

# THE ACTIVIST



**Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) 5 April 2018**

## **WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY- 28 APRIL 2018**

The RMTU's theme for Workers Memorial Day is "Safe Shifts, Safe Workers".

Safe rosters/shift work arrangements are critical to reducing the risks to workers health and safety from fatigue. Workers who are suffering from workplace fatigue are more likely to make mistakes which can lead to serious injury. There are also long term health effects associated with chronic sleep restriction.

The Workers Memorial Day posters will be with Branches by the end of next week and the Union encourages Branches to plan events to commemorate the day. As the day falls on a Saturday some branches have chosen to hold the service/ceremony on an adjacent normal working day.

## **KIWI RAIL DSC- ASBESTOS ISSUE**

Maintenance workers identified asbestos during a routine muffler change on a DSC shunt loco. Since then all 29 DSC's have been tested and 15 of the DSC's are found to have a high risk of asbestos exposure.

Asbestos has been found in the pipe lagging, engine, dust in the electrical cabinets, lagging in the undercarriage, gaskets and arc shields. Three DSC's were found to have asbestos dust in the cab and

have since been quarantined and two have been cleaned.

Immediate steps to reduce exposure to workers include the deferral of maintenance of DSC's. The electrical cabinets are to be sealed immediately, cabs are being retested for asbestos and daily checks involving operations staff entering the electrical cabinet are suspended.

## **RESULT OF CALL FOR NOMINATIONS – KIWI RAIL INDUSTRIAL COUNCILS – 3 VACANCIES FILLED**

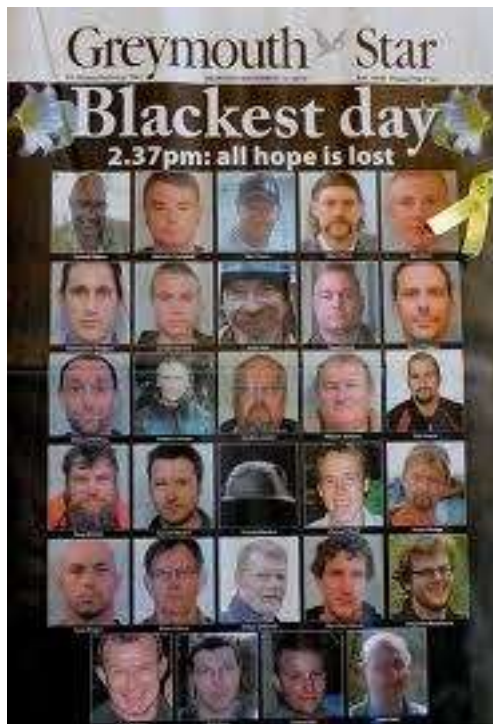
The Joint KiwiRail Industrial Councils have governing terms of reference signed by the Union and KiwiRail Ltd. They are intended to be the escalation centre for industrial issues which arise during the course of the employment relationship on a day to day basis which have not or cannot be resolved at a local or branch level or issues that have national

significance.

**The term of office is 2 years.**

**KiwiRail I & A Industrial Council  
Infrastructure Track Worker position.**

Dave Taua is a track worker based at Westfield. No other nominations were received and so Dave was the winner – Congrats and we look forward to your



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

contribution on behalf of your peers on the Council.

### **KiwiRail Freight Industrial Council Locomotive** Northern.

Brendon Smith is a Locomotive Engineer based at Westfield. No other nominations were received and so Brendon was the winner – Congrats and we look forward to your contribution on behalf of your peers on the Council.

### **KiwiRail Interislander Industrial Council Ferry Operations (Picton Outside Terminal)**

Malcolm Slater is a Ferry Terminal Operator in Picton. No other nominations were received and so Malcolm was the winner – Congrats and we look forward to your contribution on behalf of your peers on the Council.

## **SUCCESSFUL TWO DAY DELEGATE TRAINING IN CHRISTCHURCH**

Nine delegates and active members from Dunedin Rail, Timaru Port and Christchurch Rail and Lyttelton Port Branches attended at two day course in Christchurch in mid-February. One measure of success of multi day courses is if the participants come back after the first day: they all did so something was obviously going right!

The course covered basic organising on the job and used a variety of methods including group work, active learning and film to enable people to process and share knowledge and also to learn and practice skills. The benefit of having a two day course was that we were able to go into matters in far more depth than would be the case if less time had been available.

Members worked on the role of the delegate and active member; organising around issues; the structure of our union; health and safety and the RMTU; and representing members on a collective and



individual basis. They were given a toolkit of ideas and techniques to employ back on the job and by now will have started on actions they identified as a priority in their worksite and/or branch.

