

THE ACTIVIST



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NEW RMTU PRESIDENT

Union members in the rail and maritime transport industries have a new leader, following the election of Tauranga port worker Aubrey Wilkinson to the post of National President of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU).

Aubrey, who was unopposed in his nomination, is the current RMTU Vice President and will take up his post next month, taking over from long serving President Jim Kelly, of Dunedin, who did not seek re-election.

Aubrey, of Te Arawa and Ngati Whakaue descent, is a container crane driver at the Port of Tauranga, and said he was looking forward to the role.

"I'm keen to get out and listen to what our members' priorities are, and bring our diverse membership along the rail industry supply chain even closer together," he said.

Aubrey said he also wanted to get the views of union members on how to take forward the NZ Work for NZ Workers campaign, which is calling on the government and KiwiRail to back the local rail manufacturing workforce.

RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson congratulated Aubrey on his election, and said he was looking forward to working with him to continue to grow the union.

Wayne Butson also paid tribute to outgoing president Jim Kelly, who works at Hillside workshops in Dunedin.

"Jim has been a very strong, popular and successful National President since 1995 and has been a steady hand on the tiller over the years. We will all look forward to recognising his considerable achievements

as RMTU President, at our National Conference later this year," Wayne Butson said.

RUGBY WORLD CUP

"To pay or not to pay" or "will they pay or will they not" is the question on all lips. The RMTU members in Auckland, Wellington and possibly other centres will be required to be on deck during events to ensure that rail transport operates seamlessly on the day in that location. The Union has been endeavouring to meet with KiwiRail and Veolia to negotiate a remuneration, on call, standby and leave program with the companies. To date we have been rebuffed and to make matters worse the companies are beginning to advise staff that all leave during the World Cup will be declined. Our legal analysis suggests that such an approach by the employer would be a breach of the MECA.

Watch this space.

KIWI RAIL MID TERM WAGE INCREASE

Following the release of the recent Consumer Price Index (CPI) numbers the Union and KiwiRail have agreed that the mid term wages and allowances increase payable under the MECA shall be 2.6%. The increase will be paid to members in the first pay following 1 July 2011.

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.

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

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.

Confirmed speakers include;

- Garth Cowie _ CEO Port Napier
- Shane Jones – Labour
- Darien Fenton – Labour
- Thomas Davis _ GM Interislander
- Peter Conway – NZCTU
- Mark Davis - ITF
- Gareth Hughes – Greens
- Joe Fleetwood - MUNZ
- Hazel Armstrong – Lawyer and ACC advocate
- Geoff Davenport – Employment Law

IS GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO KIWISAVER OR NOT?

The CTU believes the Government has to clarify its commitment to KiwiSaver. **Previously this Government cut the level of matching employer contributions and government subsidy from 4 percent back to 2 percent** and now there is an implied threat that the Budget will cut the scheme even further.

CTU Economist Bill Rosenberg said that the member tax credit is a vital part of the scheme which has encouraged people to put their savings into Kiwisaver.

The CTU policy on workplace superannuation is to phase in a compulsory 6 percent employer contribution over four years, with a compulsory 2 percent employee contribution and 2 percent government contribution at that point. There should also be government contributions for people who are out of the workforce for extended periods, such as parents looking

after children, who are currently disadvantaged in their retirement saving.

The Government last year gave \$14.3 billion worth of tax cuts over four years mainly to those on high incomes and now it appears poised to cut the level of support to help New Zealanders save. "These are wrong priorities which have created a structural problem for balancing the government's books, while sending a poor message about people's savings habits."

SHAME ON KIWIRAIL

The RMTU's stated preference is for rail recruitment to be from local NZ citizens as this will reduce our shamefully high National unemployment rate. Key and highly desired roles like Locomotive Engineer should be taken from within the ranks of current rail workers as this reinforces a career path for existing rail workers in operational roles. We received the following letter from a member and we reproduce it here for your consideration.



"Re - The memo of Bernie Henare, RMTU Auckland Rail Branch Chair dated 9 February 2011. (See RMTU web site under Press releases).

