

# THE ACTIVIST



**Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) 19 July 2011**

## **THE RMTU NMC – 2011 TO 2013**

National President – Aubrey Wilkinson

NI Ports – Dave Marden

SI Ports – Ruth Blakeley

General Rep – William “Bill” Sweeney

Northern Core Rail – Barry Simpkins

Central Core Rail – Howard Phillips

Southern Core Rail – Doug Blakie

The General Secretary Wayne Butson is also on the NMC and his current term of office runs till 2015.

The official result is attached.

## **CPI RAGING**

The Consumers Price Index (CPI) for the year to June 2011 quarter is 5.3%. The increase has surprised many as the increase is the highest for more than 20 years. This will certainly focus members’ minds as to the size of any wage increases that are to be bargained in the coming weeks (Lyttelton and Taieri Gorge spring to mind) and sow the seed of dissatisfaction in the minds of those who are covered by multi-year deals with increases of less than this amount. June next year will be interesting for KiwiRail for example – let’s hope their EBITDA continues to shine.

## **MINIMUM WAGE NEEDS TO RISE IMMEDIATELY**

The CTU is calling on the government to lift the minimum wage immediately rather than wait until next year.

CTU President Helen Kelly said “there are 100 000 people on the minimum wage, the 2% pay rise they received in April when the minimum wage went up is nowhere near keeping up with inflation announced yesterday at 5.3%. There are 250 000 people earning below \$15 an hour. We are calling on the government to take these extraordinary price increases into account and raise the minimum wage immediately. This move would help families on low incomes cope with the added costs they are facing every day.”

“For families on or near the minimum wage they are feeling the brunt of the full costs of CPI increases in their pockets. Power is getting more expensive, early childhood education, food and petrol are all costing families more, and their wages simply aren’t keeping up. The government is at least partly responsible for these increases in costs through their GST increase and cuts to ECE funding and needs to step up the minimum wage to help mitigate the effect of these massive cost increases.”

“We also call on businesses to recognise the high inflation in bargaining for wage increases this year,” said Helen Kelly.

## **THANKS OTAGO**

The following has been sent to the Otago Daily Times as a letter to the editor;

*The Rail and Maritime Transport Union wishes thank the people of Dunedin for supporting the campaign to save jobs and to secure the future of Hillside workshops.*

*Whilst we did not succeed in saving the 40 plus jobs under immediate threat we believe that we sent a clear message to KiwiRail and the Government that it cannot just write off rail engineering in this city and in New Zealand. We built organisation on the*

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

*job and amongst the wider community. We cemented alliances across the political spectrum.*

*KiwiRail and the Government succeeded in uniting local and national politicians, environmental groups, the business community, the City Council and the ordinary people of Dunedin against them.*

*Finally, you gave the men and women of Hillside pride and self-belief. They can stand tall, knowing that they were in the right and that the people of Dunedin are behind them.*

## HILLSIDE UPDATE

This has been a full blown campaign to secure the future of the workshops and rail engineering in New Zealand.

Whilst we haven't saved the 40 or so jobs under immediate threat we have achieved our other objectives of building organisation on the job and in the wider union. We've also cemented alliances across the political spectrum in Dunedin.

The campaign became a national issue with the action in Tauranga.

The question of whether we continue to buy rolling stock overseas when we can build it here is now firmly on the political agenda and will remain so through to the election and beyond if we have anything to do with it.

A special thank you to all Otago delegates and members, both rail and maritime, and particularly to Hillside delegates Les Ingram, Stu Johnstone, Dave Kearns and Grant Donaldson.

The call for Volunteers closes today at 1500hrs.

Interviews of all staff (other than those who have volunteered for redundancy) will occur on Tuesday and Wednesday.

