

THE ACTIVIST



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RESULT OF RMTU CALL FOR NOMINATIONS – NATIONAL PRESIDENT

At the close of Nominations there was only one candidate. Tauranga Container Crane Operator Aubrey Wilkinson is therefore declared re-elected unopposed for a further 2 year term of office.

Aubrey's re-election is a sure sign that he has succeeded in his stated desire when elected in 2011. At that time he said "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.

We all congratulate Aubrey on his re-election.

HEADS UP – PORTS FORUM

The RMTU Ports Forum is being held in Wellington mid-year. Port Branch Secretaries are asked to formalise their representation and to advise numbers of attendee's to National Office as soon as possible.

Suggestions for agenda items are encouraged from branches.

YOUTH WAGES SET TO BECOME LAW BY 1 MAY

The Employment Relations (Starting Out Wage) Amendment Bill will be passed into law in the next week so it can become law from 1 May. This is despite 522 submissions opposed and only nine in favour. The change will reintroduce youth rates for 16 and 17 year olds, and for 18

and 19 year olds who have been on a benefit.

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY – 28 APRIL

International Workers Memorial Day is 28 April 2013. The day is about remembering those workers, especially RMTU members, who have been killed whilst at work.

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

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

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

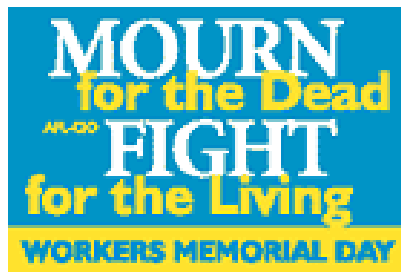
As usual we will be requesting KiwiRail to approve all trains stopping at midday on the 28th for 1 minute.

The services (that we have been informed of to date) will

be held at;

Dunedin – the memorial garden 1150hrs

Christchurch - service held in the Reserve behind where Science Alive building used to be 11.30am -12.30pm with refreshments served at the NZNO across the road afterwards. A cabbage tree will be planted in memorial of all workers who died or were injured on the job in 2012. Wreaths to be laid at the Memorial Stone by families, unions, and workers. Barrier arm comes down on the adjacent level crossing at noon and bells ring for a minute's silence.



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

Hutt Shops – 28 April Service to be held by the Elizabeth Street entrance starting at 1150hrs at the workshop memorial garden. During which we will launch a new book by Hazel Armstrong chronicling NZ rail safety history from 1974 to 2000.

Port Napier – Friday 26 April a ceremony at the memorial wall at the eastern entrance to the port. 1000 hrs start.

Hamilton - Sunday 28th branch meeting will be held at 1000hrs followed by WMD remembrance service at 1200hrs, followed by a pig on a spit, all at Te Rapa depot.

Tauranga/Mount Maunganui - Memorial Service at 1130 hrs, at the memorial stone at the Rata street gatehouse

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

CALLING ALL TOLL TRANZ LINK DELEGATES

We are hearing many rumours that Toll is not meeting its obligation to offer new employees the terms and conditions of the RMTU-Toll Networks Collective Agreement and is, instead, offering inferior terms and conditions. In fact, the employer is obliged to employ new staff at Toll Networks under the terms of the collective agreement for the first thirty days of their employment and once those workers join the RMTU their terms are secured after that.

Whilst we are checking with Toll management if these rumours are true we need our delegates to approach any new employees and check to see if they have been offered the terms and conditions of the collective agreement and also to sign these workers up to our union.

The threat of new workers being employed on inferior terms is that it eventually undermines the collective agreement and wages and conditions we have fought so hard for. We all stand to lose out if this is happening.

So, delegates, please be relentless in checking whether or not new members have been offered the terms of the collective agreement and in signing them up to our union. If you need membership

forms or brochures contact your local organiser.