Our thanks once again to our comrade union E-tu for use of their premises – we're always made very welcome!

## **LYTTELTON PORT DISPUTE GENERATES HUGE SUPPORT FOR RMTU**

At the time of writing the RMTU's dispute with LPC remains unresolved. Members will be aware from extensive mainstream and social media coverage that members have taken run a total of seven days of full strike action and been illegally locked out for two days. Whilst we are pursuing our legal rights in relation to the latter we are under no illusions that this dispute is primarily industrial and not one that will necessarily be resolved in court.

Events are moving very fast and rather than give a blow by blow account of the dispute for Activist readers that may well be out of date by the time it is published we want to focus on the huge amount of support we have received from the wider union movement and the general public.

Our comrades in other RMTU Branches across New Zealand, at the CTU, in MUNZ, FIRST Union, the

Tertiary Education Union, the Manufacturing and Construction Union, the Meatworkers' Union, The Dairy Workers Union, Etu, the PSA, and the NZ Nurses' Organisation have all given practical, moral and financial support ranging from the loan of a loudhailer to up to S10000 donation to our strike fund. We have had wonderful guest speakers attend our demonstrations and meetings and people have been generous with their time on the picket line and elsewhere. Thank you comrades from the bottom of our hearts.

Local Lyttelton band The Eastern played a free gig for our members and the new owner of the Lyttelton Arms in London street put on

a free pie and an pint for hungry and thirsty strikers. Our members also received very positive comments from the public at rallies and demonstrations and at Lyttelton market when we distributed leaflets. Even our much publicised leaflet drop was warmly received by the neighbours of LPC board members in their residential suburbs with several people complimenting the RMTU on our dignity and discipline.

We hope to report the successful resolution of the dispute in the next issue of the activist.

## ALERT - SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media use appears to be growing and many people put a lot of personal information in their profiles. A quick search for advice on social media privacy informs that too much information can lead to hackers and identity theft.

The real concern we have is that if you have your employer stated in your profile then any interactions that you believe are just coming from you may be also include your employer when someone checks your profile. This may then breach an employer's IT policy and potentially put employment at risk.

Restricting access to profiles maybe one way around it but not listing your employer at all is probably the best.

## AUCKLAND TRANSDEV BARGAINING CONCLUDES WITH 99% VOTE TO RATIFY COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

The success of our negotiations with Transdev Auckland was demonstrated by the huge majority in favour of ratification.

The RMTU's objectives going into talks were to secure real wage growth, protect our members' jobs and to build organisation on and off the job. We achieved all three with a deal that secured a backdated 2.5% wage

increase and committed the parties to engaging in a High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) type process to address the underlying issues that led Transdev and Auckland Transport to try and force driver only operation on our members.

Organisation amongst members has never been better: attendance at meetings, rallies and demonstrations was first class; participation is higher than ever before with members collecting signatures for petitions, lobbying politicians, conducting surveys and supporting two bouts of industrial action – a one day strike in December and a week-long overtime ban that broke the impasse.

The ratified agreement expires at the end of September so we have a four month breather to gather our strength for the next round of negotiations, although if HPHE works as it should discussions should be far easier this time round.

The link to the Returning Officer memo <http://www.rmtunion.org.nz/articles/article-bargaining.php>



## BLACK TUESDAY KICKS OFF RAIL UNIONS CAMPAIGN AGAINST NEO-LIBERAL FRENCH

### PRESIDENT

French rail workers have launched three months of rolling train strikes, prompting street demonstrations and transport chaos, in the first major test for President Emmanuel Macron's pro-business attack on workers' rights in the state sector.

The first day of the strikes – dubbed "Black Tuesday" – caused large-scale disruption to the country's 4.5 million rail passengers. Frantic crowds on Paris platforms queued to squeeze themselves on to scarce trains with some passengers falling on to tracks, while railway workers and students marched through major cities.

Over three-quarters of train drivers and almost half of essential rail staff walked off

the job across the country. Only one regional train in five and one high-speed TGV train out of eight was running. Commuter lines into Paris were severely affected and international train services were cut, with no trains between France, Switzerland, Italy and Spain and three out of four trains running on the Eurostar service connecting to London.

The strikes against Macron's plan to push through changes to France's vast state rail system that unions say are setting it up for privatisation mark the biggest industrial action against the president since he took office last year.

Macron only won a quarter of the vote for his reform programme – which never talked about rail privatisation- in last year's presidential election first round, and only got his second-round majority because the choice was between him and the fascist Marine Le Pen. Public opinion has moved against Macron recently. His personal ratings have slipped beneath 50%, while public support for rail reform has narrowed from 16 points in mid-March to seven points now.