## KIWI RAIL BRIEFINGS

Our view is that it was entirely inappropriate for Jim Quinn and his senior

leadership team to be touring NZ last week saying how well KiwiRail is doing at a time when Mechanical is sending our members onto the unemployment benefit. Otago members agreed and the delegates voted unanimously to recommend to Otago branch members to boycott the briefings. A picket line was placed on the entrance to Carisbrooke Stadium where the briefings were being held and 9 KiwiRail managers pushed through and crossed the picket line. 1 is a member and a complaint has been received from the hillside branch about this members actions and this matter will be dealt with under the Union's rules. All of those who crossed the picket line, bar one (KR Networks), were Hillside management.

## TAURANGA PICKET

The BOP rail and port branches, with support from the Waikato rail branch, successfully held a picket on Friday the 15th to protest the arrival of the new railway wagons from China.

The reaction from the public and other workers was supportive and we anticipate a good turnout to another picket when the next wagons arrive.

We wish to especially record our appreciation of members and officials from UNITE, MUNZ and DWU who all came and did a stint on the picket line. Solidarity forever!



## OTHER SOUTHERN NEWS

We've had a big push on training our delegates over the last month, running successful courses in Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.

It was gratifying to get such good turnouts to these courses and to watch the hold hands contribute so much to our newer delegates. I think some of the new people taught us all something as well.

Our members have put their skills to good use organising on the job since then, in particular we have been rebuilding our structure in Prime Port Timaru and have had great support from the wider delegate group

in Otago and Southland in support of the Hillside campaign.

We shouldn't forget our Christchurch members who have been quietly getting on with the job of organising in the most difficult of circumstances. A big thank you to new delegate Linda Eggers at Tranz Link who was thrown in the deep end and ably represented her members during pay talks only a few days after being elected.

## ROGER AWARD NOMINATIONS CALLED

Nominations for the famous Roger Award are now being called. Tranz Rail was a notable winner in the past along with other diabolical corporates. Who knows KiwiRail may be nominated this year????

Here are the links to the forms, in both Word and PDF.

<http://canterbury.cyberplace.co.nz/community/CAFCA/publications/Roger/2011Nomination.doc>

<http://canterbury.cyberplace.co.nz/community/CAFCA/publications/Roger/2011Nomination.pdf>

## TRANSPORT COSTS SPIKE, GOVT UNPREPARED

The ever-increasing rise in travel costs, detailed in today's Consumer Price Index release, highlight the need for better public transport strategies, the Green Party says.

Green Party MP and transport spokesperson Gareth Hughes said the 11 percent upward spike in New Zealand transport costs over the last year was just a taste of things to come.

"Oil prices will rise and fall, but the long-term trend is up. We need smarter Government strategies to protect us from a future where New Zealand families won't be able to afford to get about.

"Unfortunately, the Government's promotorway transport strategy locks us into oil-dependency. Instead, we should focus on further developing an efficient public transport system that everyone can use."

Statistics NZ today released the Consumer Price Index for the last financial year which showed a 21-year-high increase to the cost of living of 5.3 percent. It included an 11 percent increase to the transport costs and a 20.1 percent increase in fuel costs.

Mr Hughes said the Government needed to rethink its transport strategy if it seriously wanted to protect future generations.

"We asked the New Zealand Transport Agency what oil price assumptions they use in their latest models for the Roads of National Significance, and were told oil prices weren't taken into account.

"It's amazing that while fuel costs are skyrocketing, the Government still has its head in the sand on the role of oil prices in transport planning.

"Using woefully out of date assumptions about the price of oil is not a smart way for the Government to run the economy."

## FIJI AND TRADE UNION RIGHTS

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions met today with officers of the Fiji Trades Union Congress (General Secretary Felix Anthony and Assistant General Secretary Rajeshwar Singh).

This meeting discussed the deterioration in civil and trade union rights in Fiji including physical attacks on union leaders and decrees which remove basic and fundamental rights.

Peter Conway, NZCTU Secretary, said that the combined effect of the Public Emergency Regulations which makes meetings of more than 5 persons illegal, the Fiji Media Decree which curtails press freedoms and decrees amending employment rights makes it extremely difficult for unions to operate at all in Fiji.