I read with interest Bernie's memo. In the middle of last year (2010), I was at a staff retirement function and had the opportunity to speak to Aaron Templeton (Manager – KiwiRail Freight Operations). I jumped at the chance to say to Aaron, that I felt that Kiwi Rail has got it wrong. They need to stop employing people off the streets for their Locomotive jobs and look at training up own staff.

My reasoning for this is, you can turn the railway into a real career path for staff, e.g. starting off as a Rail Operator, then Remote Control Operator (R.C.O) then a Team Leader (T.L) or Locomotive Engineer (LE) if they so desire. By doing this, by the time the staff member has got to the position of LE/TL, they have a great rail knowledge of the workings of the railway and also by then, have often have a family and are

settled in an area. This may stop the flow of our staff across the ditch to Australia. What's next for a young LE trained in New Zealand? Australia?

Since that talk with Aaron, I have taken the opportunity to apply for LE training and was turned down, which I found rather surprising considering I'm an RCO, and also hold CTC certification and operate a shunt class locomotive on the mainline 14km's, with rather large and heavy tonnage, but that's another matter.

Shame on you, Kiwi Rail, for recruiting overseas, when you have plenty of willing, able and loyal workers locally. Didn't you learn any lessons, when you went down this path with the training of loco drivers from South Africa?"

Do you agree or disagree with the sentiments expressed above – let us know! Send an email to admin@rmtunion.org.nz and say what you believe about LE recruitment.

KIWI RAIL DRUG & ALCOHOL JOINT STATEMENT

"KiwiRail and RMTU want their employees/members to be safe at work. Together KiwiRail and the RMTU will discuss the introduction of a random testing programme for drugs and alcohol. A small working party will be established to draft the detailed policy including the methodology, implementation and process. The final outcome will be put to KiwiRail and the RMTU for ratification. The implementation of this policy will be preceded by an education process and proposed implementation plan."



TOLL NETWORKS – TTL CA – REMIT CLAIMS CALL

The current Collective Agreement between Toll Networks (Toll Tranz Link) and the RMTU expires on 30 June 2011.

The union has not as yet issued an "initiation of bargaining notice" to Toll, but

we need to gather member's claims for negotiation.

We expect to start negotiations before 30 June so there is a bit of work to be done before then.

In the meantime we ask all TTL members to consider what they are seeking for claims in this wage round? These should be run through your local RMTU branch for submission to the Union's National Office. The branch secretary will then get them to us.

The negotiations will be led by our Auckland based Organiser Scott Wilson. A panel of delegates is being developed to assist him.

GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP LACKING ON KIWI RAIL PROCUREMENT

Rail manufacturing workers say KiwiRail procurement decisions are too important to the local economy for the Transport Minister and Prime Minister to wash their hands of them.

An announcement from KiwiRail on the successful bidder for the \$500 million purchase of 38 three-car electric multiple units and 13 locomotives for the Auckland rail network is very close, it was noted in Parliament's Question Time yesterday.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson said that several KiwiRail purchasing decisions had gone against the local workforce, and it was time for government to require stronger local content provisions from KiwiRail's procurement programme.

"Rail workers were gutted when KiwiRail announced last May that New Zealand workshops would not be building the Electric Multiple Units for Auckland."

"This was despite a comprehensive BERL report for Chambers of Commerce, unions and local government, proving the case for a local build," he said.

"This followed 20 Diesel Locomotives for the North Island being built in China, and making matters worse, the job for 300 new

container flat top wagons last December also went to an overseas firm."

"When Steven Joyce rejected the BERL report on the Close Up programme last year, he held out hope that the 300 wagons would be built locally."

The Minister said: 'There will be lots of work for these guys, there's no doubt about that, because they do a lot of things well and there's a big rolling stock replenishment and replacement exercise that's coming down the pipeline (Steven Joyce, Close Up, May 3 2010)'

"Despite this, the job went overseas, just like the Electric Multiple Units. Steven Joyce's reassurances became worthless to the Dunedin and Lower Hutt workforce," Wayne Butson said.

