

# THE *Transport Worker*

MARCH 2013

The journal of the RMTU –  
NZ's largest specialist transport union



## SERVICE OVER SAFETY

Is KiwiRail turning back the clock?



6 ICLS FORUM - WELLINGTON



The 75 delegates from seven countries discussed the challenges facing working people.

10 ITF CANADA



Wayne Butson joined 200 unionists from 76 unions in 44 countries at the ITF conference in Canada.

27 UNION DONATES VEHICLE



The RMTU and MUNZ clubbed together to fund a vehicle to ferry children at the learning centre in Mae Sot on the Burma border.

COVER PHOTO

KiwiRail clock is typical of clocks in the operations terminals nationwide. This one is in the meeting room on level 4, Wellington Railway Station and is used by the HR and H&S people. See story page 18.

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Wayne Butson  
General secretary  
RMTU

KiwiRail heading in the wrong direction

A hearty kia ora and best wishes to all branch officers and members as we head into what is going to be a very testing, stimulating and full on year. Already, 2013 is throwing up challenges of maintaining job security in the face of increasing contracting out with all the safety issues which that raises. Additionally, there is a burgeoning aggression from employers as they persevere with the tried and failed past policies of building profits on the backs of the workers. The good news is that I know we're up for the challenge. I feel a tidal change growing amongst New Zealanders as this Government shows its true colours.

This issue of The Transport Worker has a very strong theme of health and safety. This is deliberate. It is also strongly focussed on rail and this is unfortunate as we try to have a balance between port and rail. However, the safety issues in rail are such that they must be aired in such a way that the whole story is told.

TAP takes us back

You have all heard me wax lyrical about the much-vaunted Quinn-inspired 'Turn Around Plan' (TAP) being a return to the past or my personal favourite epithet: 'So successful we have now turned around and are heading back from whence we came.' Well it's not just rhetoric – it is fact.

Let's recall a little history. On 10 May 2000 a Christchurch shunter was killed in a shunting accident bringing to five the number of TranzRail employees fatally injured over a 12 month period including:

- A crew member of the Arahura killed during a boat drill;
- A loco engineer killed in a head on train crash at Waipahi;
- A shunter killed in the Wellington rail yard;
- A shunter killed in the Woolston rail yard; and
- A shunter killed in the Middleton rail yard.

At the time it was estimated that the rate of fatal accidents amongst TranzRail staff was equivalent to 39.3 deaths per 100,000 workers – eight times the New Zealand average.

Let me acknowledge immediately that we have had no fatalities in rail for a few years however, given the increasing SPADs (signal passed at danger), yard incidents, hours of work breaches and other safety statistics heading in the wrong direction I have been experiencing greater discomfort. That anyone was not killed is more good luck than good management. Your Union has acted by restoring the dedicated H&S organiser position and KiwiRail has reacted by restructuring H&S management positions and appointing a new leader in Ballard. My greatest discomfort however, has been observing the progressive shift within KiwiRail back toward 'service over safety'. This culture and management-inspired dogma was, in my view, at the heart of the TranzRail scenario which caused the fatalities referred to earlier. Those five

deaths gave momentum to the RMTU's call for a Ministerial Inquiry into rail H&S and the then Labour Government's Margaret Wilson ordered one. The testimony from the workers and families was riveting and a great regret of mine is that we did not compose a video recording of them at the time. The Inquiry's report was published in August 2000 and is a compelling read. At the time of the inquiry the RMTU was firmly of a view that the company and managers were putting productivity and service ahead of safety. Sadly we see that same culture returning, typified in my opinion by the clocks placed in workplaces throughout NZ which state 'We live and die by the clock' on their faces and the company's in-house newsletter publishing a traffic light table on

'On time performance' – designed to make workers feel guilty by highlighting every delay as a disappointment to passengers and customers. It exhorts them to get all trains and ferries into the green zone.

In my experience our workers do the best they can for their employer and try very hard to see trains are on time. The question is, how much pressure is needed before they start to cut corners and take risks? The RMTU is certainly not against 'on time performance' but the messages must always be balanced to ensure that it is not done at the expense of safety. Where are the clocks stating 'Safety First'? Or the full page message in the newsletter exhorting workers to do the job correctly, safely and on time? Culture change is not done overnight.

Rather it is done slowly, incrementally and sometimes insidiously and this mantra of 'on time' is a direct attempt to return rail to the past of profit before safety in my view. It is time for it to stop and for Quinn and Ballard to enforce balance and consistency of message within KiwiRail if they are ever to have a hope of getting to their stated goal of zero harm!

Note: Should you wish to read more about the history of rail and safety then you will be pleased to note that the Union will be launching a book authored by Hazel Armstrong on Workers Memorial day (28 April) titled 'A job for life or your life for the job'.

United we stand – divided we beg. 🌐

## Questions at Parliament over TAP

By Phil Twyford MP

**T**HE so-called Turn Around Plan and KiwiRail's cuts and retrenchment were back on the table when CEO Jim Quinn and board chairman John Spencer fronted at Parliament's transport committee for the annual review of KiwiRail's performance.

Opposition MPs had plenty of questions for the pair: the \$200 million of maintenance cuts, the rotting sleepers, the closure and sale of Hillside, mothballing the Gisborne-Napier line, the axe hanging over the Capital Connection commuter service, the problems with the China-sourced locos and wagons, the uncertainty over Clifford Bay and replacing the Interislander ferries.

Quinn and Spencer doggedly maintained the Turn Around Plan was realistic and the organisation was making progress. Credit to them for toeing the company line, and there is no doubt the organisation has chalked up a few successes, most notably the growth in freight volumes and the renovation of Auckland's commuter network.

But really we should have had Transport Minister Gerry Brownlee in the room to answer the litany of procurement fiascos, cuts and retrenchment that have kept KiwiRail in the headlines for the wrong reasons.

It's National's bone-headed transport policy that forced KiwiRail into closing the Gisborne-Napier line without doing a



comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the line and it's economic impact in the region. If you applied the same narrow financial analysis to the country's rural roads you'd have to close half of them.

National's insistence on a least-cost procurement model saw the new locos and wagons bought el cheapo resulting in endless technical problems and the loss of 40-plus skilled engineering jobs at Hillside.

National's unrealistic financial targets for KiwiRail forced the cuts and deferral of \$200 million of network maintenance.

While management is adamant the maintenance cuts won't compromise safety

they did admit the failure to maintain old and damaged culverts was behind the wash out that closed the Gisborne-Napier line.

Across the country KiwiRail missed its target of replacing 71 old culverts last year, and only replaced 49. This is cause for alarm. The Gisborne-Napier wash-out shows what happens when essential maintenance work is not carried out.

KiwiRail told MPs it has 12,197 rail line culverts around the country and has done a risk assessment identifying 53 high priority culverts but '...in spite of every effort to mitigate risk, some incidents of wash out may still occur...'

The cuts are simply stupid. At the very time it needs to be upgrading its network and improving efficiency so KiwiRail can compete with long haul trucking, the Government's unrealistic 'Turn Around Plan' is putting enormous stress on the organisation and forcing it to cut maintenance.

National's plan for rail is not workable. KiwiRail has missed its financial targets for two of the last three years. It is being forced to make cuts that are a false economy.

At a time when the Government is wasting billions of dollars on its 'motorways of madness', it makes no sense to cripple the national rail line. 🌐

■ Phil Twyford is the MP for Te Atatu and Labour's transport spokesperson.

# Hillside laid to rest

ON 21 December last year the vast majority of RMTU members at Hillside Workshops reported for work for the last time. Later that morning, at 11 o'clock, every train in New Zealand stopped for two minutes and rail and port workers everywhere stopped working to mark the end (for now) of rail manufacturing in New Zealand.

On the waterfront across the country cranes ceased loading, straddles stayed on the patch, the security gates closed, coal loaders stopped and chippies put down their hammers.

On the rails, trains everywhere ground to a halt, track workers stopped welding and doing heat runs, tradespersons put down their tools, in offices workers stopped typing and answering calls.

All out of respect for their comrades and fellow union members in Dunedin.

At the same time the Hillside branch gathered at the main gate of the workshops, by the memorial plaque to the workers who had given their lives in two world wars. They were joined by members of the wider rail and port membership, local politicians and the public.

Branch chair Stu Johnstone and branch secretary Les Ingram laid a wreath and said a few words before the gathering observed

two minutes silence.

Readers of *The Transport Worker* will have followed the gallant RMTU-led campaign to save Hillside over the past two years. Our Union, and by that we mean the men and women of the Hillside branch and their fellow members around the country, have done everything possible to try and prevent the closure of the workshops. When the National Government was returned to power in November 2011 it was only a matter of time before the axe would fall. We've fought hard to get manufacturing jobs on the political agenda and, to this extent, have succeeded, though sadly this was not enough to prevent Hillside being gutted and a John Key victory at the last election.

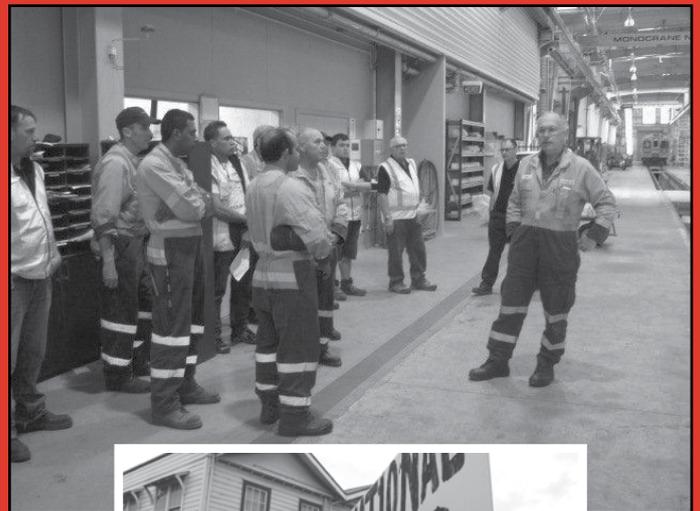
Throughout 2012 we kept up the pressure, making sure the story of Hillside and the decline and growing unemployment in New Zealand manufacturing was never far from the headlines. This wasn't enough to save the workshops, but manufacturing and jobs are now amongst the top concerns of voters and the opposition parties are running a Parliamentary inquiry into manufacturing. The record of the Key Government on jobs and battling unemployment is shameful. All they have done is grow the problem and our overseas debt and balance of payments deficit.

