

THE ACTIVIST



Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) 17 April 2009



REMEMBER WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 28 APRIL

RMTU members are asked to once again stop work (wherever you are) at midday on the 28 April to remember workers here and internationally who have been killed and seriously injured in work accidents.

The RMTU will be joining millions of workers around the world who are also commemorating this day. The key themes of this year are;

- Address the causes of occupational and environmental cancers at the workplace, and;
- Demand safety and health standards and enforcement, and;
- Build on Global Union campaign activities on banning asbestos and HIV/AIDS
- Say NO to Violence in the workplace

Some RMTU Branches will be conducting commemorative meetings at the memorials unveiled in previous years. We have been advised of;

- Christchurch's Workers Memorial Day is 28 April at Science Alive Reserve from 11.30 -12.30
- Hutt Workshops on 28 April starting 1200hrs at the memorial garden. Helen Kelly (CTU), Ross Wilson (KiwiRail and ACC Boards) will be speaking.
- Dunedin 28 April. Wayne Butson will address the assembled.

Please advise National Office if you are holding a ceremony in your area. If you wish to invite a National Office speaker then do so now.

We must continue to remind ourselves that we lose real workmates and working men and women in these accidents and not let them become simply statistics!

POSTERS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO BRANCHES SO MAKE SURE YOUR NOTICEBOARD HAS 1 OR 2 OR 3....

KIWI RAIL NETWORK INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL – NOMINATIONS RESULT

At the closing date for nominations the following was the situation;

Infrastructure – Trackworker: Alby Barr from Hamilton fills the position as a result of his being on the RMTU's National Management Committee.

Infrastructure – Ganger/Foreperson: No nominations received. Will be recalled.

Infrastructure – Signals, Comms, Traction: 5 nominations received. A ballot to be conducted. Nominee's messrs Hatcher, Kahui, Kearns, Sinclair and walker.

Infrastructure – Bridges and Structures: 1 nomination received. Buzz Terrey declared elected unopposed. Congratulations Buzz.

Infrastructure – Mechanical Group: 2 nominations received. A ballot to be conducted. Nominee's messrs Hohepa and Wright.

Operations – Train Controller: 1 nomination received. Geoffrey young declared elected unopposed. Congratulations Geoff.

Operations – Signalpersons:

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

No nominations received. Will be recalled.

Operations – Clerical Admin: 1 nomination received. Kevin Jones declared elected unopposed.

So in summary we have 2 positions to recall nominations for, 2 positions that will go to a ballot of members within those sectors and 3 positions which have been elected unopposed.

ANNUAL CPI Now 3%

Statistics NZ's latest release of the consumer price index (CPI) shows an increase of 0.3 percent for the March quarter. This brings CPI for the year to March 2009 to 3.0 percent. It is the first time since September 2007 that CPI has fallen within the Reserve Bank's target range of between 1 and 3 percent. In the March quarter, grocery prices increased 1.4 percent; pushing food prices up 1.2 percent. The CPI would have stayed flat if food prices had remained unchanged for the quarter. Other increases included a 1.8 percent rise in alcoholic beverages and tobacco that was driven up by a 4.3 percent increase in the prices for cigarettes and tobacco, (largely as a result of a 5.07 percent increase in excise duty for cigarettes and tobacco on 1 January 2009). The housing and household utilities group registered the smallest rise of only 0.3 percent since June 2001 and the price for new housing was static for the quarter. The transport group recorded a 1.5 percent fall overall, with international air transport, diesel, and petrol falling 16.5 percent, 19.2 percent, and 1.0 percent respectively. However, the price for second-hand cars bucked this trend, up by 3.5 percent.

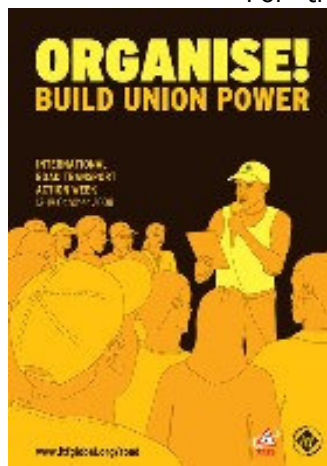
Half the annual increase was attributed to an 8.8 percent rise in the food prices, led by an 8.9 percent rise in grocery prices. Other upward contributions included a 3.6 increase in the household utilities group, with electricity prices up considerably by 7.5 percent. Decreases were recorded in the transport group, down 2.6 percent,

largely as a result of an annual fall in petrol prices by 9.3 percent.