"It's not good enough for Steven Joyce and John Key to wash their hands of these decisions. They do have options open to them. As KiwiRail's shareholders, they need to put in place stronger local procurement requirements. Without them we will see more decisions that go against local workers, local industry development, and the export potential that that involves."

Wayne Butson said in relation to Auckland's Electric Multiple Units, the RMTU would be watching very closely to see whether KiwiRail honoured the local involvement pledge it made during the tender process.

KiwiRail's May 2010 tender document encouraged firms to ally themselves with New Zealand subcontractors or suppliers and "include as much New Zealand content and resources in the design, construction, delivery, testing, maintenance and support of the EMUs as is appropriate."

"We have always wanted these trains to be built in Dunedin and Lower Hutt but local involvement provisions from the lead supplier was the next best option. It is essential that this is rigorously pursued by KiwiRail," he said.

The Close Up interview is here: <http://tvnz.co.nz/close-up/get-kiwis-do-locomotion-3509198/video>. (The comments noted above are at 9 minutes 59 seconds.)

Background notes re Electric Multiple Units:

KiwiRail has \$500 million for new electric multiple units and locomotives for Auckland. Economics consultancy BERL estimated in May last year that local construction of these would add between 770 to 1270 additional jobs and \$232 to \$250 million to GDP. The BERL report is accessible [here:](http://www.berl.co.nz/1166a1.page)

WAIRIO BRANCH LINE

Tenders for the relaying of this line have closed. Work will commence soon. This project and others were at the core of a Contracting Out dispute that the RMTU took against KiwiRail. The outcome of the dispute is that there is now in place a higher level of transparency around contract calling and letting.

The general view of the RMTU is that the domestic workforce cannot do all of the upgrade programme as we do not have the manpower nor all of the specialist skills and equipment to do the job. We are however adamant that once the projects are completed the contractors leave and there must have been an upskilling so that the KR staff can undertake ongoing maintenance. We require membership engagement to achieve the latter.

PATRICK TERMINALS FACE CHAOS AS SYSTEM CRASHES AND MUA PREPARES TO STRIKE

The Maritime Union of Australia has won approval for a 24-hour strike at the four Patrick container terminals around the country beginning this Saturday and, to add to Patrick's misery, its Sydney terminal has had to shut down due to a total system failure. The company requested that industry do not send trucks to the terminal to wait outside as this will only add to existing significant traffic congestion outside the terminal.

The MUA has been granted permission for a 24-hour strike last weekend at Patrick's four container terminals. Patrick received notification of a 24-hour strike over pay negotiations beginning on Saturday, 30



April. The stoppage by Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) workers will affect terminals in Brisbane, Port Botany in Sydney and East Swanson in Melbourne on Saturday 30 April, while workers at the Fremantle terminal in Western Australia will strike on Monday, 3 May.

MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin told The Australian newspaper the workers had decided to proceed with the protected strike after the company called off negotiations that had been scheduled for three days this week.

Mr Crumlin said the company had been dragging out the negotiations for a new enterprise agreement for almost nine months, and his members had previously deferred earlier proposed strikes.

Mr Garaty said Patrick had offered pay increases between 4 and 4.5 percent in exchange for specified productivity improvements.

"Unfortunately the union has refused to modify its claim, which would add more than 30 per cent - almost \$120 million - to our cost base during the next three years," he said.

Mr Garaty said the union had demanded a range of unreasonable benefits:

- 6 per cent wage increase each year of the three year agreement.
- Increase in superannuation from 9 per cent superannuation to 13 per cent.
- 1 per cent income protection.
- Six weeks annual leave.
- Long-service leave increased to 13 weeks after 10 years.
- Elimination of G2 classification with all G2s increased in pay to G3 and other reclassifications.
- Extra worker for each shift as safety facilitator.
- Eight-man minimum per gang.
- Payout of sick leave at salary rate in circumstances of redundancy rather than graded.



KIWI RAIL NETWORKS – CONTRACTING OUT

KiwiRail Networks members will be aware of the large amount of work that is required to be done to rebuild the rail system. KiwiRail calls this project "the turnaround plan" the scope of this project is beyond the capacity of the domestic workforce, and will require the use of large numbers of contractors during the rebuild of the infrastructure.