"Now two further decrees are proposed - around 'Vital' industries and 'Critical' industries. These decrees would make it almost impossible for unions to function and would effectively remove many union officials from their current positions".

Peter Conway said that the NZCTU is joining the Australian Council of Trade Unions in a call to the Fijian Government to cease these attacks on union officials and worker rights.



"We are looking at all our options to support workers in Fiji. This will take the form of a broad based campaign involving meetings with the New Zealand Government and relevant employers, leafleting public events, providing information for members and discussion of possible bans and industrial action where appropriate."

## PRICE RISES HITTING FAMILIES HARD

The 5.3% rise in CPI for the year to June is another sign of working people being hit hard by the combination of GST and other government charges, plus big increases in food, electricity and petrol prices, says CTU Economist Bill Rosenberg.

"These are all increases in purchases which people can't avoid. It particularly hurts people on low incomes. Unions will be pushing hard for reasonable wage and salary increases to compensate for these increased costs."

Wage and salary rates rose only 1.8% in the year to March according to the Labour Cost Index, and of those getting increases, half were getting less than a 3.0% increase. Average hourly earnings rose only 2.6%.

"Wages are not keeping up with CPI inflation, with or without the GST increase. Statistics New Zealand says the CPI would still have increased by 3.3% without the rise in GST."

"When added to continuing high levels of unemployment and falling hours worked, times are tough for many people. Increasing reports of poverty and reliance on food banks are another sign of this," said Rosenberg.

## HAVE YOU MOVED RECENTLY?

To ensure members who fall within the coverage of balloted positions get the opportunity to vote for their preferred candidate please let National Office know your new mailing address or update your details online [www.rmtunion.org.nz](http://www.rmtunion.org.nz)

## KIWI RAIL DRUG & ALCOHOL WORKING PARTY

The next meeting of this joint working party is scheduled to occur in Auckland on 12 August. The RMTU participants are Scott Wilson and John Kerr (RMTU Organisers) and Phil Kearns, Hayden Smith, Howard Phillips.

## CONFERENCE 2011 REMITS

A reminder that Remits for conference 2011 close on 31 July 2011 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 and 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.

## LYTTELTON PORT CA UPDATE

The Combined Unions (RMTU, MUNZ, Foreman and Stevedores Union) are continuing negotiations for the renewal of the Collective Agreement covering union members employed at Lyttelton Port.

An attempt at a 12 month rollover of the document (April 2011 - April 2012) with a % increase earlier this year was unsuccessful and we entered full negotiations shortly after.

The rationale for a 12 month rollover of the CEA was in recognition that both people and plant have been hammered because of the Canterbury earthquakes.

The intent was to try and provide some breathing space for both parties, as members sort out their (often incredibly disrupted) personal lives, work to repair the Port, and continue to bring vital supplies for Canterbury across the wharf.





LPC would, in return, gain a breathing space for 12 months while working through insurance issues, repair requirements, and continue daily operations.

Unfortunately the expectations of both parties were not met and full negotiations continue. We next meet with LPC on the 17th and 18th August and we are making good progress so far.

## FISHING INQUIRY – A LONG TIME COMING

The Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ) said that on-going problems with the abuse and underpayment of overseas crews on joint venture vessels in New Zealand waters had become an international embarrassment.

Maritime Union of New Zealand general secretary Joe Fleetwood said that the MUNZ and the ITF had intervened in numerous cases in the past few years.

"We are interested to see the industry is now calling for the inquiry, but we have been calling for an inquiry like this for years. It has been a long time coming."

Current regulation of the New Zealand fishing industry and joint venture operators using international crews had failed he claimed. The union is demanding that the inquiry is not just a "box ticking exercise", but that there is proper regulation and enforcement. Wages and conditions for all workers should be "world class" and there should also be employment opportunities for New Zealand workers in their own industry.