The strikers believe momentum is on their side – even making comparisons with the May 1968 uprising.

## RMTU MEMBERSHIP DATABASE UPDATES

The RMTU membership database is an important tool in contacting Union Members or ensuring members are kept up to date with the latest information. We are concerned at the number of "unknown" or "return to sender" envelopes returned to National Office as part of this year's officer elections. We remind members that if you wish to exercise their rights and participate in the decision making aspects of the Union they should ensure they inform National Office of any change of address or contact details as soon as possible. This includes any change of designation or employer.

Branch Secretaries hold "update of membership forms" that you can post or fax in or alternatively for immediate action

members are reminded to utilise the update of membership details link on our website [www.rmtunion.org.nz](http://www.rmtunion.org.nz).

For example – All national Union elected positions are up for election this year and so there may be votes conducted by mail. If we have the incorrect address info you will not get a vote as you will never receive a voting paper. **Update now!**

## LABOUR MUST KEEP ITS WORD AND GET BEHIND ELECTRIC TRAINS

KiwiRail's decision in December 2016 to cease running electric locomotives on the North Island main trunk line was one of its most regressive moves to date. Instead of extending the electrification north to Auckland and south to Wellington, they wanted to mothball the lot.

In place of upgrading and retrofitting the worthy fleet of electric locomotives, they opted instead to increase the use of Chinese-built dirty diesels, many of which have subsequently spent days and weeks out of commission, and which have inbuilt problems as well as unexpected and new complications needing to be fixed.

It doesn't make sense, economically or environmentally. Running electric locomotives on the main trunk between Palmerston North and Hamilton saved KiwiRail up to eight million litres of diesel and eliminated up to 12,000 tonnes of carbon emissions a year. They were on a winner environmentally.

Unfortunately, KiwiRail was in a bind. They didn't have the funding to upgrade and modernise the line and the National-led Government wouldn't back them. Rail lines such as Stillwater to Ngakawau, Napier to Gisborne, and Northland couldn't even be maintained at a level to avoid deterioration over time.

The main trunk between Wellington and Auckland and the South Island main trunk line from Picton to Invercargill were only receiving sufficient investment to maintain them in their current state. There was no leeway for improvement.



Encouraged by a backward-looking Government, KiwiRail took the cheap option and, unlike dozens of other countries investing in electric rail and light rail, they turned the switch off.

Protests came from all quarters, including the Greens, who called it "short-term thinking", the Labour Party, which promised to reverse the order, environmentalists, who bewailed the increased pollution, and even the head of the British committee on climate change, Lord Deben, who called it "atrocious" and "an incredibly bad look for New Zealand".

Meanwhile, trucks were given a green light to expand as fast as they could. Big trucking companies got approval to continue creating increasing quantities of air pollution and traffic congestion — without bearing anywhere near their fair share of the costs — and with the blessing of the Government of the day, which talked constantly about roads, roads, and more roads, for more and bigger trucks, and strengthened bridges to take their ever-growing loads.

KiwiRail says the old (30-plus years) electric locos are unreliable and that the changeover at Hamilton and Palmerston North is inefficient. But its new Chinese-built DL diesel locos have proven to be anything but reliable and that "inefficient" changeover time is a mere 22 minutes added to an Auckland-to-Wellington journey. Negligible.

It didn't have to be this way. Last August, Michael Wood, then Labour's transport spokesman, gave KiwiRail written notice that a future Labour Government would save the electric locomotives on the North Island main trunk.

Unfortunately, it has been radio silence since then.

We know this new Government has a hell of a job on its hands fixing the mess the other

lot left behind, but we reckon this one is an easy win. Especially with New Zealand First and the Green Party in their corner.

Rail has to be one of the cornerstone industries of our clean, green future. We could have electric rail running electric locomotives built in New Zealand using New Zealand steel, moving freight from our ports to regional manufacturers, carrying tourists from Auckland and Wellington to Taranaki, the Central Plateau and East Coast while getting commuters quickly and efficiently to work and back again. This is the future we could have with a bit of foresight and decisive action. We're talking about good jobs, good investment and good environmental outcomes, the kind of opportunity which doesn't come around very often.

We're asking the Government to step up, keep their word and do the right thing for New Zealand.

Save the electric locomotives on the North Island main trunk. Rule out replacing any electric locomotives with diesel. Give KiwiRail the tools and funding it needs to build a modern, green, successful rail system. One we all deserve.



## LYTTELTON PORT REFUSES TO COMPROMISE WITH WORKERS: FURTHER

## INDUSTRIAL ACTION ON THE CARDS

Disappointed by Lyttelton Port Company's refusal to compromise and resolve the continuing industrial dispute, port workers have again given 14 days' notice of industrial action to begin on 20 April.