The RMTU has been in litigation and deep discussions with KiwiRail over the use of contractors for some time, it is a sensitive issue with members who resent contractors doing their work that is covered by the collective agreement. There have been a number of complaints regarding contractors not meeting the same standards in protective equipment, not abiding by health and safety standards, performing substandard work which has to be redone by Networks staff, and doing work which some staff believe could be done by them.

The RMTU has reached an agreement with the company on the use of contractors during the period of the turnaround plan. This agreement gives a number of assurances which should make members more comfortable. The key points of the agreement are:

- Commitments to consult fully over any proposal to use contractors.
- Commitments to continue to maintain and grow the numbers of Networks staff during this period.
- Commitments not to use contractors to displace networks staff.
- Commitments to continue to invest in staff training, invest in modern equipment and plant for Networks staff.
- Commitments that contractors will not be used to reduce the earning on Networks staff (including overtime)
- Commitments that contractors will be required to meet Networks standards for health and safety, as a minimum.

- Commitments that at the completion of the turnaround plan, the maintenance of the rebuilt network will be transitioned back to Networks staff.

In return for these commitments the RMTU has agreed to work with the company on initiatives that will improve productivity, a pilot program has already been begun in Christchurch.

The RMTU views this project and the agreement on the use of contractors as positive for both the members and the company. Copies of the full agreement are available from your regional RMTU Organiser.

\$200,000 PAY HIKE FOR CEO'S WHILE THE REST OF US STRUGGLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET

Workers will look poorly at the \$200,000 a year salary increases dished out to New Zealand CEOs, at a time when cost of living for the rest of the country is rocketing up, the National Distribution Union said today.

Today's New Zealand Herald CEO salary survey found average salaries among those CEOs surveyed had shot up from \$1.4 million to \$1.6 million in just a year, an increase of 14%.

"While members of our union are facing steep cost increases from GST, petrol and food, the very wealthy are benefiting heavily from tax cuts worth several hundred dollars a week, and big jumps in their salary packages," NDU General Secretary Robert Reid said.

Robert Reid said there was a complete lack of initiative to address the gap between rich and poor from the National government, whose approach to employment rights and welfare were making things worse.

"Clearly we don't have a plan from government on income inequality. We have a Finance Minister that talks up New Zealand's wage gap with Australia, a

miserly 25 cent minimum wage increase, and a Budget next month that will cut the essential public services New Zealanders need," he said.

"And this lack of initiative to address income inequality is reflected in large parts of corporate New Zealand also, where workers' pay is a tiny fraction of CEOs.

"CEOs have no moral authority to urge wage constraint on workers when they are on such high rates of pay and receiving big increases year after year.

Robert Reid said in NDU sectors some of the strongest wage growth had come from unionised workplaces, with negotiations delivering increases of between 3% to 4% or more at major retail chains and transport and logistics companies.

"But workers without access to unions are seeing their wages go backwards fast, as they struggle to keep up with inflation."

"The very wealthy are doing well out of this government, and they are pocketing big salary increases. It is unconscionable to see such greed at a time when so many workers are struggling to make ends meet," Robert Reid said.



UNION WELCOMES EMPLOYMENT COURT DECISION

The New Zealand Meat Workers & Related Trades Union Inc welcomes the decision of the Employment Court issued yesterday.

In the decision, Judge A.D. Ford found that AFFCO New Zealand Limited (AFFCO) was required to employ and layoff seasonal workers in accordance with their initial start date. This followed AFFCO changing its practice, and employing non-union workers ahead of those in the Union. Evidence was called in the Employment Court of this practice taking place at AFFCO works at Imlay in Wanganui; Rangiuru outside Te Puke; Horotiu north of Hamilton; and Moerewa north of Whangarei.

The National Secretary of the Union Dave Eastlake said today: "AFFCO had been favouring workers not in the Union, and we

believe encouraging workers to leave the Union. This decision will put an end to this discriminatory practice. This recognises long practice in the meat industry, with long serving workers being entitled to work ahead of new starters."

The implications of the decision are being worked through by the Union. The decision will impact on hundreds of meat workers employed by AFFCO. Wages will now be sought for the workers who were wrongly laid off.