Of course all of this was, and is, of little comfort to the men and women who were thrown on the scrapheap with the gutting of Hillside. The bitter taste of failure is something we all have to live with as we remember the words of Jimmy Reid, the Scottish shop steward who led the Upper Clyde shipbuilders in their fight to save their industry in the 1970s:

"To appreciate fully the inhumanity of this situation, you have to see the hurt and despair in the eyes of a man suddenly told he is redundant, without provision made for suitable alternative employment. Someone, somewhere has decided he is unwanted, unneeded, and is to be thrown on the industrial scrap heap."

As the media spotlight moves elsewhere, the reality of what has happened is sinking in. Families are facing a future of uncertainty as breadwinners look for work and workers learn about the harshness of finding and holding down a job in an economy where the employing class is in the saddle and there is very often no union in their new workplace.

The fight is not over. A nucleus of workers remain at Hillside running the heavy lift maintenance facility and Labour has committed to reinstating it when they regain power. 🇳🇿



(1) Dunedin South MP Clare Curran lays the blame.



*Stu Jobnstone speaks from the heart.*



*Life member Jim Kelly stands with Otago Rail branch secretary Tim Spence in opposing the closure.*



# International Centre for Labour Solidarity (ICLS) Forum

Wellington, December, 2012



Delegates gathered in front of the Wellington Railway Station. (inset) CTU president Helen Kelly and (below) the chairman of SRUT Thailand, Somsak Kosaisook.

**T**HE RMTU hosted the New Zealand Forum of the ICLS late last year. More than 75 delegates from transport unions in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines descended on Wellington for three days to build solidarity, report on the challenges facing working people and to debate neo-liberal economic theory related issues.

A very moving presentation from our Japanese brothers and sisters on the continuing effects of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown in 2011 brought home the fact that the crisis is by no means over for many, many people in the affected areas and the stresses and strains of living in the shadow of damaged nuclear reactors and radiation fallout.

The common theme across the reports from each country was that despite the collapse of the so called 'Washington Consensus' in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, the neo-liberal right wingers



are still bent on their policies of privatisation, austerity and attacking workers' rights.

We heard from local opposition party politicians and a lively question and answer session ensued as overseas delegates could make the connection with what is happening to workers here in New Zealand to events in their own countries.

The conference unanimously passed a remit supporting Hillside workers and railway manufacturing in general (see box). This received considerable media attention. One thing the National Government hates is to be shown up internationally!

It wasn't all hard work though. Delegates had a 'Peace Tour' of Wellington and its environs, visiting the eternal flame to the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the Ataturk Memorial to the men who died at Gallipoli, and the Memorial Gardens at the Hutt Workshops to rail workers who gave their lives in two world wars and have been killed at work.

There was also an opportunity to socialise and build camaraderie and international solidarity. One Cuba Street restaurant had its roof lifted off as delegates exercised their vocal cords in singing traditional songs of organised labour.

## Immense value

The value of conferences such as these is immense. We learn that the challenges we face are common to all workers and sometimes we discover some novel solutions from our international brothers and sisters. And of course, when it comes to a fight, support from overseas, both moral and financial, is often vital.

More importantly, there have been occasions when our comrades have taken industrial action in support of one another. None of this happens without maintaining links and building solidarity. We live in a global economy and workers must organise globally and successive RMTU Conferences have reaffirmed that we must maintain and grow our international links. 🌐

# The Remit

That this meeting of the New Zealand Forum of the International Centre for Labour Solidarity:

In light of the New Zealand Government's failure to give clear direction to the state owned railway company KiwiRail to build railway rolling stock in New Zealand, and the subsequent decision to close down Hillside Railway Workshops, resulting in the loss of 115 jobs and ceasing rail rolling stock manufacturing, that this Forum:

- 1. Abhors and condemns the failure of this New Zealand Government to consider the wider economic and social implications of its procurement decisions; AND
- 2. Expresses our loathing of the impact of this failure; specifically the decline in our manufacturing base; the loss of highly skilled jobs and the reduction in investment in our workforce; AND
- 3. Endorses the principle of fostering the economic, political and social well-being of our members by building railway rolling stock as close to the point of use as possible; AND
- 4. Calls upon all affiliates to demand that national and regional governments adopt procurement policies that actively promote this; AND
- 5. Affirms our commitment to employment and production for the public good and not for private profit in order to foster social and economic justice.



*RTBU and RMTU stand together.*



*ICLS president and JREU general secretary Chiba.*



*Leody de Guzman Philippines*



*(l to r) ICLS vice chair Somsak Kosaisook, Wayne Butson and ICLS general secretary Satoru Yamada.*



*Green Party transport spokesperson MP Julie Anne Genter.*

*Union delegate Brian Armstrong stands solid with IFF Thailand co-ordinator Suangcana Tungworachet who was on the Tranz Alpine.*



*(l) International solidarity at the Passchendaele Memorial Hutt Shops.*

## John Kennedy

30/5/1936 – 4/12/2012

John retired medically unfit for duty. After retirement he became a regular attendee at Railway superannuitants meetings and functions and also liked to come and give a hand with folding newsletters etc.

He was known as 'Stumpy' but if you called him that in later years he would no doubt tell you his name was John.

He used to look forward to the post on the second Tuesday of each month to see how much he was winning in bonus bonds.

When we went out for lunches, I have never seen a man stack a plate like he could, go back for more and still have room for pudding.

John went to Oamaru for his holidays to visit his mother and used to take a case full of socks for her to darn, returning only when all were completed.

A benefit to the left with John's passing is that PM Key has lost one of his voters. Boy, was he a hardened National Party supporter.

John had a good send off at Porirua with a good crowd of railway retirees.

His neighbours will miss him as he loved his garden and was always putting vegetables over the fence for them.



## Brian Spearpoint

5/9/1925 – 14/1/2013

Brian was a great workmate. For his own reasons, he was always a loco assistant, but what an assistant. Cleaning the interior of the cab was top priority and if you didn't get out of your seat you got polished and if you didn't repeat his signal call he would remind you.



Brian would bring his pushbike to Wellington from Wallaceville on the unit and pedal from the station to

loco and then, when finished work, pedal towards the Hutt Valley and do whatever business he had to do. Vegetable market day at Allen Street, Wellington Brian would always go to it (I believe Brian was a vegetarian) and when he caught the unit home his bike would be loaded down with sacks of vegetables.

If Brian saw a piece of wood in the rail yard or along the track he had to have it. Often you would see Brian pedalling to the Hutt Valley with lengths of wood tied to his bike. Out on the track if Brian spied a length of wood he would remember where he saw it and on the way home you would have to stop the train and pick it up. I came into Wellington once with the running boards stacked with wood. His backyard looked like a wood dealer's yard. He also always had plastic bags for any loose coal on the ballast in the rail yards.

Brian didn't like heights. A hose broke on the Waingawa Viaduct and it was me who had to crawl over the wagons to change it.

He was a good workmate, cheerful and a good conversationalist especially on the history of railways in the Wellington area. When he retired he would always stand at his window and wave to the Masterton trains.

In his own way Brian was a railway legend.

RIP.

- Martin Mason

# Rambo retires!

CASS'S only resident is becoming a man of leisure. Twenty-five years ago, Barrie Drummond, aka Rambo, took on the track inspector's role at Cass and became responsible for the highest section of the Midland Line. This March he steps down and retires.

In his time Barrie has become something of a legend in the world of rail, not least for the annual 'Cass Bash', which is – amongst other things – a weekend cricket match between KiwiRail staff and locals which saw 240 people in attendance last November.

Barrie has been a man who has worked



to shape his environment as well as be shaped by it. The TranzAlpine goes through Cass every day and passengers are treated to a commentary that points out the mini golf course Barrie created by the track, as well as a bowling green.

If you believe everything you hear about Rambo you'll form the view that life certainly has been colourful over the years in Cass and its environs.

Some of the tales of track life may have grown with the telling, but one thing is certain: for someone living in such an isolated location Barrie has made many friends in the area and there is no shortage of visitors.

In some ways Rambo's story is an archetypal New Zealand tale of isolation in the big country of the South Island. He isn't quite a 'man alone' however, as a loyal RMTU member Barrie has always had the support of his Union and the backing of his workmates.

Congratulations on reaching this milestone Barrie and best wishes for a happy retirement. 🇳🇿

*The Transport Worker publishes obituaries of RMTU members. We ask they be no longer than 300 words and are accompanied by a scanned high resolution photo. Copy and photo should be sent a month prior to publication to editor@rmtunion.org.nz*

# RCOs take action – and win!

**F**RUSTRATED by a lack of recognition of remote control operators (RCO) and the increased responsibility being heaped on them, RCO John Reizinger was pivotal in developing the strategy to change the situation. In a discussion at Lyttelton Railway Station with the RMTU South Island organiser John Kerr, he made his views known very clearly. What came out of that conversation was a realisation that if the RCOs were to be heard they had to organise – deeds not words were the only way to fix the problem.