GREAT TRAIN SAFETY VIDEO

Use the link below to view a very good safety message with a very catchy tune (which I just can't get out of my head).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJNR2EpS0jw>

BIGGEST COFFEE BREAK

Oxfam's biggest coffee break is an annual fundraiser. It is staged in the fortnight 4 to 19 May 2013. Last year more than 300 workplaces took part. It is a fun and sociable way to raise money to help some of the poorest people in the world. Sign up to host a coffee break at work and Oxfam will send you a free pack with fairtrade coffee and chocolate. Then all you need do is get your workmates to come to coffee in return for a gold coin donation.

www.Oxfamcoffeebreak.org.nz

PM SHOULDER TAPPED MATE FOR TOP SPY JOB

John Key's intervention in the appointment process for the Director of the GCSB reeks of cronyism and is further evidence of a disturbing lack of transparency under his government, says Grant Robertson, Labour's Deputy Leader.

"It has been revealed that Mr Key rejected a shortlist of four candidates for the position of Director of the GCSB, and then encouraged his friend Ian Fletcher to apply for the job. Mr Fletcher was then the only person interviewed for the job by a panel including State Services Commissioner Iain Rennie.

"This looks like a jack-up to get John Key's mate appointed as our top spy. He was not even an applicant for the job, and ended up being the only person interviewed. The public of New Zealand deserve far better than this kind of cronyism, especially in a sensitive position such as this.

"Are John Key and Iain Rennie really trying to suggest that Mr Fletcher was the only person who deserved to be interviewed? And why was the position not re-advertised if the shortlist of applicants

was rejected? That's certainly what would normally happen in those circumstances.

"Late last week John Key spent a lot of time and energy trying to downplay his relationship with Ian Fletcher. We can see why now. Mr Key acknowledged by the end of the week that he had been in regular contact with Ian Fletcher for at least the two years prior to his appointment, and that they were family friends.

"Further the Prime Minister told Parliament that the appointment of Ian Fletcher was "made by the State Services Commissioner". While it might be that he signed a recommendation, it's very clear now that the Prime Minister's role in the appointment was significantly greater than he was letting on.

"This appointment process is extremely murky. It reeks of the sort of cronyism and lack of transparency that is sadly becoming the hallmark of this government," Grant Robertson says.

AUCKLAND'S HOUSING SHORTAGE

Commentators have been saying that the Auckland housing market will perform well this year and may rise overall by around 10%. Next year is forecast to be positive too. Low interest rates are one thing that is driving this but there is another more important factor - Auckland is simply not building enough homes. According to a recent report from Westpac Bank, this under-building is serious - Auckland needs to build a minimum of 9,500 dwellings annually. We are building half this number. To quickly unwind the shortage, we need to build well in excess of 9,500 in the short term. This shortage will remain for the foreseeable future and house prices will only go in one direction, which is up.

BULLER GORGE SAFETY GROUP

This group had its third meeting on 3rd April. Our National Health and Safety Organiser Karen Fletcher attended along Westport LE Delegate John Valvoi.

The meeting discussed the geotech survey recommendations and priority work that

needed to have been done after the storms earlier this year, particularly the culverts. The good news is that the high priority work appears to have been done.

John Valvoi had carried out an audit of the coverage of the satellite phone coverage and had identified some blind spots. Work is now being done on trialling a piece of software that will allow communications to locate on one satellite instead of triangulating on three.

Our next meeting will occur in the next couple of months where, together with the Search and Rescue people, we will run through a range of scenarios that may occur in the Gorge.

WELFARE REFORMS: WRONG ROUTE

The Social Security Bill that the Government is preparing to pass in Parliament is the wrong approach in an unprecedented time of high unemployment and looming redundancies.

Eileen Brown, CTU Policy Analyst says "this Bill is premised on the false ideas that unemployed people don't want to work and that there are enough jobs to be found if you really try. It's already hard for families who are looking for work; these changes only make it tougher for them to get by. We have 163,000 officially unemployed, 284,000 jobless and 111,000 wanting more work. We are seeing large scale redundancies."

"The Government needs to gear itself to job creation and support for people who are out of work and at risk of losing their jobs. Instead these will introduce sanctions and bring in draconian measures like drug testing that even their official advice was against. They are also preparing to contract out the work testing procedures to private providers. Contracting out of work testing was disastrous when it was done in the United Kingdom with a massive upswing in appeals against decisions, most of which were successful, extremely critical independent audits and huge street protests."

"The threat of sanctions and other punitive measures that this Bill brings in will force people into low quality, low paid work with

risks to them and their families. Government should be helping to create jobs that are decently paid and provide good employment opportunities and safe and secure work."