UNEMPLOYMENT PERSISTENTLY HIGH

Today's unemployment figures showing 155,000 people or 6.6 percent of people out of work shows that unemployment is remaining persistently high. The level of 155,000 people out of work compares with 90,000 unemployed in June 2008.

The jobless number which includes those discouraged from looking for work is 271,400. Although part time employment has increased there are still 103,600 part timers seeking additional hours of work to make ends meet.

Peter Conway, CTU Secretary, says that "these figures send a message to the Government that it simply has to do more to support the unemployed".

Youth unemployment has spiked upwards to 27.5 percent, Māori unemployment has gone up to 16.1 percent and Pacific people have an unemployment rate of 14 percent.

And women also appear to be disadvantaged with an unemployment rate of 7 percent compared with men at 6.2 percent. We also note that the "all except Canterbury" figures show a smaller fall in the rate of unemployment – from 6.8% to 6.7%.

Peter Conway said "it is true that we live in tough times. But things are toughest for those on low incomes struggling to make ends meet and those without a job. They should be a priority for any Government."

The Government could expand the skills investment subsidy to encourage employers to take on a worker, establish

more schemes like Enhanced Task Force Green, reinstate Community Max, ensure that training agreements are required alongside government procurement and ensure that the Government stimulus to the economy is job-rich.

RMTU Comment: Why with such a disgusting and disgraceful youth unemployment rate would this Government be calling for the retirement age to be lifted to 67 and for the elderly to work on longer? Do we not want young people to ever get jobs?

MOTORWAY MADNESS IS LOW QUALITY SPEND

The leaked Government Policy Statement (GPS) on transport funding has an out-dated focus on motorways and won't deliver economic prosperity, said the Green Party today.

Radio New Zealand reported this morning that the leaked draft GPS allocates nearly 40 per cent of the transport budget to new state highways for the next decade.

Green Party Transport spokesperson Gareth Hughes said that more money on motorways meant less money for everything else.

"Joyce claims that he has also somehow increased funding for public transport, walking, cycling and road safety – but if that is the case, where has all the new money come from?"

"The fact is that his Government has prioritised billions for new motorways with poor business cases, and consequently there is less money available to meet the growing demand for trains, buses and bicycles.

"There is also less money available for road maintenance, safety and local roads. There is always a trade off, and Mr Joyce is putting our money in the least cost effective options.

"Motorways don't solve congestion, and they won't reduce transport costs when oil prices are sky high. The Minister is out of step with New Zealanders," said Mr Hughes.

Recent Shape NZ polling found 66 per cent of New Zealanders do not believe it is possible to eliminate congestion by building more roads and motorways.

"The GPS fails the future by ignoring the need to invest in public transport projects like a CBD Rail Loop for Auckland or light rail for Wellington, which are desperately needed," said Mr Hughes.

Mr Hughes said rail patronage increased 20 per cent between March 2010 and 2011 in Auckland.

"We can't increase economic productivity by putting all our money in motorways when the international oil price is expected to stay high, but the Government can help people get around by investing in trains and buses and making walking and cycling safer.

"We can future-proof our freight networks by investing much more in rail and coastal shipping.

"We need to invest in a transport system that doesn't increase our vulnerability to high oil prices. That's smart economics," said Mr Hughes.

Link to Radio New Zealand Story:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/2488035/government-poised-to-increase-state-highway-spending.aspx>

Link to recent Shape NZ poll:

<http://www.nzbc.com.nz/story.asp?StoryID=1288>

BRASH BACKS SM: PUBLIC HAVE RIGHT TO KNOW WHO'S BEHIND IT

The public has a right to know who is backing a discredited electoral system that only 1 in 20 voters supported when it was last put to the vote, and that is blatantly unfair, Campaign for MMP said today.

Don Brash has today come out in support of the Supplementary Member (SM) voting system, ahead of the MMP referendum on November 26.

"SM is an unpopular and discredited electoral system that sustains the worst aspects of First Past the Post," said Sandra Grey, Campaign for MMP spokesperson.