Recently, 32 crew on board the Oyang 75 in Lyttelton abandoned ship claiming they had been physically and verbal abused and underpaid; several other similar cases have also been brought to light.

Earlier this week, Helen McAra, general secretary of the ITF-affiliated New Zealand Merchant Service Guild, criticised New Zealand's fishing code of practice for failing to protect overseas workers from abuse and exploitation.

## JOBS CUTS PROPOSED ON SAME DAY AS OVERSEAS RAIL WAGONS ROLL OFF SHIPS IN TAURANGA

Just hours after Dunedin KiwiRail workers found out that 44 of their workmates were to lose their jobs, the first shipload of rail wagons that is causing their redundancies rolled off the boat in Tauranga.

KiwiRail is proposing to cut 70 jobs at workshops in Dunedin and Lower Hutt, following their decision to purchase Auckland's new electric trains and 300 new container flat top wagons from overseas firms, rather than have them built locally.

The ship carrying the first of the Chinese built flat top wagons is expected to arrive in Tauranga at 10 pm tonight, subject to shipping time and discharge occurring.

It will be met by a noisy picket of local rail and port workers when they are delivered to the Norske Skog site in Mount Maunganui, Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

"All rail workers in New Zealand are united in their anger that good jobs in our industry are being lost overseas, because of a lack of action from government and KiwiRail," he said.

"KiwiRail has the capacity in Dunedin and Lower Hutt, it has a workforce dead keen to do the work, and it has a solid economic case for local involvement."

"Now, because of KiwiRail's decision to buy rolling stock made overseas, 70 rail construction jobs, and associated engineering industries in Dunedin and Lower Hutt, are at risk."

Wayne Butson said he was also concerned that Transport Minister Steven Joyce was deflecting responsibility for these job cuts

"2,000 Greenpeace members emailed Steven Joyce protesting the building of the flat top wagons overseas. They urged him to intervene to save local jobs. Despite this, it was KiwiRail CEO Jim Quinn who contacted Greenpeace.



"If Steven Joyce gets 2000 emailing him in protest, why isn't he responding? If he is prepared to direct KiwiRail to front this, he can direct KiwiRail to keep these jobs in New Zealand also."

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ACCEPTS CASE AGAINST ACC INJURY THRESHOLD

The Human Rights Commission has accepted The National Foundation for the Deaf combined cases submission that the ACC 6 percent injury threshold and age deduction scale are discriminatory on the grounds of age and disability.

Louise Carroll, Chief Executive of The National Foundation for the Deaf Inc said the main driver behind the threshold was to save money, and the law had no regard for the effects of hearing injury on people's lives.

"We believe every case should be judged on its merits, not according to an arbitrary and unvalidated formula," she said.

"Under the threshold a person must have a total hearing loss of at least 6 percent before ACC will take the claim, and if the damage is less than 6 percent the claim is rejected.

"Noise attacks the tones of our hearing we use for speech discrimination, and the way different tones are rated, it can take a lot of damage in that area to get a total 6 percent loss."

Mrs Carroll said that under the fixed age scale ACC deducted a percentage from an injured claimant's hearing depending on their age – regardless of whether the person had age-related hearing loss or not.

"The law takes no account of the fact we all react differently to damaging noise levels. The only fair and rational way of dealing with hearing injury claims is to treat them individually," she said.

Mrs Carroll said The National Foundation for the Deaf, along with the rest of the hearing disability sector, lodged petitions against the threshold in November 2009, and despite almost universal opposition, the threshold came into effect on July 1, 2010.

"We've lodged this submission with the Human Rights Commission, and we are delighted that has now been accepted, as people with hearing impairment will now have a voice."

Mrs Carroll said the next step would see the Human Rights Commission invite ACC to join mediation, and further action would depend on how ACC responded.