"Unemployment can be reduced by active job policies and intensive programmes rather than sanctions for breaches of social obligations. This Bill is taking us in the wrong direction."

GIBO'S FISHING TOURNAMENT

This Fishing Competition is hosted by Port of Tauranga and the naming is in tribute to our deceased long standing Port Branch President John Gibson. The date is set for this year and is 20 April. Tight lines and screaming reels to all who participate.

WHO IS BUYING OUR HOUSES?

There has been much made, particularly in Auckland, about the number of houses being sold to foreigners. Recently the Bank of New Zealand and the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand carried out some research in this area. It shows that around 11% of these houses are being bought by offshore parties. The three most common places of origin of these buyers were China, United Kingdom and Australia. Furthermore the research showed that around 50% of these buyers were planning to live here. What these figures did not show was the breakdown by suburb. This is where you will see the real variances. In Epsom, for example, there appears to be a large number of off shore buyers, whereas in parts of Henderson there are relatively few. As Auckland has been in the top ten best places in which to live in the world in a number of surveys, we expect to see more foreigners wanting to live here.

KR SICK LEAVE

In the wageround it was agreed between the parties that deduction of sick leave when members take sick leave would be in accordance with the MECA. That is to say "if you take 1 day off sick then 1 day sick leave will be deducted". In the past if you took a 10.5hr shift off you had 1.5 days leave deducted. This was ridiculous and not in accord with the MECA. We are keen to hear that KiwiRail are in fact only deducting

1 day's sick leave for each day (shift) of absence. Contact the National Office if you believe that you are having more than 1 day leave deducted for a single shift (day) absence.

TENDERING FOR RENTALS

A new method of obtaining a rental property is appearing on the Auckland market. That is tendering for your accommodation. If you want to live in a certain area, know exactly what type of property you require and how much you are willing to pay, then, why not tender. Tendering is an accepted practice in the marketplace – buyers already place tenders for such things as properties, cars, and plant and equipment. We can see this method for obtaining accommodation being used more, particularly by professional people who are short on time and do not want to visit thirty or forty properties before they find a suitable one. This will ultimately become just another method of obtaining a property to rent.

KIWI RAIL COASTAL PACIFIC SUSPENSION 'MISGUIDED AND SHORTSIGHTED' SAYS RAIL UNION

Today's announcement that KiwiRail will suspend its Christchurch-Picton passenger service, the Coastal Pacific, over the winter months is both shortsighted and misguided, says the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU).

'Since the Christchurch earthquakes of 2010 and 2012 KiwiRail's Christchurch based passenger services have suffered a decline in customer numbers, but this summer has seen the reversal of that trend, and it does not make sense to stop running this train over the winter,' said RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson.

'What Christchurch needs right now is a demonstration by Government owned companies like KiwiRail that they have faith in the rebuild and the resurgence of the tourism business in Christchurch. KiwiRail's Tranz Scenic passenger services are iconic and together provide a blue chip tourist attraction all year round,' he said.

'There are plenty of businesses in the South Island who benefit from the tourist dollars that services like the Coastal Pacific bring in,' he said.

'To suspend the service over the winter months is short-sighted, it sends a signal to tourism operators overseas that our own Government lacks faith in the rebuild of Christchurch and the resurgence in tourism in the South Island and beyond,' he said.

'We acknowledge that passenger numbers will be down over the winter but it is misguided to suspend the service as KiwiRail will lose ground that it will need to make up in the Spring,' he said.

'Our union is pleased that no redundancies will result from the suspension of the service but we would have been much happier to see it continue to build on the momentum it has gained this summer as we enter the winter months,' he said.

TELECOM JOB LOSSES SHOWS NEED FOR GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

The loss of around a thousand jobs at Telecom will be a hard blow for the families of these workers and highlights the need for a government strategy to boost the ICT sector, Green Party ICT spokesperson Gareth Hughes said.

Telecom has announced that it will axe between 930 and 1230 jobs by the middle of this year.

"The loss of around a thousand highly-skilled, well-paid jobs at Telecom will be devastating for those workers and their families, as well as their communities – the Green Party's thoughts are with them," said Mr Hughes.