John took up the challenge. He accepted that the membership are the union and that rank and file members, working together, can achieve change if they're prepared to put the work in. He asked for advice and listened hard but from there on in he did the groundwork with his fellow workers. It means far more when a member gets a call from one of his workmates than from a union official.

John drafted a remit for the RCO's claim and rang round the active RCO delegates and members across New Zealand. He persuaded other branches to back his remit and got his workmates at Middleton to sign a declaration that they were prepared to back their claim with action if necessary.

As RMTU general secretary Wayne



*John Reizinger gets a warm fuzzy from Helen Earl-Robinson!*

Butson travelled the country prior to the wage round it was the RCOs who were speaking with one voice. Yes they were unhappy, yes they wanted something done about it – the crucial difference between them and some other occupational groups was that they attended the meetings, had one clear remit and were organised.

The employer was getting the message as well.

In smoko rooms around the country the RCOs were speaking with one voice: "This is our year and we're prepared to fight." Local managers heard this loud and clear. These are the people who deal with these workers day to day to get the job done. They knew the RCOs had a good case but more importantly they knew that they were organised and were prepared to do something to make it stick.



## ARE YOU A MEMBER?

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The NZ Harbours Superannuation Scheme is open to all port workers.

The NZ Harbours KiwiSaver Scheme is open to port workers, Rail & Maritime Transport Union members and their families.



The Schemes have an external administrator and contributions are invested by four top-rated fund managers. Download a copy of an Investment Statement and Application Form at:

[www.harbourssuper.org.nz](http://www.harbourssuper.org.nz)



◀ The result was that by the time we got to the negotiating table the company knew that the RCO remuneration was a widely and deeply felt issue. There was no question that RCOs were going to get a significant pay increase. There was still an argument about how much but the employer had already accepted that change was inevitable.

The lesson is clear. What makes the difference in negotiations? It's not how hard the negotiators argue round the table or how much work the paid officials do. What it boils down to is that members must get together and do some work before the talks begin, refine their claim and make sure it's clear. The more it's talked about and understood the better the chance of getting it over the line – especially if they're all behind it. Write to National Office and send in signed declarations from whole yards expressing their willingness to back their words with action if they have to. Tell bosses that you're prepared to fight for a good deal. In short: unite and ensure there is clear purpose behind the rhetoric.

This takes leadership and hard work. It's easy to sound off in the smoko room about how badly you're being treated and then do nothing about it. It's a bit harder to take the responsibility to enable others to achieve a shared purpose by taking that advice, making those calls, persuading workmates and keeping up the pressure.

John Reizinger is one who did all those things. The RCOs at Middleton and across the country owe John, and the other lead delegates in terminals, their thanks. The Middleton members have expressed it in a real and meaningful way. Well done John and well done, RCOs.

Here's to 2014. Who will be next? 🌐

# ITF Rail & Road Conf



*Wayne Butson with ITF land transport section secretary Mac Urata.*

**12 to 16 November 2012 - Toronto**

**W**AYNE BUTSON attended this meeting representing RMTU in its road and rail affiliation to the International Transport Workers Union (ITF). Wayne is also the chair of the Asia Pacific Rail Section of the ITF.

He joined with more than 200 unionists from 76 unions in 44 countries in attending the meeting co-sponsored by the ITF and the Canadian Auto Workers Union.

During the meeting, delegates looked at how unions had developed practical actions to meet the challenges of globalisation, restructuring and logistics supply chains. Delegates heard how unions were transforming the lives of those in informal and precarious jobs through organising strategies targeting specific groups, such as taxi drivers.

They also discussed regional networks across west and east Africa, cross border co-operation and organising non-resident drivers. The role of women was another of the issues tackled, as was HIV/AIDS.



*(l to r) ITF general secretary designate Steve Cotton, Wayne Butson and Mac Urata.*

Participants reaffirmed their solidarity with workers in Iran, Swaziland and Turkey, where workers' rights were under attack.

Railway unions discussed the challenges across the industry, trade union campaigns against privatisation and new forms of organising to meet the demands of new ways of working.

Mac Urata, ITF inland transport section secretary, commented: "The road and rail sections have not only looked at the challenges posed by the industry, but also trade union responses. We have been focusing on how best to organise workers and build union power so that a longer term strategy can be developed to achieve better working conditions."

Wayne said: "For us here in NZ, who live in a country at the end of global logistics transport supply chains, international alliances between organised labour is essential if we are to balance the power of global multi-nationals. This has been demonstrated in a number of recent disputes like the Zeal 320, Air NZ and Ports of Auckland disputes. To expect support from overseas unions it is beneficial if you 'know' them as well and, better still, if you have demonstrated solidarity in their times of need. We live in a global economy and workers must organise globally and successive RMTU conferences have reaffirmed that we must maintain and grow our international links".

Wayne gave a presentation to three different agenda items. 🌐



*RMT GS Bob Crow talks Turkey.*

# Women in male dominated workplaces

**L**ATE last year Ruth Blakeley attended the fourth Women in male dominated occupations and industries (WIMDOI) conference in Adelaide. Its theme was: Safe & Secure Work and attracted 48 women. Ruth was the only NZ attendee and only one of six from the transport sector.

Other sectors represented were mining, food, energy and communications as well oil, gas, auto manufacturing and fire services.

Ruth said it was heartening to see that a number of the attendees were younger women.

“This made me think about the union membership growth potential amongst younger women coming into male dominated workplaces and industries.”



## Repeated abuse

One of the issues that came up repeatedly was the sexist bullying that women in male dominated workplaces can experience including women’s issues being made invisible by male union officials, male members and workplace managers, sexual harassment, assault and taunting and teasing.

Speakers at the conference included: ACTU president Ged Kearney, Dr Barbara Pocock from the Centre for Work & Life, University of SA, Belinda Tkalcevic from the ACTU and Mary Crooks of the Victoria Women’s Trust.

Mary Crooks, was particularly inspiring. She spoke about the lack of respect for women, children and indigenous peoples, a fair go, democratic principles and for the common good which she said were evident in Australian politics and the media.

“She could just as easily have been talking about NZ,” said Ruth. “I believe that the union movement in NZ could apply some of these strategies to address these same issues.”

She has sent a copy of Crooks’ speech, A switch in time, to RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson.

Ruth was charged with the intention of establishing a RMTU women’s network.

“I therefore took particular notice of the Australian union’s women’s networks. In our sector the most obvious, well established and resourced network is the MUA Women’s Network.”

Conference attendees prepared action plans as an activity.

## Action plan

Ruth’s action plan is as follows:

1. Develop a step by step plan for exploring the establishment of a RMTU women’s network including:

- Map the RMTU women’s membership. The RMTU women’s membership is 8% of RMTU or approximately 400 members. We could identify these members on a per branch basis.
- Prepare and deliver a newsletter reporting in more detail on the WIMDOI conference for each woman member.
- Survey the women’s membership about their workplace issues. This survey

could be included with the newsletter. Survey could include such questions as: Are there specific claims women members want in their collective agreements? Is workplace bullying an issue? What do members want to do about violence at work and at home? Are the current parental leave arrangements working? Are there obvious career paths that women members can easily access and feel confident of a fair go? Are the current union structures working for them?

- Collate the survey results and develop appropriate organising plans on the basis of its outcomes.
2. An obvious question in the survey has to be whether our women members would support a women’s network.
  3. The establishment of such a network is not something that I can take on as branch official. This is a question for the RMTU executive who may need to nominate someone to get it started.
  4. I also think that we could ask for some support from the CTU and I will raise this possibility at the CTU Women’s Council.

WIMDOI expressed encouragement for this action plan and urged me start costing it. 🌐

# What is the future for our national rail network?

By Sue Kedgley



**I**'m wondering what will be left of our national rail network in a few years time? Most countries in the world are expanding their rail networks. But the future of our network is looking uncertain as a series of closures shrink it ever further.

The past 12 years have seen the closure of passenger rail services to Rotorua, Tauranga, Napier, Dunedin and Invercargill, as well as the recent mothballing of the Stratford to Okahukura and Napier to Gisborne lines, the closure of Hillside rail workshops and the sacking of 181 employees.

There are now only four long distance passenger rail services left, and all are struggling to survive. The Northern Explorer service between Auckland and Wellington runs only every three days in each direction, and is targeted at tourists. The Capital Connection between Palmerston North and Wellington is on the brink of closure and KiwiRail is trying to sell off the TranzScenic services between Christchurch and Greymouth, Wellington and Auckland and the Tranz Coastal service between Picton and Christchurch.

KiwiRail's freight business, on the other hand, is doing well and has grown by 25% over the past few years.

But the on-going competitiveness of rail freight depends on improving its reliability, reducing travel times and upgrading the

rail network that is still in a parlous shape after decades of neglect. There are still 800 wooden bridges on the network that are a century old and need replacing, along with thousands of old railway sleepers, rolling stock and signalling technology. But desperately needed infrastructure maintenance is being deferred once again as KiwiRail struggles to compete as a commercial enterprise.

So what is the future of our ailing network? Will it continue to limp along half heartedly, or die a slow death? Or will it be resuscitated in a few years time, and redeveloped into a modern, effective transport network?

The rail network's problems date back to 1993, when a former National government sold it to Faye Richwhite. During 18 years of private ownership, there was almost no investment in it, and it was run down to the point where parts of it were unusable.

The Labour government brought the track back into public ownership in 2003, and the network in 2008. It promised to invest a billion dollars in upgrading the network – a decision the National Party vigorously opposed. When National became the government in 2008, they were less than enthusiastic about inheriting a government-owned railway.