"Only 5.6% of New Zealanders supported SM the last time it was tested, at the 1992 referendum. More recently only 4% supported SM in last year's UMR poll, down from 9% in their 2009 poll."

"The 1986 Royal Commission discredited the system also."

"Under SM the votes of hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders will be wasted as people's choice of party would only be allocated to 30 lists seats."

"Just like First Past the Post, this is likely to mean New Zealand will be governed by a political party that does not have the support of a majority of voters."

"Given SM is so discredited, New Zealanders have a right to know who is behind the push to adopt this system, what their interests are, and why they are so keen to have a system which will turn up unfair results," Sandra Grey said.

NZ WORKERS 30% CHEAPER TRUMPETS ENGLISH

Finance Minister Bill English's comments that New Zealand's low pay rates are a way to attract investment here were met with a hail of criticism from Union and political leaders. "We have a workforce that is better educated, just as productive and 30% cheaper," English recently told a meeting of the Australian New Zealand leadership forum.

The National Distribution Union said English's remarks suggest the government has given up on improving the incomes of Kiwi workers. "As Treasury has acknowledged, the wage gap opened up in the 1990s when firms were offered the low road, including the deregulation of the labour market," the union said.

CTU Secretary Peter Conway said the government has a "low-wage vision." "There is no doubt that we have low capital per worker in New Zealand and that makes it harder to lift both wages and productivity.



But advertising our low wages as an advantage is not going to lift them," he said.

Closing the wage gap with Australia was a key issue for the government when it successfully campaigned in 2008. Another Tui's anyone!

STRIKES DOWN

The number of industrial disputes last year was the lowest since records began more than two decades ago, reported Statistics New Zealand. In 2010, there were 11 strikes, five partial strikes and one lock-out. The total of 17 was down from the previous year's 31 disputes, NZ Stats figures show. Industrial actions last year involved more than 6,000 workers, costing employers about \$1.1 million in wages and salaries, compared to about 9,000 workers and about \$2.4 million in 2009. Only three of 17 disputes last year were left unresolved, the best since 2003, reported government statistician Geoff Bascand. According to Bascand, manufacturing and health care and social assistance were the industries most affected by strikes.

KIWI JOBS THROUGH LOWER WAGES

Australian pilots union charged that Qantas is using a shell company to off-shore jobs and lower pilots' wages and conditions. The Pilots Association said Qantas formed Jetconnect, registered in NZ, in 2001 to fly the trans-Tasman route solely so that pilots could be employed under lower New Zealand standards.

Pilots Association's Adam Susz said Jetconnect planes are marketed as Qantas, the aircraft is painted in Qantas colors and Qantas is written on the side of the airplane. The union and the Australian Council of Trade Unions recently filed a complaint with Fair Work Australia charging Jetconnect is a sham arrangement which is owned and controlled by Qantas. "So really, it's just an industrial set-up to avoid paying Australian terms and conditions," Susz said.

NO SELLOFF OF CHRISTCHURCH'S PUBLICLY-OWNED ASSETS! - LOOTERS STAY AWAY

The revelation that all of Christchurch's publicly-owned trading assets could be in danger of being sold due to a "legal loophole" in the law establishing the new State authority to run the city whilst it is rebuilt after the earthquakes should set alarm bells ringing loudly. If that comes to pass, it would be the single biggest instance of earthquake-related looting yet seen. American writer Naomi Klein coined the phrase "disaster capitalism" in the wake of the Bush Administration's criminally negligent response to the 2005 Hurricane Katrina catastrophe in New Orleans, where Big Business and its political mouthpieces used the situation as an excuse for an orgy of corporatisation and privatisation. If such disaster capitalism is inflicted on Christchurch, that will be the "third big one" to slam into the city. And it will be the one with the most long term destructive effects.

Of course, Government Ministers have said that there is no such intention. The value of a politician's solemn vow can be gauged from those Act MPs who only days ago publicly declared that Rodney Hide had their undying support as leader.