"How many of these skilled workers will leave for Australia in search of stable work and higher pay?"

"We need to give skilled Kiwis a reason to stay in this country but there's no strategy from the National Government to create and protect Kiwi jobs.

"The Greens have launched an ICT policy that will make the Internet faster and cheaper with a second international cable.

We also think the Government should back New Zealand's ICT industry by making government agencies consider the wider economic benefits to New Zealand of supporting the local ICT industry when making purchasing decisions.

"That will provide a huge boost to our ICT industry and create job opportunities for workers like those losing their jobs at Telecom.

"Where's the innovative thinking from National? How much longer can they just shrug their shoulders and ignore the growing tally of job losses?," said Mr Hughes.

MINING OF NATIONAL PARKS BACK ON GOVERNMENT AGENDA

Mining in some of New Zealand's most precious national parks appears to be back on the Government's agenda despite promises the areas wouldn't be touched, Labour's Energy and Resources spokesperson Moana Mackey says.

"It is deeply concerning that eight consents have been granted to Newmont Gold and Addison Mines to prospect for coal and other minerals on protected Schedule Four land in Coromandel and the Paparoa National Park.

"Despite being forced into an embarrassing back-down on this issue in 2010 it appears National has simply changed tactics in order to achieve its original intention of mining Schedule Four land and is now progressing the activity under the guise of 'scientific research'.

"Conservation Minister Nick Smith's claim that the prospecting is not about mining, but is rather a means to research the geological features of these areas is not credible.

"No company would be spending time and money investigating the mineral potential of this land simply out of scientific curiosity. They have clearly been given a signal by Government that mining of these areas is back on the table.

"This is even more worrying in light of changes to the Crown Minerals Act, which aims to 'promote' rather than just manage minerals exploration and extraction and gives mining and prospecting a huge

advantage over all other activities carried out on Department of Conservation land.

"The Bill removes the sole decision-making power for allowing access for mining on conservation land from the Minister of Conservation, who now has to share that role with the Minister of Energy despite the obvious conflict of interest. It also allows Cabinet to remove or reclassify the protection status of land, meaning land could potentially be removed from national parks.

"Kiwis sent a strong message to the Government in 2010 that our most precious conservation lands are not to be touched. The Government claimed to have listened to those concerns but clearly it is now renegeing on that promise.

"National's dilemma is that it has no other plan for economic development and reducing unemployment. It has put all its eggs in the basket of fossil fuel and minerals extraction and today's revelation simply shows how desperate it is to pursue that agenda."

TAIC INVESTIGATION

On Thursday 28 March 2013 the New Zealand Transport Agency notified the Commission of a rail incident that had occurred at about 1830 that same evening involving a metro passenger train operating between Wingate and Taita stations, Upper Hutt.

Initial circumstances reported are that Train 4664 was a 6-car passenger service operating from Wellington to Taita. The train was being driven by a trainee driver under the supervision of a trainer driver. The train stopped at Wingate station, where the train manager and rail operator stepped onto the platform to oversee the passenger exchange. The train departed while both were still on the platform and before the train manager had signaled the driver 'right of way' (Clearance to depart). The train then travelled about 1.5 kilometers to Taita with all of the doors open and no passenger crew on board. There were about 15 passengers on board the train, but no-one was injured.

The inquiry was opened under Section 13(1)b of the Transport Accident

Investigation Commission Act and Mr. Vernon Hoey is investigator-in-charge.

SLATING OF RMA CHANGES BY ENVIRONMENT COMMISSIONER A WARNING TO GOVERNMENT

Stinging criticism of proposed changes to the resource Management Act from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, should be a wake-up call for the Government, says Maryan Street, Labour's Environment spokesperson.

"In a submission, released 3 March, Dr Jan Wright focuses on the proposed changes to Sections 6 and 7 of the RMA, which express the purpose and principles of the Act, saying they will 'fundamentally change the role of the RMA and erode the environmental protection it provides'.

"The Commissioner may be stating her own concerns, but they echo those of thousands of people who have been alarmed by the stated purpose of the reforms.

"Those concerns hinge around the fact that the law - which is meant to protect our beautiful environment - is being undermined to the point of uselessness by the wish to 'balance' economic development with environmental values and protection.