Focussed on building new motorways, they seemed to regard rail as something of a white elephant, an 'old technology' and a financial burden on government.

I suspect they would dearly love to get rid of it if they could find a buyer for it (unlikely) or even close it down entirely.

But they agreed to keep KiwiRail going, providing it could be turned into a commercially viable business. They promised to invest \$750 million to upgrade the network, on the proviso that there would be no further investment after that, and released a ten year 'Turnaround Plan' to turn KiwiRail into a self supporting commercial operation that would fund all future maintenance itself.

The Rail and Maritime Union dismissed the plan as a blueprint for the systematic destruction of KiwiRail, pointing out that

there's no rail network in the world that's run commercially without some government support, especially when it's competing with a road transport industry that is heavily subsidised by taxpayers.

They also pointed out that there isn't a level playing field between rail and its competitor, the trucking industry. While KiwiRail is expected to pay for the full costs of maintaining the rail network, the trucking industry is not expected to fully fund roads or fix network repairs from natural disasters. But KiwiRail is expected to pay to fix rail bridges that are washed away by flooding, or any other network problem. They closed the Gisborne line because they didn't want to spend \$4 million for storm damage repairs.

So it's not surprising that, three years down the track, the government's plan hasn't turned KiwiRail around.

In its desperation to generate revenue, KiwiRail has started retrenching again, deferring maintenance, letting lines like the Napier to Gisborne line die, and laying off staff (including key track maintenance staff). It's also made a series of purchasing blunders, buying 18,000 rotten, Chilean railway sleepers and Chinese locomotives and wagons that aren't performing as expected.

More closures are on the cards, as any part of the operation that's not profitable is likely to be shut down, under its new commercial mandate.

So unless there's a change in government, KiwiRail is likely to shrink to a freight-based network focussed on servicing just a few big customers like Fonterra, Solid Energy and New Zealand Steel. Another possibility is that the government will try to sell it again, and some suspect that's why it has recently separated KiwiRail into two different companies.

All of this suggests a dismal future for our rail network. And this is a serious concern, because a high quality national rail service is essential for a sustainable national transport strategy, as well as to reduce our dependence on oil and the number of trucks on our roads. 

## KiwiRail CA settlement report back meetings

**A**MBITIOUS as always, the plan to “jointly” report back nationwide on the proposed settlement for the KiwiRail/RMTU collective agreement with several teams, did not happen without issues.

For one team, most of the report back

meetings were not jointly presented so the KiwiRail portion of the presentation did not always go as planned!

Also some members came to these meetings with their minds already made up to reject the deal before being able to listen to and question members of the union negotiating team, which was disappointing.

This was not the case at the Grovetown meeting of I&E members from Christchurch,



*I&E RMTU members at the Blenheim depot.*

Blenheim and Kaikoura. The report back team was warmly welcomed and thanked afterwards despite many of them having uncertain futures with the restructure occurring at the time. 🌐



*The onsite workers garden planted with vegetable and fruit trees.*

## Labour Conference 2012

**A** team representing the RMTU attended the 2012 Labour Conference and it is fair to say the consensus was that it was the best Labour Conference they had ever attended.

The level of participation was high, young Labour members passionately lobbied and debate was strong. Policy changes that, in the past didn't have a show of getting through, were achieved and at the end of the conference there was a great speech from David Shearer which was definitely necessary but not

expected.

Our highlight followed the Labour Affiliates (unions) allowing us speaking rights on our Hillside remit. Our delegate from Hillside, Stu Johnstone, left his family a day after the announcement of Hillside's demise, to travel to the Conference and speak on the remit to restore a rail manufacturing facility there. Stu's heartfelt address was very well received by Conference delegates and the Hillside remit got the support we know it deserved. Well done Stu and Labour! 🌐



*Stu Johnstone and Jim Kelly at the Conference*

## David Shearer visits Hutt Workshops



*A week out from Christmas, Labour leader David Shearer and local MPs Trevor Mallard and Chris Hipkins went on a tour of the Hutt Workshops and then met with RMTU delegates in their union office to discuss the future needs for these workshops. Delegates spoke of the need to invest in modern plant and also the need to invest in new workers and apprentices so that essential knowledge can be passed on. Heavy engineering and our workers must remain in NZ. 🌐*

# Auckland organiser departs

**A**UCKLAND organiser, Scott Wilson, has nothing but praise and fine words for the RMTU and all the members he's worked with these last 11 years. In a few weeks he will leave a job that has given him joy and huge satisfaction and head with his partner to her parent's walnut farm just north of Whanganui.

"She's desperately happy about the idea and I am too," he said. She's apparently a really keen gardener frustrated by their tiny Auckland garden and can't wait to get into her hands on the parent farm.

Scott was the first RMTU organiser appointed to Auckland covering a massive area from Tauranga to Taumaranui through to Whangarei. These days the RMTU has an organiser in Tauranga which by rights should have lessened Scott's load. Instead, Auckland Rail has grown so much the work load has barely changed.

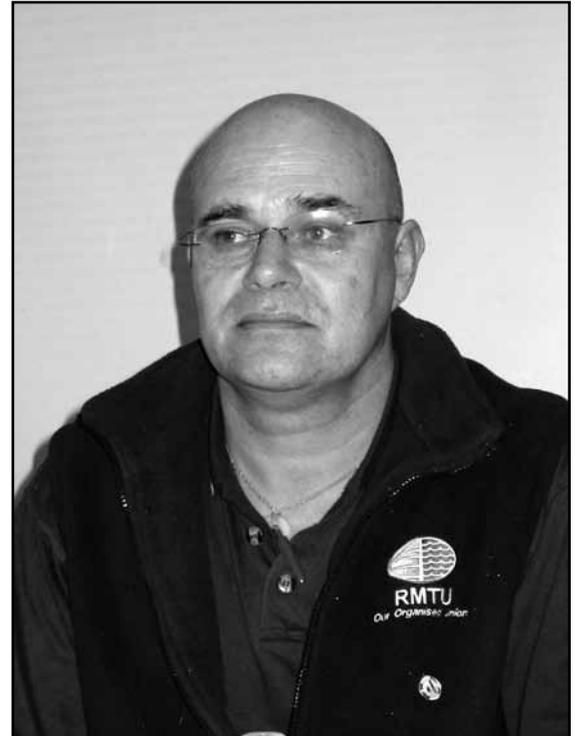
"The RMTU is an excellent organisation to work for and the local members are a wonderful bunch of people," he said.

"And I especially like the RMTU's relationship with KiwiRail which is excellent. They take the RMTU's opinions and views very seriously, despite the odd spat."

One of the big issues he believes the RMTU must get on top of quickly is the company's increasing use of contract workers.

"The company made 180 people redundant before Christmas citing lack of money and are now employing contractors to do the same work despite promising the Union they wouldn't," he said. "Most contractors aren't skilled or equipped to do the work in the way KiwiRail workers are. This is often very dangerous work. The RMTU must get these people unionised quickly and then improve their pay and work conditions and knowledge and skills."

The near disaster in the Kaimai Tunnel



(see page 15) he says is testament to the dangers and inherent nasty outcomes. 🌐

## ASP radios less than ideal

**A**SP (audio shunting procedures) describe the method of shunting used within the majority of KiwiRail's freight terminals using shunt locomotives. The ASP radios are handheld radio equipment used by the rail operators and remote control operators.

These radios have short comings, in the RMTU's view, that pose health and safety risks. Our shunting delegates have identified a range of issues that operators face in their day to day work. Each site poses a different 'wireless communication' challenge owing to layout, buildings (including construction type) and congestion. However, all of the delegates say that:

■ wind affects audibility;

■ rain gets into the handsets and microphones;

■ the range can be too restricted so that the radios cut in and out over long distances especially with a long rake of wagons or where there is a curve in the track or a buildings within the range (especially if it is clad in corrugated iron);

■ radio interference from another gang working close-by can occur;

■ the radio can go off channel if you bump it; and

■ noise near shunting operations (like from a reefer generator) which interferes with the audibility of channel chat.

It appears that the servicing of the units is largely OK, but sometimes the technicians are hard pressed to get to the radios

for servicing as they are in use in the field or, if an operator finds one which is really good or has a great battery that holds its charge, they may take personal ownership of the item and not leave it in the pool.

The NZTA identified non-compliant hand held shunt radios potentially in use within the Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin shunting areas.

In last year's safety assessment the NZTA noted a small number of radios in the Blenheim area which had not been tested for code compliance. They suggested that a blocking device to prevent a radio being used when it is non-compliant should be considered.

The RMTU will undertake a survey of members about hand held shunt radios with the view to passing the information on to KiwiRail and to the NZTA for this year's safety audit. Reliable and robust radio communication is essential to ensure safe shunting practice within our yards and the safety of our people and the public. 🌐



# The Kaimai Tunnel gas incident

On August 25, 2012 a group of contractors went into the 8.9km long Kaimai Tunnel ill-equipped, under-trained and with a poor understanding of conditions and possible outcomes for the work they planned to do. They emerged coughing and severely distressed. They were lucky to survive.

The following is a summary of events, pre-conditions and consequences.



**K**IWIRAIL (KR) initially asked its staff to complete a job in the Kaimai Tunnel grouting the concrete slab. But ultimately it contracted Abernethy Civil Contractors to complete the job, working alongside Concrete Solutions. The use of Abernethy staff as contractors was a breach of the MECA which requires KR to prefer utilising its own people for on-going business activity.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the use of Concrete Solutions was not a breach as there is no internal expertise within KR to undertake this work.

