegates in the construction of the rosters. Meetings held in the last week finally appear to have the members satisfied that what is being proposed is in fact workable and finds a good balance for all concerned.

ASBESTOS PETITION PRESENTED

On April 1 the NZCTU and affiliates presented a petition on the steps of Parliament with more than 1000 signatures which called on the Government to ban the importation of asbestos and develop a comprehensive plan for the removal of all existing asbestos in New Zealand. The petition was accepted by Labour leader Andrew Little and will go to a select committee which will study it and decide what should be done. "Asbestos is the biggest workplace killer in New Zealand.

It kills at least 170 workers annually, more than twice as many workers as accidental

deaths at work. The number of people dying from asbestos related diseases (lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis) is increasing and the Government projections are that it will peak at 300 deaths annually, higher than the road toll," said CTU Secretary, Sam Huggard. He said New Zealand was "out of step" with other developed countries which have banned all products that contain asbestos.

TRANSDEV RADIO'S

Digital Radios have been installed in EMU cabs despite there being no agreement from the RMTU regarding the use of these radios. The use of these radios has been discussed at recent Cab committee meetings but remaining unresolved, the latest minutes showing Transdev was to amend the proposal and come back to the RMTU.

There is already an agreed existing procedure for contacting CAF fitters (via your company supplied mobile phone) so we do not see the need to change. In the meantime we have learnt that AT have instructed CAF to fit the radio's into the EMUs.

Members are advised that despite the radio being there with stickers giving usage instructions these should not be used until agreement has been reached between the Union and the company.

UNION MERGER

The Public Service Association (PSA) and the Southern Local Government Officers Union (SLGOU) announced their formal merger on April 1. PSA is already New Zealand's largest union and the merger brings the union's membership to nearly 62,000. PSA National Secretary Richard Wagstaff called the merger "good news" for members and the wider local government sector.

"Through the merger, we have added nearly 2000 members from Canterbury and Otago who work for local government. This brings our total number of local government sector members to about 8000, or 13 per cent of our total membership," he said. Wagner said the merger gives the union a "stronger voice for quality services and jobs in local government" at a time when important



issues affect the sector. Past SLGOU president Paul Cottam expressed pride over the union's past accomplishments and looked "forward to the next challenge of building a better future for all of our members."

MORE ON TRANSDEV RADIO'S

Transdev is discussing hand held radios for our Ticket Inspector members, these radios have the ability to be tracked by GPS. While this sounds helpful in an emergency situation there is no policy or procedure in place that covers the possibility of our member's movements being tracked by using the GPS tracking function.



Transdev management has even suggested that our members undertake a trial before any agreement on their use is worked out; this was rejected as an attempt to introduce the radios by stealth.

There is another meeting this week with Transdev answering the list of questions raised as there is a lot more to consider than just the GPS tracking function.

KIWIRAIL/RMTU HSAT REJUVENATION WORKSHOP

On the 13/14 April representatives from 22 Health and Safety Action Teams (HSATs) met in Auckland to work out how to improve the function of the HSATs and take a leadership role in health and safety.

Rugby legend Tana Umaga joined the group to discuss his experiences of leadership. The group talked about the upcoming changes to the Health and safety landscape. We also heard from senior KRG leadership regarding their commitment to investing in the teams.

SECRET DEALS

New Zealand recently became part of the World Trade Organization's Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) which set off a new wave of criticism over international trade deals signed in secret. Parliament refused to hear submissions on the deal or engage in any form of public comment. The government rejected a

request by the NZ Council of Trade Unions for public submissions on the GPA which has the potential to significantly impact the health sector.

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation warned the GPA will require most (but not all) district health boards (DHBs) to put overseas providers on a level footing with local providers for major purchases. "That means DHBs may no longer be able to opt for New Zealand services or contractors as their first choice, and they may not be able to exclude suppliers who also deal in products such as tobacco," said the union. Ian Powell, Executive Director of the Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS), called the deal "a fundamentally flawed process if people are denied an opportunity to assess the possible impact of trade deals like these. That's not how democracy is supposed to work."

RMTU SEEKING NEW EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS

In preparation for the new Health and Safety Reforms, the RMTU has written to rail and port employers seeking new Employee Participation Agreements (EPAs). The purpose of the EPA's will be to lock in Health and Safety Rep rights to be elected by the workers, have access to training and participate on the Health and safety committees. To date we have had one negative response from Centreport.

MAINTENANCE TRANSFER TO CAF

Fleet transition (this is the flash name for the winding down of the DMU, Sa and Sd fleets and the move to full use of the Electric Multiple Units) meetings continue to be held for our affected members at Westfield and the Otahuhu Carriage Depot. So far the talk has focused around dates for the diesel units dropping out of service. KiwiRail have been given a clear message that it is time for them to talk more about the people involved and what the future of Westfield will look like, how many will be required to remain in servicing and what additional work will be brought into the loco depot.

The Union has been highlighting the very clear reluctance of CAF to employ KiwiRail staff. Most of our members who apply don't get a response to their application and meanwhile there is widespread advertising internationally for qualified rail staff to come to NZ and work on the new EMU trains by CAF. They have consistently been anti-union in their dealings with the RMTU.