The food price index was also updated today. Monthly food prices increased 0.5 percent in the March 2009 month. The meat, poultry and fish subgroup increased 1.4 percent, with the prices for fresh chicken rising 3.2 percent, lamb by 5.9 percent, and beef by 1.5 percent. Fruit and vegetable prices were also up by 1.6 percent. In particular lettuces were 55.5 percent more expensive and strawberries were 61.5 dearer, whereas prices for apples were down 16.9 percent and potatoes were down 9.4 percent.

Grocery food fell by 0.2 percent and was the only subgroup to record a decrease for the month. This was driven by a 5.7 percent fall in the price of chocolate bars and blocks, a 6.9 percent fall in cheddar cheese, and 5.1 percent fall in yogurt. However, the price for plain biscuits soared by 14.2 percent.

For the year to March 2009 food prices increased 8.6 percent.



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS – RMTU NATIONAL PRESIDENT

In accordance with Rule 24 of the Rules & Standing Orders of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union nominations are hereby called for the position of National President.

Nominations must be in writing and contain the signed consent of the candidate. Nominations shall be proposed and seconded by financial members (Rule 1).

Nominations must be received at the Union's national Office by the Returning Officer no later **than 8am on Wednesday 29 April 2009.**

- Nominations are open to all financial members of the Union
- The term of the office is for 2 years (Rule 24.2)
- This is an honorary position and NOT full time

- Duties are as contained in Rule 27 of the Union's Rules & Standing Orders.
- All nominee's (the person being nominated) MUST be financial members of the Union at the time of nomination – Rule 24.5
- The nominators and seconders must all be current financial members of the Union
- Nomination forms are available for download from the Union website or by contacting National Office on 04-499-2066.
- The incumbent advises that he shall be seeking re-election.
- Should a ballot of members be required (if there are more than 1 nomination after the date of nominations closure) then it will be conducted under 42. This will be a full postal ballot of all financial members of the Union.
- The Returning Officer for the election shall be the General Secretary.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS KIWI RAIL NETWORKS (FORMERLY ONTRACK) INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL!

The Union calls for nominations for the following positions from members who fall within the categories of representation;

Infrastructure – Ganger/Foreperson

- If you hold a position of ganger (foreperson) in any area of KiwiRail Networks operation then you are eligible for nomination for this position.

Operations – Signallers

- If you are employed as a Signaller within KiwiRail Networks then you are eligible for nomination to this position.

Nomination forms are available from the Union's Website www.rmtunion.org.nz or National Office by calling 04 4992066, fax 04

4710896 or by email to jharrison@rmtunion.org.nz

Nominations must be moved and seconded by current financial Union members who are employed within the same area for which the nominee is being nominated for and an acceptance of nomination signed by the nominee.

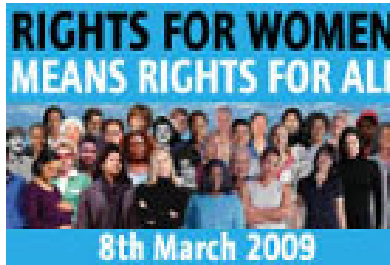
Correctly completed Nominations must be received in the Unions National Office by 1700hrs 8 May 2009.

LABOUR PARTY REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Dates for regional conferences are as follows;

- Region 1 – 15/16 May in Auckland
- Region 2 – 6/7 June in Hamilton
- Region 3 – 2/3/ May in Bulls
- Region 4 – 16 May in Wellington
- Region 5 – 6/7 June in Greymouth
- Region 6 – 23/24 May venue to be confirmed.

The RMTU is affiliated to the Labour Party and so will be represented at the conferences. If you are interested then contact your regional Union organiser or Branch Secretary.



KIWI RAIL NETWORK WORKING PARTY UPDATE

As you will be aware the current Ontrack collective agreement expires on 30th June, also there have been two working parties looking at:

- Hours of work
- Market rates of pay

There is currently a proposal for a meeting with Ontrack to progress these issues over 13-15th May.

The newly elected KiwiRail Network Industrial Council will form the core negotiating team for the Collective Agreement.

Once this group is finalised we intend to conduct a national round of membership meetings to discuss our approach to the upcoming bargaining round. These meetings

will shape our approach to the negotiations. Obviously with the current economic climate this will be a difficult set of negotiations, and we will need to get membership endorsement of the Union approach.