## No supervision

The job went ahead with five Abernethy and five Concrete Solutions staff. There was no-one from KR to supervise the work. This is in breach of the KR 'Working in Tunnels and Gas Safety Instructions' (the instructions) which requires a KR staff member holding a current Tunnel and Gas Awareness Certificate to be present at all times.

Furthermore, whilst the Abernethy staff

had just completed the Tunnel Gas Awareness Training, KR's investigation report states that the Concrete Solutions staff had not been trained in tunnel gas awareness. This is also contrary to the instructions.

KR ascertained that the Abernethy staff had just been trained by an instructor who was not up-to-date with the latest training material and had not been assessed as competent to deliver the new training material nor had they created an evacuation plan. This too is contrary to the instructions.

On the morning of 25 August 2012, two work groups were assigned to work in the tunnel. Two Abernethy and four Concrete Solutions workers formed one work group.

There were nine gas masks made available from KR stores for the ten men. The instructions require that each man must be equipped with one gas mask (with two filter canisters). According to information obtained by the RMTU, the workers in this group had only two masks for six men. The KR investigation report does not touch on whether each man was equipped with a gas

mask but it does say that some of the men 'were not wearing approved gas masks but were wearing masks for the prevention of exposure to chemicals being used to repair the floor'.

## Ill-equipped

From the information that the RMTU has, it seems that the men were not equipped with appropriate gas masks and filters when they entered the tunnel. This is contrary to instructions.

Only one of the two work groups was issued with a gas monitor<sup>2</sup>. The group entering from the Tauranga end had the gas monitor which was turned on at 7.54am as they entered the tunnel. At around 8.50am a short term exposure limit (STEL) alarm went off. It activated for seven minutes. The instructions state that if the STEL alarm sounds staff are to shut down equipment if it can be done safely and immediately evacuate from the tunnel. The men continued working. This is contrary to instructions. ▶

The gauge was reading CO 123 ppm around 8.50am and then the levels fell. At around 10am it reached 105 ppm and stayed continuously above the STEL alarm setting for the next hour and a half while the men evacuated. They eventually got out around 11.20am. Thus their exposure above the STEL was well and truly exceeded. This is contrary to instructions.

The instructions say exposure to CO at these concentrations would result in headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, confusion and disorientation. There is an association between nitrogen dioxide concentrations in the air and increases in hospital admissions for respiratory disease. Nitrogen dioxide can decrease the lung's defences against bacteria, making them more susceptible to infections and can also aggravate asthma. Several hours after exposure the symptoms of bronchitis and pneumonia may develop.

The workers were using petrol driven equipment to grind concrete. They tried to change the position of the fan to disperse the gases and dust, but there was very little natural air flow through the tunnel (which is 8.9 long and is NZ's longest rail tunnel) and the fan was ineffectual. The men started to evacuate when the readings were 111 ppm and they were experiencing nausea, headaches and blurred vision.

## Unsurprising errors

The crew exited out the Hemopo end (the Matamata side) of the tunnel – a distance of 3 km through the gases and dust. The KR investigation report points out that the men exited in the direction of the meagre air flow and this contributed to exceeding their exposure limits. When deciding which way to evacuate the tunnel, the person in charge did not check wind



## Kaimai Tunnel facts

- Longest tunnel in New Zealand at 8.85 km.
- Project was approved September 1964.
- Estimated cost \$11,434,000.
- First sod turned by Minister of Works, Percy Allen on 2 October 1965.
- Construction started at the western end on 15 January 1969.
- Excavated by hand at western end due to alluvial material.
- A cave-in resulted in the loss of four lives. Rescue operation saved eight others.
- A tunnel boring machine was used from the western end.
- 48% of the tunnel was bored using conventional methods.
- Ducted ventilation initially sufficient but near centre temperatures increased.
- Four refrigeration plants installed to counteract heat.
- The two excavations met on 4 June 1976.
- L Dillon, a project supervisor, first person to walk the tunnel on 21 June.
- First official train was the Silver Fern railcar RM 3 on 12 September 1978.
- Project was eight years over time and over budget.
- The final cost: \$43 million plus \$13 million for the deviation.
- Today, up to 22 weekday freight train movements per day go through the Kaimai Tunnel, and up to 19 per day during the weekends.

### Video

<http://bit.ly/UkhyWP>



flow direction. This error is not surprising given the lack of an evacuation plan, the inadequate training in tunnel gas awareness and the absence of a KR supervisor on site.

One of the Concrete Solutions workers said: "Once the track had been (cut and) lifted we began grinding (the concrete track beds under the track) for about an hour. Dust filled our area of the tunnel and we moved the fan to try and push the dust away. Combined with the dust and gas fumes most of us began feeling ill, dry retched due to fume inhalation . . . the gas detector was flashing and beeping continuously. We exited out the Matamata side and all sat down on the ground and regained

breath. We waited for about an hour and a half. The dust could be seen coming out of the mouth of the tunnel shortly after. (Name removed) arrived and took us into Matamata as we were feeling the worst (sic) and were driven back into the tunnel to clean up our gear. (name removed) bought us some food and drink to replenish our metabolism as we had nothing to eat or drink. The masks we were using had proper fume respirator pads but all of us still felt the fumes."

Another Concrete Solutions' worker said: "We noticed that the gas detector hadn't stopped beeping and I was already feeling drowsy . . . and the others were telling me they felt the same. Our foreman, we noticed him sitting on the side of the track feeling migraine and getting tunnel visions as our gas reading was getting too high".

A KR worker who was servicing drains in the area noticed

the men lying on the ground outside of the tunnel. He thought they looked ill, so he went down to see them. He said: "Their eyes looked blurry and they looked crook"<sup>3</sup>. He asked them whether there were other people in the tunnel and he was told there was another gang. They tried to contact them on channel 1 and on their mobile phone but could not get hold of them. They decided to don the already fume-laden masks and re-enter the tunnel to look for the other crew.<sup>4</sup> They found the other crew who were unaffected by fumes and gave them their gas monitor.

The KR manager was contacted and drove across to the tunnel. It took him over

◀ an hour to get there. He took some of the affected men to have a feed and drink and authorised re-entry to replace the track section that had been removed and to pick up their gear. In the KR manager's opinion the Abernethy men were in 'good spirits' when he arrived. He thought, the employees of Concrete Solutions showed signs of being affected by the event showing a high degree of dust and grime contamination on their faces. He noted that "after food and drink and recovery time, they picked up and returned to a good state of spirits". The manager thought they were all OK with no respiratory issues evident. He did not take them for a medical check up.

The RMTU is concerned that these men were not taken to a medical centre for a check up: we believe they should have been, along with the KR worker who had entered the tunnel to check if there was anyone left in there<sup>5</sup>.

## Lesson learnt

There is a lot to learn from this incident and much follow up to occur.

- The Kaimai Tunnel is a hazardous environment. It is 8.9 km long, there is no ventilation system installed and natural ventilation cannot be relied upon. The fan in this incident was not effective. The tunnel is in a volcanic geological area and experiences heat build-up as well as volcanic gas emission. The RMTU believes that the Kaimai Tunnel may pose greater risks than the Otira Tunnel.
- The equipment was petrol driven and the fumes from the equipment were combined with dust from the grinding of concrete.
- The KR person responsible for the work, did not ensure that everyone was properly trained, equipped and supervised prior to work commencing and during the entire performance of the work. A lot of the information about the training came out after the event. Pre-planning was abysmal and non compliant from a safety perspective.
- There was a lack of concern for the men's health. Exposure was significant and the manager's response should have been to take them to a medical centre for a check-up post incident.
- It appears that the two work crews in the tunnel could not communicate

## STEL readings

- Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) - 5 ppm max time allowed 15 mins
- Carbon Monoxide (CO) 200ppm max time allowed 15 minutes, 100 ppm max time allowed 30 minutes, 50ppm max time allowed 60 minutes.
- The STEL alarm is set for 50ppm for CO and 5 ppm for NO<sub>2</sub>.
- The ceiling is 10ppm NO<sub>2</sub> and 400 ppm CO.

with each other, and train control was not immediately notified of the event.<sup>6</sup>

- It is not apparent that management has been taken to task for this awful event. It should not have happened and was entirely preventable if procedures had been complied with. But for luck, it could have been even worse.
- The RMTU wants the people who do the investigation to have received training in incident investigation. KR ought to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest by not having the manager tasked with the project implementation and planning also be the investigator. The NZTA has observed in its most recent Ordinary Safety Assessment that NRSS5 states that investigators must be experienced. The NZTA wants KR to define the educational and training qualifications, or skill levels for investigators. The RMTU agrees with this recommendation to KR from the regulator. This issue was raised by the regulator in both the 2011 and 2012 assessment. The RMTU suggests that the regulator should ensure KR addresses this issue and the other failings we have discussed in this article.
- The RMTU want a review of the Kaimai Tunnel in much the same way that the Otira Tunnel was reviewed by a joint RMTU and KR team. This incident should be a catalyst for the review.
- We have not been able to contact the Abernethy or Concrete Solutions workers as they are not RMTU members. However, if anyone reading this knows them, please pass this article on to them. The RMTU is concerned about their health and safety. The RMTU speculates that

this event may not have happened if KR staff were doing the job rather than contractors. Whether that is correct or not, one thing is clear – KR has failed to discharge its health and safety obligations in a number of respects. Given the tragic events on the West Coast, no employer in New Zealand should be in any doubt about the dangers of gas build up in areas where there is poor or little ventilation, especially where machinery is being used. The RMTU has raised these issues directly with KR, so that there can be no doubt that the company, and its Board, are all on notice of these very serious issues, and the need for urgent action to be taken by the company, its management and its Board. The lives of workers are at stake. 🌐

## Footnotes

1 Clause 29.1.

2 Personal communication with RMTU following the incident with the KR worker who attended the scene.

3 The notes disclosed to the RMTU by KR also indicate that this KR worker thought the Concrete Solutions workers were distressed and gasping for breath when he found them outside the tunnel.