"The Commissioner even warns that the RMA 'is not, and should not become, an economic development act'.

"The Government should take her warning seriously. Its rushed process, allowing barely four weeks for public consideration of proposals to amend the RMA, and just three weeks for public consideration of proposals on water quality and management, suggests a sinister agenda for the environment.

"The emasculation of the RMA flies in the face of everything New Zealanders hold dear about our environment and its value and benefit. Altering the purpose of the RMA in this way is about as destructive as putting a tunnel through from the Dart River to Milford."

DIRECTOR FEES HIKE A GOLDEN THUMBS UP FOR SALE

The 73 per cent hike in directors' fees for Mighty River Power shows the asset sales programme is a cash cow that keeps on milking the taxpayer, says Labour's SOEs spokesperson Clayton Cosgrove.

"Mighty River Power's directors are getting a whopping 73 per cent pay rise. But what has changed in their job description, workload or responsibilities? All that's changing is the shareholding. Given that there will be a decrease in Parliament's oversight their job has arguably become easier.

"The Government is making a habit of shelling out money to SOE heads – Solid Energy's former CE got a \$250,000 golden handshake. This is a golden thumbs up for Mighty River directors, saying thanks for going private.

"The asset sales process is turning into a gravy train that Kiwis are paying for. Right now Mighty River's directors are being paid an extra \$1200 a day to prepare for sale. Soon they'll get \$36,000 more. No wonder some SOE directors have been so enthusiastic about asset sales.

"The directors of Meridian and Genesis will be licking their lips.

"Tony Ryall calls a 73 per cent pay rise a 'conservative increase'. I'd hate to see what a big pay hike looks like in Tony Ryall's eyes. He's completely out of touch.

"Kiwis need to know how this 73 per cent golden thumbs up came about. Did the directors threaten to resign unless they got a big pay packet? If not, call their bluff. This Government talks tough when it comes to Kiwi strugglers but rolls over when it comes to their mates.

"Every year there will be stories of increasing directors' fees because they've 'got to compete with private sector salaries'. What a crock and what a loss to the taxpayer," says Clayton Cosgrove.

ITF STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HONG KONG DOCKERS

The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) spoke out yesterday against a temporary injunction that throws out striking dockers from Kwai Tsing Container Terminals, Port of Hong Kong.

On 30 January the ITF Hong Kong Dockers Coordinating Committee comprised of Hong Kong Storehouses, Transportation and Logistics Staff Association (HKSTLSA), the Union of Hong Kong Dockers (UHKD) and the Hong Kong Docks and Ports Industry Unions (HKDPIU) called for dialogue with Hong Kong International Terminals (HIT) and its subcontractors over decent working conditions for all workers regardless of their employment status. In response to a lack of dialogue from the company and its disregard for the union's call for pay parity, the Union of Hong Kong Dockers commenced strike action on 28 March, and is supported by its sister Hong Kong unions.

The ITF strongly condemns the attempts by HIT, which is owned by Hutchison Port Holdings Trust (HPH Trust), to deprive these workers of their right to strike via an injunction. The company's attempts to intimidate workers by threatening to dismiss strikers as well as its move to replace them with strikebreakers constitute serious violations of international standards. Furthermore, the ITF is calling on HIT to engage in meaningful, open and fair discussions with the workers' union to improve working conditions and ensure parity between the company's outsourced and its directly employed workforce. In addition, the ITF is calling on HIT to take full responsibility for its subcontractors, to put an end to the exploitation of outsourced dockers who are earning less for working longer; and to return to the table to discuss the reinstatement of the hourly overtime rate for contracted dockers.

ITF president and dockers' section chair Paddy Crumlin commented: "This dispute has reached a critical stage. The ITF is calling on HIT and on Hutchison Port Holdings Trust (HPH Trust), to put health and safety, decent working conditions and respect for union rights first. The dockers have the full support and backing of the 4.5

million member strong ITF global union. Dockers in global network terminals around the world are watching closely, as are transport workers along the supply chain. Global network terminal operators in the stevedoring industry in particular have a critical responsibility to work with their employees to ensure basic labour rights are acknowledged and respected."

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

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