"Our members voted on this before Easter, but we held off issuing further strike notices in the hope the company would alter their approach to the negotiations. We hoped everyone could take a deep breath and find

a proper resolution, especially as the Port's chief executive has returned from his overseas trip.

"Unfortunately that hasn't happened," says John Kerr, South Island organiser for the Rail and Maritime Transport Union.

"There have been discussions, but once again LPC has rejected any compromise we suggested. They remain determined to force our members to pick between inferior pay and conditions, or unsafe rosters.

"Today we've issued notice that our members will go on strike for five days from 20 April.

"LPC should use the next 14 days to think about how they're treating the people who make their profits. They seem more focussed on imposing unfair pay and conditions than letting us get back to work.

"We cannot give up this fight, but we want to resolve this dispute quickly and restore security to the South Island logistics supply chain.

"Our members want to be safe and healthy at work, to be remunerated the same as other workers at the port doing the same or equal work, and for their employer to be flexible rather than inflexible in negotiating with them.

"We've bent over backwards to try and sort this out, meeting with management multiple times and providing many options to resolve this dispute," says John Kerr.

"We thank the people of Canterbury for the support they've shown us. We know that they understand decent jobs and fair employment agreements are the only way to keep our region going."

## **KIWI RAIL REMEMBERS THE WAHINE**

An Interislander ferry will sound its horn to mark the time the Wahine struck Barrett Reef and another will form the backdrop to a flotilla on Wellington Harbour, as KiwiRail helps commemorate the 50-year anniversary of the Wahine tragedy.

KiwiRail is a key sponsor of this year's Wahine 50th commemorations, which will take place in Wellington on 10 April.

"The rail ferry Aramoana, which was part of what is now the Interislander fleet, played a role in rescuing passengers from the Union Steam Ship Company's Wahine. Crew from Aramoana bravely volunteered to man lifeboats in the rough seas and rescue passengers and crew from the sinking ferry," says KiwiRail Chief Executive Peter Reidy.

"KiwiRail and Interislander wanted to help commemorate this event as it's important to recognise the lives that were lost and saved, the brave rescuers involved and the impact it has had on the maritime industry.

"The Wahine disaster helped shape maritime safety systems in New Zealand, and changed the way ferries operate on the Cook Strait.

"Today, we have better designed ships, improved bridge management systems, state of the art weather forecasting, comprehensive seafarer training and stricter regulations, all of which mean sailing on the Cook Strait is a much safer experience for customers and crew than it was 50 years ago.

"The Wahine disaster also changed the way New Zealand responds to disasters and gave rise to organisations such as the Life Flight rescue helicopter service, which Interislander supports.

"We are honoured to help commemorate this important event in New Zealand's history."

As part of the 50th anniversary commemorations in Wellington on 10 April, the Interislander ferry Aratere will sail past during the Dawn Service at Eastbourne. It will sound its horn at 6.41am, the time the Wahine struck Barrett Reef. A wreath will be thrown from the deck of the ferry to mark the occasion.

In the afternoon, the Interislander ferry Kaiarahi will sit as the backdrop to a flotilla steam-past of around 40 boats in Wellington harbour (including some which took part in the Wahine rescue 50 years ago).

## **CARRIAGE WORK FOR HILLSIDE**

The company behind a planned luxury train journey through New Zealand will use Hillside Workshops in Dunedin to refurbish its carriages. The arrival of the carriages is the first sign plans released by the company late last year for a luxury train journey



through regional New Zealand are coming to fruition.

Antipodean Explorer has confirmed it owned 16 carriages that turned up recently on a siding in Dunedin. It also confirmed they would be refurbished at the Hillside site that closed amid controversy in 2012.

The company has leased space at Hillside to carry out the work. The company had financial backing from Chinese company Fu Wah. The 16 former commuter train carriages had arrived in Dunedin from Taumarunui. Over the next two years these carriages will be refurbished at the Hillside engineering workshop in South Dunedin. KiwiRail had been commissioned to haul them from Taumarunui to South Dunedin.

Dunedin South MP Clare Curran said it was very good news. Her understanding was the company had leased at least one building at Hillside and was intent on going

ahead".

There was support building to rejuvenate Hillside, she said. Dunedin Railways had also been involved.

## BITS AND BOBS

- **Petone Railway Station ANZAC memorial Service is on 25 April 2018 commencing at 0700hrs. See you there!**

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

## SAFETY FIRST

**BEFORE**

**AFTER**

Support these NZ companies & their workers

Keep NZ work for NZ workers

**Hillside Engineering & local companies:  
Expert builders and remanufacturers of rail rolling stock**