4 There was varying views on whether this entry was authorised by KR. The KR worker advises the RMTU that he was authorised to enter the tunnel by the KR manager but the KR investigation report says that "the team were advised that no one was to re-enter the site until the manager arrived".

5 This gentleman has subsequently suffered asthma and difficulty breathing and had been hospitalised. After the event he thought he had the flu but it developed into severe asthma. He was in the tunnel for 20-30 minutes. He went in to the tunnel twice, first without a mask to check the gas readings, and a second time to look for the other crew. The last time he was wearing an already fume-laden mask. He most likely suffered a break through of fumes as he had a taste in his mouth.

6 The KR Safety Investigation Report says that Rule 90(j) of Track Safety Rules and Rail Operating Rules is not clear about promptly reporting failures and mishaps of any kind (such as gas alarm activations) to train control.

# On time or dead? That

Stuck over the clock photographed for the front cover of this magazine are the words: *KiwiRail – We live and die by the clock*. It would appear that KiwiRail are firmly placing service ahead of the lives and safety of their staff. In a mad rush to ensure trains arrive on time they are forcing an under-staffed, under-resourced workforce to cut corners and place their health

and wellbeing at consequences s

On these pages, some of the issues strate where the

## H&S report imminent

**T**HE Government's independent review into workplace health and safety is due to release its findings on 30 April 2013.

The taskforce aims to identify whether the overall workplace health and safety system remains fit for purpose and provides practical measures that would cut the rate of fatalities and serious injuries by 25% by 2020.

New Zealand's workplace death and injury toll is a national disgrace. In an average year 100 people are killed at work. Proportionally, we have five times the rate of workplace injury than that of the UK with over 6,000 New Zealanders making notifications about serious harm in their workplace each year.

The RMTU's submission to the taskforce reinforced the findings of the Royal Commission's report on the Pike River Coal Mine tragedy calling for an overhaul of the current health and safety regulatory framework including the creation of a stand-alone, independent regulatory agency, separate from the current mega Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MoBIE).

A single agency responsible for enforcing the H&S regulation, including rail and maritime, would be a departure from the

current fragmented and light-handed approach to enforcement by the NZTA and Maritime NZ.

Other key points of the RMTU submission included:

- Introduction of corporate manslaughter legislation;
- Introduction of standards developed in consultation with workers which underpin the legislation. For example, a current and comprehensive code of practice on manual handling which would support members with the hazard of manual handling of transition heads;
- Rights for elected and trained health and safety reps to 'direct' workers to cease work on safety grounds. The ability to stop unsafe work prevents the work from being contracted out or performed by vulnerable workers such as people in their first 90 days of employment; and
- A boost to H&S rep training including the development of a stage 4 training course. Continued training would build on the experience of hundreds of RMTU H&S reps who have completed stage 3 training between 2-4 years ago. 🌐



*The new miners' memorial in Greymouth is a solid granite tribute to the 427 men killed in West Coast coal mining accidents.*

# t's the question

risk. The RMTU is appalled – and scared of the  
such a foolhardy policy may produce. ....etc etc

and those preceding and following, we highlight  
es surrounding health and safety and demon-  
RMTU's interests lie: firmly with its members.



## Safety Vs service

In the latest issue of the KiwiRail staff newsletter, *The Express*, a good deal of space is set aside to expound the values of on-time performance. Through the graphs (below) they show the variations of arrival times in minutes over a specific (undated) week.

Red = is late

Orange = is late but within 15 minutes of scheduled time

Green = is on time or early.

The variations from the desired arrival times are shown in figures – plus and minus.

The article goes on to stress that every late arrival means many disappointed passengers, customers and their clients and it should

be a reminder that everyone in KiwiRail has a role in getting all trains into the 'green' zone.

While the RMTU has no problem with the aim to get all trains and ferries into the 'green' zone it is very concerned that this should not be at the expense of worker safety.

Your Union will continue to work to improve safety and, where possible, improve arrival times. However, says general secretary, Wayne Butson: "We will not be making any concessions to worker safety."

However, the Union's aims are not contrary to the company's. Both have worker safety in mind – the Union's concern is that KiwiRail ensure that safety is always ahead of everything else. 🌐

### PREMIER FREIGHT

SERVICE	ORIGIN	DESTINATION	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
210	WGTN	AUCK	-36	-38	5	52	-46	NA	NA
211	AUCK	WGTN	-77	-40	-13	29	-36	NA	NA
215	AUCK	PNTH	NA	-22	1	81	42	NA	NA
220	WGTN	AUCK	NA	-79	-22	35	-12	NA	NA
221	AUCK	WGTN	NA	NA	45	101	51	-33	NA
236/216	PNTH	AUCK	21	55	25	75	42	NA	NA
237	AUCK	WGTN	NA	-10	-12	-7	-83	NA	NA
720	CHCH	PICTN	-10	11	11	47	44	NA	NA
721	PICTN	CHCH	-15	-7	26	-6	10	-18	NA
722	CHCH	PICTN	-68	-46	-3	19	17	NA	NA
737	PICTN	CHCH	NA	NA	-39	-103	-78	-48	NA
929	CHCH	DNDN	69	-15	25	12	NA	NA	NA
929D	DNDN	INGIL	NA	39	-9	2	-13	NA	NA
935	CHCH	DNDN	19	-4	-11	11	82	NA	NA

### NORTHERN EXPLORER

WGTN	AUCK	NA	48	NA	NA	0	NA	28
AUCK	WGTN	76	NA	NA	56	NA	43	NA

### INTERISLANDER

Arahura	2 daily return trips on average	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Aratere	3 daily return trips on average	100%	100%	100%	67%	100%	83%	100%
Kaitaki	2 daily return trips on average	75%	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	67%

# Buller Gorge safety

**W**EATHER bombs causing washouts in the Buller Gorge last year and on New Year's Day have triggered RMTU delegates to call for a Buller Gorge safety group. RMTU representatives from track maintenance and drivers met with KiwiRail to discuss safety in the Gorge particularly in relation to extreme weather conditions, radio communication and working alone.

KiwiRail have recently put into operation weather stations at Tiroroa and Whitecliffs to monitor rain fall. When rain levels reach 40mm a track inspection is triggered to ensure the safety of the track before a train may proceed. Other controls include regular geo-tech surveys to assess slope stability and a monitoring fence to detect slides.

The safety group agreed that all track workers working alone would carry satellite



*A Harvest rain gauge monitor.*

phones and a personal locator beacon to ensure contact in the event of radio outage. LEs entering the Gorge should always have a satellite phone with them.

The Buller Gorge safety group will meet again at the end of February to review the effectiveness of satellite phone coverage and review emergency evacuation procedures with the input of search and rescue personnel. 🌐

## Essay competition

In 1913 a young Walter Nash ran a nationwide essay competition on 'What Socialism is' and received 40 entries. Winners were published the weekly *Maoriland Worker*. Now, 100 years later, the Labour History Project – not affiliated to any political party – is holding another competition to inspire debate on alternative futures.

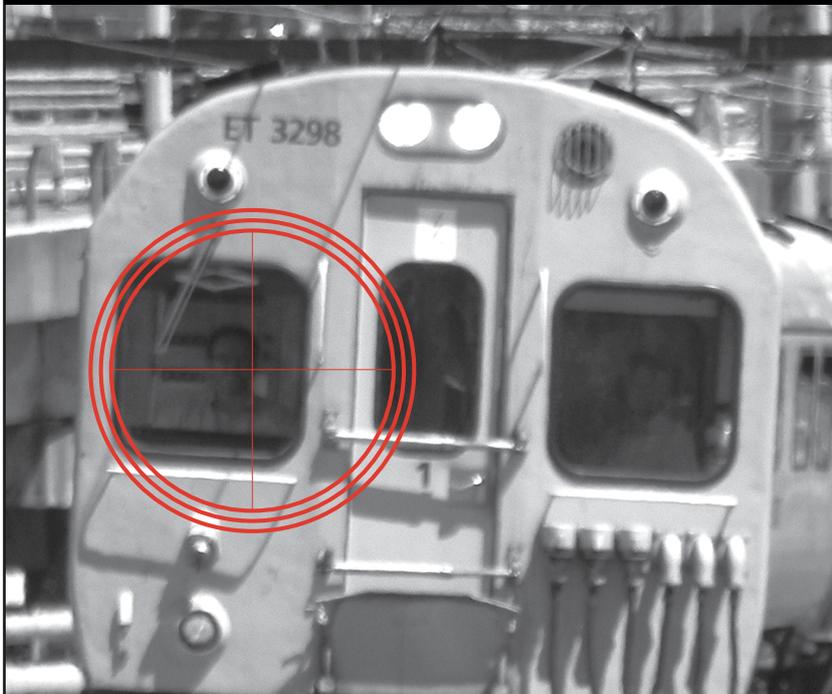
'Another world is possible' is the topic they have chosen and they welcome entries from progressive New Zealanders of all ages that offer visions and pathways for a fairer and brighter society.

The winning essayist will receive \$500 and the runner-up and junior winners \$250 each. The winning essays will be published in the Labour History Project Newsletter and on Scoop.

More details can be found at:

[lhp.org.nz](http://lhp.org.nz)

# Sickness, accident & death



## The New Zealand Locomotive Engineers' Sickness, Accident and Death Benefit Fund

In the last 10 years 230 locomotive engineers had to retire due to medical reasons. They received a total payout of \$4,737,097 from the above Fund. LEs who didn't belong to the Fund and who were forced to

retire did not receive anything.