Truth is an elastic concept in politics. And flogging off Christchurch's assets sounds like a routine prescription from Dr Brash, Act's new leader and coupmaster. There's no secret about where he stands on the subject of public assets. And Brash's ideological soulmate, the Business Roundtable's Roger Kerr, has already called for the sale of all or some of Christchurch's assets to pay for the rebuild.

CAFCA is sure that it's purely coincidental that any that were sold would just happen to fall into the hands of the very same transnational corporations that make up a large part of the Business Roundtable. Ever since it branded Christchurch the "People's Republic of Christchurch" for having the temerity to hang onto its publicly-owned assets (in social housing alone, the Christchurch City Council is the country's second biggest landlord, after the State) the

Business Roundtable and its political mouthpieces has wanted an example made of the city and its assets flogged off.

If central or local government is foolish enough to try to go down this path, they will be buying a fight. In 2006 the City Council came a spectacular gutser when public opposition and a shrewd strategic intervention by the Port of Otago thwarted its cunning plan to hock off the Lyttelton Port Company to a Hong Kong transnational corporation.

And if Ministers want ideas on how to finance the massive rebuild, start by implementing the proposal to slap a small earthquake recovery levy on higher income earners. Reverse the tax cuts that were a blatant hand out to the rich. And crack down hard on transnational corporate tax dodgers who suck extortionate profits out of the country whilst not paying their fair share (the likes of the Big Four Australian-owned banks who settled with IRD in December 2009 for \$2.2 billion, the biggest tax avoidance case in NZ's history). There's no shortage of money in the country – it's just a question of who has got it, and of ensuring that it stays here to be used for the public benefit.

'TOGETHER' LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT FAIRNESS AT WORK

Fair treatment at work makes a significant advance this week with the launch of Together, a radically new type of organisation which will extend union association to thousands of new workers.

"Union members understand that working together ensures a better deal for workers, but many New Zealanders don't have access to a union. People in non-unionised workplaces, casual workers and employees in small businesses may simply not be able to get union coverage at work. Together offers low threshold membership to workers in these un-unionised workplaces and sectors." Said Helen Kelly, President of the CTU.

Together is a new organisation established and run by the unions affiliated to the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions. Together aims to connect workers in un-unionised

work places with the union movement and the union experience. Membership, costing just \$1 per week (\$52 per year), gives employees and contractors, in industries and locations without union support, access to help and expert advice.

Together also offers family/whanau membership giving the opportunity for current union members to join up as many of their family and whanau as they want for just \$1 per week. Family/whanau membership makes their family part of the union family and gives them the values and benefits union members share.

"Together is perfect for people working in industries like IT, tourism or in small shops, driving taxis or on casual contracts who don't currently have any support. Together will also provide coverage for people who work in remote areas and smaller towns who don't currently have access to a union." said Kelly.

"These people face many of the same workplace issues as people who work in bigger, unionised industries, but don't have the same support available to them. Together will provide support and advice when they need help with issues like workplace bullying, sick leave, holiday pay, employment agreements and sexual harassment. Together will give them that support and join them to the wider union movement" said Helen Kelly.

BITS AND BOBS

- KiwiRail Freight looking at a new LE Transfer policy to ensure fairness and consistency of approach.
- Clifford Bay back on the agenda AGAIN. It is sad that yet again instability is re-introduced into the daily working lives of the KiwiRail Picton and Port Marlborough members.
- The KIC met in Auckland for 2 days and the delegates report that many matters were addressed and dealt with. Look out for the minutes when they are released to catch up with the happenings.
- The MIC (Mechanical Industrial Council) meets in Auckland this week On the agenda is a discussion on pay and progression a facet of which will be a



discussion on the fact that KiwiRail Network mechanical engineers are now to be paid at higher rates than KiwiRail Mechanical engineers as a result of the KN wage rate review.

- Hutt Branch delegates and National Office staff met with regional political figures to strategise on how to ensure that the Ganz Mavag refurbishment project would be done within the Wellington region.
- Congratulations of Aubrey Wilkinson obtaining the RMTU National Presidency have been flooding in from around the world for Union leaders. For example it is on the ICLS website. To see go to http://www.icls.or.kr/2005/en_index.php

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

“WE’RE STRONGER TOGETHER”!