PORTS FORUM

An interesting and challenging programme is in store for delegates attending the 2009 National Ports Forum in Wellington on 5 & 6 May 2009. The Forum will continue some of the themes of previous forums;

- Organising mapping for growth and power
- unity of the RMTU members on the waterfront,
- bargaining and core term discussions,
- health and safety matters of particular concern to waterfront workers,
- ACC past/present & future,
- effects on New Zealand Ports caused by the recession
- the demise of the Seachange Strategy will be outlined
- Discussion on the ITF and MUA approaches to the recession
- Discussion and report on the Port Tauranga "Port of Convenience" issue

Port branches are urged to ensure they are well represented at the Forum, an opportunity to keep abreast of the latest developments affecting port workers, network with comrades at other ports and make the most of an industry specific conference which is just for port workers.

Port branches MUST advise the National Office who their delegates will be, as soon as possible so that all arrangements can be made.

Registration forms are available from your branch secretary or contact Julia at National Office on 04-4992066 or julia@rmtunion.org.nz.

Once bookings are made any subsequent alterations which incur additional cost (air travel particularly) will be invoiced to branches.

MAYDAY @ BLACKBALL

"without our brain and muscle not a single wheel will turn"

It is intended to commemorate the Mayday event in Blackball as usual. This is an 'early warning' notice of the event.

Draft programme for 2009 Celebration of 1908 Blackball Strike.

- Friday 1st May 8.00pm, The Hilton - Songs of working people
- Saturday 2nd May 10.00am, Working Men's Club - Forum: The legacy of neo-liberalism. Can we think the system or does the system think us? What should we be talking about?
 - Workers rights? Money?
 - Social dysfunction? The planet?
 - Food? Revolution? Culture?
 - Housing? State surveillance?
 - And what action should we be taking?

Saturday 2nd 2.00pm, Working Men's Club - Workshop on '08 Strike Memorial Project

Saturday 2nd 8.00pm, Blackball Church. Theatre: The Curator of Baghdad, a story from Guantanamo Bay (with Paul Maunder, Caroline Selwood, Garyth Bensley)

Lunch, Dinner and Accommodation available at The Hilton bbhilton@xtra.co.nz

Further information: wkultur@ihug.co.nz or www.blackballmuseum.org.nz or 037324010

TRANSPORT WORKER ISSUE 2 - 2009

The deadline for all branch notes, letters to the editor or other contributions (including photos) is 8 May 2009.

Contributions from Branches who have been absent to date would be particularly welcome as would individual letters from



members on topics they feel strongly about.

Remember it is YOUR magazine.

IF YOU HAVE AN A&D PROBLEM ASK FOR HELP!!

The RMTU is concerned that members are testing positive for alcohol and/or drugs post incident or reasonable cause within our industries. Our advice is if you think you might have a problem with alcohol or drugs then ask for help. Help is available through Employee Assistance Programmes or by contacting the Union.

Members in the rail industry can enter into voluntary rehabilitation, which is not disciplinary, but rather aimed at helping people sort out their problem with A&D. Some Port employers operate similar systems.

For further details contact your Union organiser.

PROBLEMS WITH ONTRACK ACCOUNTING FOR HOLIDAYS

Complaints have been received from Ontrack members over the accrual of the extra weeks leave for working away from home. Ontrack staff can accrue up to an extra weeks leave on top of their annual leave, depending on how many weeks they work away, which is all well and good, if you know you're entitled to it.

Discussions with Ontrack have exposed that there has been a problem with the implementation of the "pay global" payroll system. Ontrack have undertaken to keep the RMTU informed on progress, and hope to notify staff through their payslips within the next three weeks.

CONFERENCE 2009 REMITS

A reminder that Remits for conference close on 31 July 2009 but late remits are frequently accepted and conference delegates also have an opportunity to table

"notices of motion" at conference to be debated on the floor as well.

It is essential that early advice is given/received for remits which seek to achieve major change within the Union or the way it conducts itself as the delegates need to be able to obtain a mandate on how to vote at conference.

All remits to conference MUST have been passed by a majority vote at a duly constituted Union branch meeting.

STAT DAY SHIFT CANCELLATION – KIWIRAIL

The Union has watched with growing concern the cavalier approach that KiwiRail has taken to the booking off or alteration of members shift in the lead up to, during or the day after to Stat day shifts. We believe that many of the practices adopted are unlawful and cannot have been the intent of Parliament when the Holidays Act was enacted. The Union has written to the company posing a number of questions, the answers to which will determine whether the matter escalates to litigation or is able to be resolved informally.