**You could be next to miss out!**

**For as little as \$219 a year your future – or those of your next of kin – could be better assured.**

### Contact:

Julia Harrison, PO Box 813, Wellington  
 Telephone: (04) 499-2066  
 Fax: (04) 471-0896  
 Email: [julia@rmtunion.org.nz](mailto:julia@rmtunion.org.nz)

**Attention LEs**  
**Join this Fund now for**  
**your own peace of mind**

# Whistleblowing

By Ben Thompson  
Lawyer,  
Hazel Armstrong Law



**L**ATE last year I attended a seminar about 'whistleblowing' in Australian workplaces on the RTBU's behalf. Whistleblower is the name given to a worker who discloses information regarding wrongful actions occurring in his or her workplace, so that those wrongful actions can be investigated.

The seminar speaker was part of a team which had conducted a large research project in Australia, interviewing thousands of workers and managers across several states in order to investigate how often workers blew the whistle, why they did so and how whistleblowing workers were subsequently treated.

The conclusion of the Australian research team was that in order to encourage workers to disclose information regarding wrongful practices, those workers must be

given adequate support and protections. They must be able to trust that the response to their whistleblowing will be fair.

This led me to think about the protections offered to whistleblowing workers here in New Zealand, for surely the same conclusions must apply on this side of the Tasman. Is the protection offered to workers under New Zealand law sufficient to encourage disclosure of wrongful practices?

## Whistleblowing legislation

The New Zealand law on whistleblowing is set out in the Protected Disclosures Act 2000. The Act applies when a worker makes what is known as a 'protected disclosure'. Importantly, protected disclosures can only be made in relation to 'serious wrongdoing' which is occurring in the workplace (either public or private). 'Serious wrongdoing' is defined as:

- Unlawful, corrupt or irregular use of public sector funds/resources;
- Actions or omissions which pose a serious risk to public safety or the environment;
- Actions or omissions which pose a serious risk to the maintenance of law;
- Actions or omissions which constitute an offence;
- Actions or omissions by public officials (i.e. employees of public sector organisations such as KiwiRail, Solid Energy, ACC) which are oppressive, grossly negligent, improperly discriminatory or which constitute gross mismanagement.

The key thing about this definition of 'serious wrongdoing' is that it focuses essentially on wrongful workplace behaviour which is of public interest. If the alleged wrongdoing is less serious, or otherwise not of public interest (e.g. alleged mismanagement in a private sector business),

then the worker who reports the workplace wrongdoing is less likely to be protected by the Act. Further, the definition of 'serious wrongdoing' is particularly (but not exclusively) focused on behaviours within public sector organisations – which reflects the fact that wrongdoing within public sector workplaces is much more likely to be of interest to the public. This is of particular importance to the many RTBU members who work for public sector employers such as KiwiRail.

In addition to the matter having to constitute 'serious misconduct', for the protections in the Act to apply a whistleblowing worker must:

- Believe on reasonable grounds that the information they are disclosing is true; and
- Wish for the matter to be investigated, and for the protections given by the Act to apply. These things should be conveyed in writing at the time the disclosure of serious wrongdoing is made.

## Reporting procedure

To whom should a worker report, when blowing the whistle? If a worker wishes to make a 'protected disclosure' under the Act, there is a procedure which must be followed:

- Firstly, the worker should disclose the wrongdoing in accordance with any internal company procedures which exist for the purpose of whistleblowing. All public sector employers are required to have such a procedure.\*\*
- If disclosure in accordance with the company procedure is inappropriate (for example, if the person to whom disclosure should be made under the policy is involved in the wrongdoing) or if there is no company procedure, then disclosure can be made straight to the head of the company.

◀ ■ If disclosure to the head of the company is also inappropriate, if the matter is urgent, or if the head of the company has done nothing within 20 working days, the worker can then make disclosure to an 'appropriate authority', e.g. State Services Commissioner, Health and Disability Commissioner.

■ Finally, if the worker has disclosed the wrongdoing in one of the above ways but nothing is done within a reasonable period of time, the worker can then choose to report the matter to a Minister of the Crown or the Ombudsman.

This escalating reporting system is designed to ensure that, if the particular employer is not prepared to take any steps to remedy serious wrongdoing in its own workplace, a whistleblower can take their concerns to a higher authority and still remain protected under the Act.

### Protections offered

What protections does the New Zealand law give to workers, once they have blown the whistle? Three forms of protection are offered, as follows:

■ If a worker who has made a protected

disclosure becomes the victim of 'retaliatory action' from a former or current employer, then that worker 'may have' a personal grievance under the Employment Relations Act. This is a weak form of protection. It adds nothing more to what is already provided in the ER Act itself, and doesn't actually promise anything – the fact that a worker 'may have' a PG implies that he or she also may not.

■ The Act offers whistleblowing workers immunity from civil or criminal proceedings – including disciplinary proceedings – by reason of having made the disclosure. In other words, a worker cannot be disciplined for blowing the whistle, so long as they have complied with the Act in doing so.

■ The Act also says that anybody to whom a protected disclosure is made must use his/her 'best endeavours' to keep the identity of the whistleblowing worker private. This will afford some protection to the whistleblower from potential recriminations at the hands of those involved in the wrongdoing. However, the law will allow disclosure of a whistleblower's identity in some

scenarios, for example if the whistleblower consents, or if disclosure of the whistleblower's identity is essential either to the investigation of the allegations, to the prevention of serious risk to public safety or the environment, or with regard to the principles of natural justice.

We think that the last two forms of protection – immunity from proceedings and confidentiality – are very important. They facilitate reporting of serious workplace wrongdoing by making recriminations against responsible whistleblowing workers less likely.

However, the protections offered by the law could be strengthened – particularly in relation to personal grievances resulting from employer recriminations.

### Public and worker safety

Of particular relevance to RMTU members in terms of whistleblowing is safety, both of the public and of workers. The definition of 'serious wrongdoing' explicitly includes conduct which threatens public safety. Many RMTU members are involved in



## \$1,500 AD&D

All members of RMTU are now covered by a \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children.

Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year. Please contact an AIL representative to deliver your AD&D Benefit and explain the additional insurance coverage available.

If you have not filled out a response card, call our freephone for more information NOW!



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freephone 0800 894 121  
mario@aillnz.co.nz

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Please note: To qualify for the \$10,000 of additional ADB coverage, an AIL representative must visit you, obtain an enrollment form and collect premium for the first year. You may renew annually thereafter for \$5.

the carriage of members of the public, or the carriage of freight through areas shared with the public. As such, when carrying out their day-to-day tasks RMTU members are in a position to notice workplace conduct which poses a serious risk to public safety, and which should therefore be disclosed for investigation.

I would argue that the definition of 'serious wrongdoing' also includes conduct which poses a serious risk to worker safety. 'Serious wrongdoing' includes conduct which constitutes an offence; failing to take all practicable steps to ensure worker safety is an offence under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992. Therefore, workers who become aware of workplace conduct which endangers them and/or their colleagues should be encouraged to:

- Disclose the conduct so that it may be investigated; and
- Make use of the protections offered by the whistleblower legislation.

A tragic example of how whistleblowing might have saved workers' lives is the Pike River disaster. The Royal Commission report into the tragedy confirmed that a number of unsafe work practices existed in the mine prior to the explosion, including deliberate bypassing of safety systems,

tampering with safety locks/covers, and unsafe ventilation practices. We are now all too aware of the risk that such unsafe practices posed to the miners. Had the whistle been blown – not only to the head of the Pike River organisation but also to an 'appropriate authority', if no action was taken – would the tragedy have still occurred?

## Whistleblowers must be protected

The findings from the Australian whistleblowing research are just as applicable to New Zealand workplaces.

Workers play a key role in revealing unacceptable workplace practices – managers who took part in the Australian research consistently rated disclosure from workers as the most important method for bringing to light wrongdoing within organisations.

However, if employers want to cut down poor practices by encouraging whistleblowers, workers must be provided with adequate protection and support. 🇳🇿

\*\* KiwiRail has such a policy, which is available for viewing on their intranet.

## Exposed



*Talking about whistleblowing we thought it was high time this photo of Father [Todd] Christmas was published in the public interest.*

# What killed Ken Callow?

THE CTU has launched a YouTube clip and campaign aimed at trying to get the Government to agree to an inquiry into the forestry industry, and to im-

plement health and safety and employment standards to stop the deaths and injuries of forestry workers.

Helen Kelly said: "Forestry is the most dangerous industry in New Zealand. In 2013 there have already been two deaths. Since

2008, 23 workers have died and almost 900 have been seriously injured. Each death is a family, community, workplace losing someone who was loved. Each injury is someone's life being changed forever by something that happened at work. We need to bring this to the attention of the government and the industry to step up and stop this from happening."

The YouTube clip shows Caroline and Roger Callow talking about the tragic death of their son, Ken Callow, at work. The clip is being used to raise funds for billboard campaign using the One Big Voice website.

For more information, see

**[whatkilledkencallow.org.nz](http://whatkilledkencallow.org.nz)**



*Roger and Caroline Callow in the forest near to where their son was killed.*

# A Christmas tale from Napier

**I**T'S 2.15am and still muggy. I've been at work 10 hours, with two more to go. I'm supervising timber loading on a pulp and timber vessel destined for Japan. I'm tired, sitting communicating with my forklift drivers via a radio, reflecting on my career at Napier Port. The quiet hypnotic voice of the hatchman talking to his gantry operator working Hatch-1 is soothing, like a lullaby – 'Come back, bro ... back, back ... stop ... there, bro ... sweet as my bro.' It is poetry and motion. The gentle banter of men working totally in tune.