## ONEWORLD UNIONS OFFER EMPLOYERS 'PARTNERSHIP IN BUILDING ALLIANCE FUTURE'

A new body representing workers in oneworld alliance airlines today made its first move by offering a constructive partnership between trade unions and management on problem-solving and negotiation.

The One World of Labour Council – which was formed in April by unions affiliated to the ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) and with members working across the alliance – made the offer in a letter to the CEOs of each of oneworld's 12 member airlines.

In it, the Council's coordinator, John M Conley, says:

"I am writing to you to introduce the One World of Labour Council, a global group that comprises trade unions representing workers across the oneworld alliance member airlines.

"The oneworld airlines are operating increasingly as if they have a de facto merger, and this alliance on the part of our employers has caused us to forge even closer working relationships. The One World of Labour Council was established within the International Transport Workers' Federation, a Global Union Federation of 780 transport trade unions which collectively represent over 4.6 million workers worldwide, to strengthen collaboration, information sharing, joint planning and actions on issues of common concern to our members.

"The Labour Council met recently in Madrid, where its members reaffirmed their

commitment to acting in unity and becoming an effective counterpart to the employers in the oneworld alliance.

"We see ourselves as your partners in building a world class oneworld alliance that maintains high standards with regard to safety, customer care and employment conditions, and that strengthens its position through quality service and professionalism rather than by pursuing a futile and destructive strategy of labour cost competition.

"At present, industrial relations are clearly strained in a number of airlines within the oneworld group and our unions have pledged to support each other during these challenging times. Nevertheless, we wish to express our commitment to problem-solving and negotiating in good faith with those among our management counterparts who are willing to do the same. To this end, the Labour Council would like to invite you and your fellow leaders within oneworld to open channels of communication with us as soon as possible, both at the national and global levels."

**Strong Public  
Services  
Worth Voting For**

The One World of Labour Council seeks to forge a coordinated approach to labour relations across the alliance airlines and act as a voice for those working within it who might otherwise not be heard. The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) is a global union federation representing 4,668,950 members in 155 countries. Two hundred and seventy five of those unions represent workers in the aviation sector, including cabin crew, pilots, ground staff, baggage handlers and air traffic controllers.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENTS A SMALL STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

The appointments, today, of two women public service chief executives is a welcome step in addressing the gender imbalance at senior public management level but there is still a long way to go, says the PSA, the country's biggest union.

"We welcome Lesley Longstone as Secretary for Education and Carolyn Tremain as Comptroller of Customs and wish them well in their new positions. It's good to see women appointed at the highest level because we need to see the public service more accurately reflect its workforce which is predominantly women," says Brenda Pilott, PSA National Secretary

"We can only hope that these appointments are the start of an effort to reduce the gender gap at senior level in the public sector. 59% of public service workers are women, yet of the 33 public service departments only four have now women chief executives."

"It's evident that New Zealand needs to nurture and promote talent within the public service. Two of our most important departments, Education and Treasury, are now headed by executives from the UK. The recently appointed deputy chief executive of our largest department, the Ministry of Social Development, is also from the UK."

"While New Zealand will undoubtedly benefit from their overseas experience, we need to provide more professional development for our public servants and that's especially true if women in the public service are to reach the highest levels."

"A further task - for all chief executives - is the need to close the gender pay gap in the public service. The public service figures in 2010 showed a 14.4% gender pay gap - more than the national average. In Customs the gender pay gap is 15.1% and in the Ministry of Education the gap is a whopping 30.6% in a department where 81% of the staff are women. These are real challenges for Ms Tremain and Ms Longstone."

### **PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE YOUTH INEQUALITY**

A new report shows that there are practical solutions to addressing the inequality gap for disadvantaged youth, the Green Party said today.

The report by the New Zealand Institute, called More Ladders, Fewer Snakes, says that by increasing access to e-learning and

improving school-to-work transition we can reduce youth unemployment and the resulting social issues.

"Disadvantaged youth deserve a fair go when it comes to education and employment," Green Party Co-leader Metiria Turei said.