KIWIRAIL NETWORK H&S WORKER PARTICIPATION ELECTIONS

Review of the current safety system has revealed that KiwiRail Network Health and Safety Worker Participation System is due to be reviewed around April 2009. The company suggest that we delay this review until July 2009 for the following reasons;

- The RMTU is presently in the process of carrying out other representative elections, and secondly;
- They are giving consideration to reconfiguring our safety action teams so that they can be more effective. In respect of this we need to give this some more thought before consulting with the RMTU. Accordingly it seems pointless holding the re-election if there is a possibility of us agreeing some changes.

The company wishes to hear from us as to whether we are agreeable to such a delay.



We do not see any major difficulties with a delay as all current reps are elected to their role and therefore have a mandate from the membership at large.

OECD SURVEY MISSES THE POINT

The 2009 OECD Economic Survey of New Zealand misses the point in its prescription for the New Zealand economy, said union economist and CTU Secretary Peter Conway today.

"Although there are some good suggestions made, overall the prescription is to privatise in electricity, ports, ACC and health despite the fact that we have just witnessed massive private sector failure in financial management which has required huge bailouts by the public sector. Yet the OECD continues to push for ever greater market-based models across social provision and strategic infrastructure. This illustrates that the OECD seems to have learned nothing from the global financial crisis."

"We also disagree with criticism of the Government's undertaking not to sell public assets during this term of office. We strongly urge that public ownership of Air New Zealand, KiwiRail and Kiwibank is retained."

Proposals to raise the retirement age, introduce more road toll charges, remove investment screening for foreign investors, break up national wage bargaining in the health sector, formally separate hospitals from DHB funders and outsource hospital management will also raise major concerns.

It is encouraging however that the OECD notes the 'very low level of gross public debt' and that tax cuts are 'less potent' as demand boosters than timely investments in infrastructure.

Conway continued: "Given relatively low public debt and the predictions of significant lifts in unemployment, we believe that there is room for more urgent

public investment to create and retain jobs."

The OECD correctly notes the need to reduce the high current account deficit but is strangely uncritical of the reduction in KiwiSaver incentives to boost savings as one way to address this. The OECD also notes the ongoing need to lift productivity and the CTU agrees with this point.

Conway concluded: "We also agree that there is more room to move on the official cash rate and a reduction to 2 percent in the next few months is desirable."

PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN NZ RAIL SYSTEM

The final report has been published. The RMTU was consulted as a stakeholder by the consultants compiling the report. The report can be viewed at <http://www.ltsa.govt.nz/research/reports/370.pdf>



KEEPING ASB STAFF IN WORK –GOOD FREEZE THEIR WAGES - BAD

The bank workers union Finsec says the ASB bank's goal to avoid job cuts is a positive step in the right direction, but says wage freezes for middle income earners don't have to be part of the package given how profitable the bank is.

ASB announced a suite of actions today aimed at keeping staff in work, including a wage freeze for all of those on \$50,000 or more.

"ASB announced an after tax profit of \$238 million for the first six months of their financial year. We think they have enough wiggle room to provide low and middle income earners with a fair wage increase this year," said Finsec Campaigns Director Andrew Campbell.

Campbell said the financial crisis should not be used as justification to cut or freeze pay when banks continue to make large profits despite the current conditions.

"Some of the big banks are actually growing their profits in the midst of this recession.

Before wages are frozen we think ASB needs to open their books and explain why such a move is necessary and how it is not simply using the current crisis to cut costs and increase profit," said Campbell.

"ASB's goal to keep staff in work is positive, as is their commitment to not offshore work. This shows a social responsibility bereft in the other Australian owned banks who are currently shedding staff," said Campbell.

"We congratulate ASB on demonstrating a social conscious in relation to keeping their staff in work and call on other banks to do the same. However we do not believe that a wage freeze should be the price to pay to keep a job when the bank is so profitable," said Campbell.

BITS & BOBS

- The Union has ordered a further 10 Flags from the manufacturer which will be available for distribution to branches upon request.
- Minister of Finance Bill English, KR Chair Jim Bolger, Dunedin South MP Clare Curren and Labour leader Phil Goff all visited Hillside workshops yesterday.

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

"WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER"!

