

Media Release: Rail & Maritime Transport Union (RMTU)
Tuesday August 9, 2011

13,854 Kiwis want to save Hillside and Hutt rail workshops

Lower Hutt rail workers whose jobs are at risk say the government needs to listen to the 12,000 people have signed a petition calling for trains to be made at home.

The workers' petition was presented to Dunedin South MP Clare Curran at Parliament a short time ago by workers from Hillside and Hutt rail Workshops. Clare Curran was flanked at Parliament by Green Party Transport Spokesperson Gareth Hughes

"Up to 30 positions at Lower Hutt's workshop are now at risk. This follows the redundancies of 44 Dunedin workers last month, both a result of KiwiRail purchasing rail rolling stock and electric units overseas" said Wayne Butson.

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

"This followed 40 Diesel Locomotives for the North Island being ordered and built in China, and making matters worse, the job for 600 new container flat top wagons also went to an overseas firm."

"When Steven Joyce rejected the BERL report on the Close Up programme last year, he held out hope that at least some of the 4000 needed flat top container wagons would be built locally."

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

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

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

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

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

"We have always wanted these trains to be built in Dunedin and Lower Hutt but a local involvement provision from the lead supplier was the next best option. It is essential that this is rigorously pursued by KiwiRail and our discussions with CAF, a shortlisted bidder for Auckland, have shown they are keen to maximise local involvement," he said.

"Unemployment is at 6.5 per cent, yet one practical way the government could reduce this rate is to focus on Government procurement. This country is going to experience a dire shortage of key skilled

trades so long as we allow our heavy fabrication manufacturing and other work to be continuously sent offshore”, said Wayne Butson.

We have yet to meet anyone who thinks that sending significant manufacturing contracts offshore is a good idea and appropriate use of Kiwi taxpayer’s funds.

“No one in New Zealand other than KiwiRail CEO Jim Quinn and Transport Minister Steve Joyce agrees that we should be standing idle and letting go of our rail industry jobs, putting the wider engineering industries in Dunedin and Lower Hutt at risk.”

Details:

Where: Parliament steps

When: 12noon till 12.30pm

What: Presentation of Save Hutt and Hillside petition

Ends.

For further information: RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson on 04-473-6693 or 027-496-2461