"This report provides practical solutions to help reduce the gap for those youth who start off with nothing.

"Engaging and energising youth to stay in education and giving them a helping hand, if they want to move into work, will ensure better outcomes for all New Zealand."

The report says that the cost of youth problems is over \$900 million annually to New Zealand while the cost to implement the recommendations of the report is only \$200 million.

"Other OECD countries spend more on addressing the causes of youth inequality. New Zealand needs to follow their lead," Mrs Turei said.

"Re-introducing a youth wage will just make the gap worse and will not provide the support and motivation our youth need to be tomorrow's parents, workers, citizens and leaders."

Link to the report

[http://www.nzinstitute.org/index.php/ownershipsociety/paper/more\\_ladders\\_fewer\\_s\\_nakes\\_two\\_proposals\\_to\\_reduce\\_youth\\_disadvantage/](http://www.nzinstitute.org/index.php/ownershipsociety/paper/more_ladders_fewer_s_nakes_two_proposals_to_reduce_youth_disadvantage/)

## CTU VOTE FAIRNESS ELECTION WEBSITE - HTTP://UNION.ORG.NZ/VOTE-FAIRNESS

We are pleased to advise that we have a new website up and running for the election campaign.

The site has two main sections, one, the Issues: will take you to the issues we have identified as being important issues in for election in November. Each of the issues has some broad bullet points and some

further information for more in depth analysis. Most of the pages have a downloadable graphic, and/or a PDF that can be printed off, or put into union publications and used as required.

And second, the resources: compiles all of the resources found under each of the issues in easily downloadable format.

There are also cartoons, important dates, updates, and we include some You Tube clips from our Fairness at Work campaign. A few more will be added during the campaign.

We'll be updating the website frequently throughout the campaign as issues arise or as new statistics or policies etc are released, please let us know if you have suggestions for content throughout this period. Please note that we have done a very brief update re cost of living but will revise that content more thoroughly in next few days.

All of the information and resources on the website are available for reproduction for use. Please note that all promoters are subject to the requirement in the Electoral Act 1993 to include their name and address on any election advertisement, which may include any materials you use from this site. Please see [www.elections.org.nz](http://www.elections.org.nz) for further information.

## "NO EVIDENCE" SAYS REPORT ON ACC REFORMS

A report by economist Peter Harris released today by the ACC Futures Coalition, challenges the practicality of the government's proposals for reforming ACC, and raises serious questions about whether there is even a problem that needs to be fixed in this way.

"There is very little evidence of a problem with ACC that any of the solutions being proposed need to address", said Mr. Harris, "and even less that any of the solutions will have positive benefits".

Consultation closes today on two options to change the funding of the ACC work account:





Extending the coverage of the Accredited Employers Programme (AEP) by reducing some compliance obligations and widening the choice of the form of partial self-insurance that participating employers can select; and

Privatising the work account by giving employers the option of insuring with private insurers for workplace accidents.

"The government appears to be relying on questionable data and a lot of assumptions in what they are proposing", said Mr. Harris. "If we look at the Accredited Employers Programme, between 2000 and 2009, AEP employers had better accident records (and therefore lower ACC costs) but there is no evidence that AEP caused the better performance. It is equally likely (and more plausible) that employers with better pre-existing accident records took advantage of the option of AEP to capture the benefits of their better systems and practices".

"Since 2006, the number of employers participating in the programme has declined steadily, by about 6% a year. If it was delivering improved results it would, over time, be opening up a gap between what the ACC charges for cover and what self-insurance could achieve, and the expectation would be that participant numbers would increase, not decrease", said Mr. Harris.

"Any margins to lower costs in the AEP in comparison with paying ACC levies will have been further eroded by the probability that work account levies will fall by 22% in 2012/13," said Mr. Harris.