We believe this is wrong and that NZ Inc is being taken for a ride. The NZ taxpayer and Auckland ratepayer have paid to have these trains manufactured together with the infrastructure and now NZers will potentially be put out of work at KiwiRail, receive compensation from the Taxpayer through KiwiRail and meanwhile CAF will be bringing in new immigrant labour to do the maintenance on the trains. This is classic John Key lead Government tactics, shit on Kiwi's and look after people in other countries! It is wrong!



A NEW EMPLOYER TO DEAL WITH

The RMTU would like to welcome our new members working for Electrix. These members do the traction work across the Auckland network. So far we have 9 new members and the hope is to increase this as more become aware of the benefits of union membership.

INFRASTRUCTURE ENGINEERING AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PHASE THREE

Members will recall we expected a proposal from KiwiRail on 14 April on the above. KiwiRail management tell us they have failed to meet this deadline and they expect to have something for us for the week of 27 April.

An RMTU group comprising KNIC Reps John Bannerman, Phil Kearns and Organiser John Kerr met with management before Easter to discuss a job description for a new CEA role of Production Supervisor/Team Leader. This has gone to an independent consultancy to be evaluated in order to give

us an idea of what rate this type of position would attract in the job market.

We will report further when we know more.

MILK PRICE HALVES: A \$7B ECONOMIC BLACK HOLE

Global milk prices have halved since the peak last year, creating an economic black hole of almost \$7 billion that will suck in regions reliant on dairy, crucial industries and the Government's books, says Labour's Finance Spokesperson Grant Robertson.

"The economic black hole from the fall in milk prices is getting bigger and bigger. Since the February 2014 peak, prices have fallen 51 per cent. That will see a large fall in the Fonterra milk payout to farmers.

"AgriHQ has just revised its payout forecast down from \$4.70 to \$4.51. That makes the black hole almost \$7 billion since last season.

"If the price keeps falling or even stays where it is, Fonterra's payout will be significantly lower than forecast and the economic black hole even bigger.

"The Government's overreliance on the dairy industry to grow the economy has backfired. National is looking increasingly out of touch and out of ideas on the economy, especially after the Reserve Bank's astonishing intervention yesterday in calling for more action on the housing market.

"The lion's share of the milk price pain will be felt in regions that National is neglecting. Many small communities are now almost solely reliant on dairy farming.

"The fall in dairy prices shows National's failure to diversify is hurting the economy, both locally and nationally.

"The Government has failed farmers and the wider economy by not encouraging other sectors to grow and contribute to economic growth. Despite promising to rebalance the economy they haven't even got out of the starting blocks.

"New Zealand needs a modern, diverse economy that creates well-paying jobs across all industries. These are the perils of a

one-dimensional economy," Grant Robertson says.

RETAIN THE ELECTRIFICATION – A MEMBERS LETTER

An RMTU member sent the following letter to the KiwiRail Board and to Ministers. We thought it was worthy of reproduction as it is clearly a statement from the heart.

Dear KiwiRail Board and Government Ministers

Death by a thousand cuts! So much for John Key's undertaking to the Nation - not to sell off KiwiRail. No, instead Key and his cronies utilise the age old trick of political slight of hand to undermine our nation's asset. Our rail infrastructure has been picked to death with the ongoing closure of lines and the continued outsourcing to private contractors, vultures and like!

Be warned Mr Teflon, New Zealanders are on to your cocky arrogance and Nationals self-imploding dog eat dog policies. The National party is well known for its historical personal and financial interests in the trucking industry. We the people of this nation are not as stupid as "Key" would like to think. How many cheap asbestos filled Chinese trucks are on our roads today? No the trucking industry is a model of society that freeload daily on our highways without paying proper road user charges for use of our public roads, let alone the endless infrastructure damage, deaths and injuries that occur on an almost daily basis. Perhaps they simply aren't popping enough pills or maybe they need to be subsidised as well. Ahhh, now there's a new platform for National to stand on at the next election.

I strongly protest against the use of my taxpayer money being utilised for any backward step to fund the re-introduction of filthy, costly and potentially harmful diesel locomotives instead of investing in a smart rail future.

To hell with your roads of significance, they are nothing more than truck freeways of ill-gained profit at a huge cost to our rail and

port infrastructures. Think outside the square for once and put Keep KiwiRail back onto a level playing field for a cleaner future and a better way forward.

The Key to ending this nightmare will be to bring an end to the "Key regime!" It's not rocket science!

You may wish to compose a letter of your own. If you please make sure you copy us in.

GOVERNMENT TWO-FACED ON ZERO-HOUR CONTRACTS

The Government should look to ban zero-hour contracts in its own back yard before getting too high and mighty about other employers using them, Labour's Health spokesperson Annette King says.

"Information collated by Labour shows at least three district health boards – Hutt Valley, Nelson-Marlborough and Southern – had some 282 staff working or not, as the case may be, on unfair-zero hour contracts last year.

"Let's hear the Workplace Relations Minister Michael Woodhouse justify that. He's spent the last few weeks reassuring Kiwis he is looking to outlaw the practice he describes as 'unnecessary in a modern and flexible labour market'.

"The Government talked up these nasty arrangements when it suited. Now it's feeling the heat it's scrambling around in an attempt to look sympathetic to the public mood.

"Employers don't want zero-hour contracts – good ones have demonstrated that by dumping them – and nor do their staff.

"Zero-hour contracts remove the opportunity for permanent employment. Michael Woodhouse should stop talking out of both sides of his mouth. He should lead by example and make sure the DHBs have stopped this practice," Annette King said.

Be Safe – Just Say NO!