"Private insurance is even a worse option. There are a number of uncertainties about how private insurance will operate and so it is difficult to evaluate what benefits it might bring. These uncertainties include things like how residual claims (i.e. all claims existing at the time of the introduction of the insurance option) will be funded; the nature of the prudential regime that participating insurers will have to operate under; and how the costs of public health and emergency transport services will be allocated", said Mr. Harris.

"These 'known unknowns' are so fundamental that in advice to Cabinet,

government officials concluded that 'there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding the magnitude of both costs and benefits (and in some cases even the sign - i.e. whether they will have a net positive or negative impact...'", said Mr. Harris.

"With all of the changes currently in train - the bedding of experience rating, falling work account levies, a degree of turmoil in the insurance industry in general, and fading enthusiasm for the AEP - change for the sake of change cannot be justified", Mr. Harris concluded.

Hazel Armstrong, spokesperson for the ACC Futures Coalition has welcomed the report.

"We have known that the government's proposals were fundamentally flawed", said Ms. Armstrong," because they represent a major shift away from the principles on which ACC was founded and the employer the client of the insurer, rather than the injured worker. But now we know that the financial assumptions on which this policy is based are equally flawed. It is time for the government to step back from these ideologically driven proposals and recognise ACC for what it is - a great institution that is integral to our system of social support."

The report can be found at [http://issues.co.nz/library\\_images/accfuture\\_s/acc\\_report\\_by\\_peter\\_harris\\_july11.pdf](http://issues.co.nz/library_images/accfuture_s/acc_report_by_peter_harris_july11.pdf)

## **WILKINSON MUST GO TO PROGRESS MINE SAFETY**

The Government must replace current Minister of Labour Kate Wilkinson and act immediately to improve mine safety, Green Party West Coast based MP Kevin Hague said today.

The Royal Commission into the Pike River mining tragedy has heard from a Department of Labour witness that Ms Wilkinson rejected suggested improvements to mine safety in 2009.

"Ms Wilkinson has compromised her credibility by rejecting safety improvements suggested in a 2008 Department of Labour Discussion Paper such as check inspectors," said Mr Hague.

"Someone has to be held accountable for failing to implement steps to improve mine safety.

"Nothing has been done to improve mine safety for workers since Pike River.

"The Government doesn't need to wait for the Royal Commission before improving the safety of those working underground.

"The Bolger National Government of 1992 disestablished the position of check inspector – a worker with the authority to clear a mine considered dangerous.

"Evidence before the Royal Commission now shows that the current Minister quashed suggested improvements to the health and safety of those in the underground mining industry.

"The Government should implement the safety recommendations from the 2008 Department of Labour Discussion Paper now.

"If Ms Wilkinson is an impediment to improving mine safety, then surely she should step aside," said Mr Hague.

### **BITS AND BOBS**

- **C3 Negotiations (Mount)** - We will be holding a delegates meeting on Wednesday 20th to finalise the business unit claims before meeting C3 the following week.
- **Champion** - We have finalised the Union's claims and sent them to the employer, and we are waiting for confirmation of a date for negotiations.
- **Quality Marshalling** - The parties to the QM collective agreement met at a Facilitation meeting, and the Union will be calling a meeting of to discuss the outcome.
- **UCL** - The negotiations are moving along.
- **Toll Networks (Toll Tranz Link)** - Ratification meetings have been occurring throughout NZ on the proposed settlement. Indications are that the proposed settlement seems to be acceptable to members.
- **In the Next Activist** we will be calling for nominations for all KiwiRail

industrial council positions (except those to be filled by the recently elected NMC members e.g. Barry Simpkins will be the northern loco rep on the KIC and Doug Blakie will be the Southern Yard Ops rep on the KIC).

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

- **Maintain situational awareness at all times;**
- **Ensure all are aware of the work to be performed;**
- **Make safety your first priority;**
- **Make sure you will go home safe and sound at the end of your shift;**
- **Make sure your workmate will go home safe and sound at the end of their shift;**
- **Do not allow yourself to be distracted.**

**Do not make assumptions**

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