There are 19 of us here tonight. Only four are permanent.

I began work at the harbour board just prior to Christmas 1966 as a cashier looking after the board's leasehold sections, wharves and ship charges. The port's general manager – a truly gentle-man – oversaw accounting, industrial relations (the Waterside and Harbour Worker's Unions) and any media issues if required. He drove himself to Harbour's Association meetings in Wellington in his little red Cortina. During one such trip, it overheated, blew up and the board purchased its first company car – a no frills Holden. He left gifts of hankies on our desks each Christmas. Made aware that an old woman's leasehold section and house was rundown, he organised the Lion's Club to clean up and repaint it. His wages were relative to the Board's staff at the time – office, construction and cargo workers, pilot staff and trades people alike; characters that, as a teen, it was a treasure knowing on my journey towards manhood.

In the 70s I transferred to the cargo department as a clerk/forklift operator. The general manager kept track of my progress, my work, marriage and, children. Old hands helped and encouraged me through camaraderie and good humour and showed me the ropes. We worked hard day and night and on weekends. With penal rates and bonuses we were well paid. I missed most of my children's sporting fixtures. Five or six hundred odd wharfies and 200-odd port staff all spent their wages in the community.

And yes, a lot of them were (odd, that is). But oh what a lovely bunch they were.

In the 80s I was promoted to second in charge of the cargo department. The old



general manager was replaced with a new managing director. New roles in marketing, industrial relations and IT soon followed. I saw the Port move from bulk cargo to containers; from roll-on-roll off vessels to swish new container cranes. From Harbour Board to Port Company under Regional Council control and the introduction of what was the most expensive union breaker of them all – Omniport (under the directorship of ex National Deputy PM Jim McLay) – a \$45 million all-weather loading system proven to be unworkable in Houston, Texas well before its completion here (something I saw first hand). My greatest supporters were still the wharfies and drivers who had shown me the ropes. We bent the rules, moved mountains and achieved miracles. My leadership style – working alongside my staff – was out of step with management. The port flourished.

In the 90s I switched companies. Port reforms left the Watersider's Union decimated. Seagulling, or casualisation as it is known now, became the norm. Myself and 50 or so wharfies joined the casual ranks when the stevedoring company we'd switched to went under. I was soon rehired by the Port to supervise special contacts. Omniport was scrapped three years before its contractual ten year tenure. A new CEO introduced a whole new echelon of senior managers. Consultants, financial controllers, marketers and IT experts began running cargo operations. The operations manager – the last of the true gentle-men – quit. Old hands like myself were branded part of an old culture carrying too much baggage from the past. For the next 15 years, under eight inexperienced externally-appointed managers, no one showed me new or better ways to do my job.

The port suffered four work related deaths and two accidents involving major injuries.

In 2010 I was made redundant then re-employed by the company contracted to stevedore the work I'm doing now. My new CEO sent me a card and lotto ticket in a gesture reminiscent of my original general manager. The Port's CEO shouted himself and his cohorts a wage increase and four new company cars. On the Pan Pac Spirit Voyage 79, millions of dollars worth of cargo is almost loaded, and not one senior Port manager was involved.

It's 4 am. 'Sweet as, bro,' the permanent hatchman praises his casual gantry operator. 'That's it, bro. The other hatch'll load the bins. Home my bro.'

Old George – the longest serving casual, an old Coast Maori – limps to his modest car. Wharf-men wearing company hardhats over darkened hoodies slip into a low slung, black-bonneted white Honda and go cruising; their boom-box defying the early morning air. They will fund their own Christmas breakfast together at MacDonald's. They've done their jobs; scratched out a living for another week; it's all they can do to just get by.

The will for them to stay and learn new ropes has long gone. There is no point.

At the end of the month, doing nothing but provide the ship a berth, the Port's CEO (a \$569,000 plus man) and his echelon (49 in all on salaries scaled from \$300,000–\$100,000) will lay claim to the success of our work and value of the cargo loaded with their shareholders (the Regional Council) – 'As sweet as, bro.'

Merry Christmas. 🌐

■ The author wishes to remain anonymous

# KiwiRail's H&S strategy

**K**IWI RAIL has just published its two year health and safety strategy through to December 2014 called: One KiwiRail Health and Safety.

In the report's summary, KiwiRail states that its goal is to deliver New Zealand a self-sustaining, appropriately invested rail and ferry infrastructure in ten years.

To be successful, it states, it will require support by a focussed, effective and efficient Health & Safety function that is aligned with business needs and structured to support the business on its journey to achieving safe high performance.



further change in the future.

Environment and Sustainability are not covered in this document as they are described in a companion Environment and Sustainability Strategy.

## Targets

The targets adopted in this strategy are:

- supporting the line to deliver safely; and
- controlling our operations to deliver safely.

This Health & Safety Strategy sets a clear framework to go about the task. This first edition is named 'One KiwiRail Health & Safety' to recognise the shift from separate business unit based Health & Safety delivery towards a more centralised model that gains synergies and consistency of approach while continuing to meet business requirements.

The strategy identifies that significant change is needed and accordingly sets out a 24 month framework to put in place the key fundamentals required. Alongside these fundamentals there are significant improvement projects which are not detailed here.

It is important that at the strategic level the focus remains on completing the fundamentals so that a sound foundation for more sophisticated plans is in place to deliver

## Five initiatives

Accordingly this strategy focuses on the timely delivery of the five foundation initiatives that make up One KiwiRail H&S:

- One KiwiRail H&S organisation structure;
- One KiwiRail H&S scorecard;
- One KiwiRail life saving rules;
- TalkSAFE as a One KiwiRail leadership behaviour; and
- Clear and consistent One KiwiRail H&S safety messaging throughout the business.

This strategy sets out what KiwiRail intends to deploy to lift safety performance. How safety improvement is delivered will be achieved in partnership with employees and their representatives.

It is acknowledged that significant improvements in rail safety have been achieved when the Company and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union have worked collaboratively to deliver safety improvement changes. 

## Check and check again!

**F**OLLOWING a series of rail operational incidents over the last 12 months, a review of operations at the Taranaki site at Whareroa is being undertaken. Clearly workers don't go to work to have mishaps but through assumptions, communication issues and possible lack of experience, these incidents occur.

The joint message of KiwiRail and the RMTU is clear. Safe operation must take priority over the timekeeping of trains. Assumption is the mother of all mishaps and we urge rail operations members to:

- Check every set of points;
- Check clearances;
- Maintain a range of vision and line-of-sight; and
- Maintain adequate communication between operators.

Yard collisions and derailments cause costly damage and can be a hazard to our members' employment but, more importantly, can cause one of our members to be seriously injured or even killed.

We all want everyone who comes to work to go home safe and sound at shift's end. To achieve this the message is very clear:

Take care – and check again!



## Are you due for H&S rep training?



**I**f you are an elected health and safety rep and haven't been to the CTU's two-day training course go to the address below to register. Stage 1, 2, and 3 courses are held all over New Zealand. Go to the CTU Worksafe website below to find out when the next course is on near you.

The CTU Health and Safety Rep training is NZQA accredited so you can apply for unit standard 20198 (a level 4 qualification worth 8 credits). If you would like to apply for the unit standard contact the CTU who will send you the course assessment material.

[worksafereps.org.nz](http://worksafereps.org.nz)



*The Movember team – some still sporting their moustaches.*

# Movember magic

By Mani Raumati

**I**N a grand, selfless gesture, Wellington InterIsland RMTU members decided to organise a fund raising campaign to assist in the battle against prostate cancer. As part of an ever growing nationwide initiative, staff agreed to forego their daily shaving routine for the month of November, 2012, which produced some interesting sights and second looks.

Led by local delegate John Finch, members dug deep and although the exercise started a week late, they managed to raise a total of \$250 from within their terminal. With the end of the crazy festive season, John contacted Stephan Kenny (National Cancer Society) for a formal handover of a cheque which Telai Sefesi presented in his capacity as Wellington Rail branch secretary.

Although the NZ Cancer Society and medical institutions battle on a wide and varied front, their one common need

has been for greater public awareness. To that end, the battle is being slowly won.

Funding is also an ever growing necessity for research and new treatments plus a focus on early detection methods, pre and post operative treatment and ongoing rehabilitation requirements.

Sadly, this disease affects 1 in 13 men nationwide.

It makes no distinction between young and old and although prostate cancer occurs mainly in men over 65, it is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among New Zealand men aged 45 and over, with about 2,500 new cases diagnosed annually.

InterIsland RMTU members are keen that readers should be well aware that this was a membership driven initiative and not



*(l to r) Telai Sefesi, Stephen Kenny (Cancer Society New Zealand) and John Finch.*

a KiwiRail one.

They ask: What if we could expand this concept through the branch next November? Ahhhh food for thought!

A big thank you to the Wellington Inter-Island membership with a special thanks to John and the boys. Well done! 🇳🇿

■ Prostate cancer foundation of New Zealand web site:  
[www.prostatecancer.org.nz](http://www.prostatecancer.org.nz)

## Where the %##\*# are you?

Did you get that important notice from the Union last month? Last year? Any time? If you haven't had any mail from RMTU head office then you had better tell us where you've moved to. Check your address by:

- talking to your branch chair who has a list of local members and their details;
- going to the Union website and updating your details – <http://bit.ly/exmEyL>
- phoning 04-499-2066;
- faxing 04-471-0896 ;
- giving us your e-mail to save on postage.

## Take note

This month's notice board of note is from the Interisland Terminal at Wellington. Well done.



## Transport unions' generosity makes a real difference



**T**HE RMTU and MUNZ's recent generosity is ensuring children arrive safely to school and return home each day from school, says the director of the Parami Learning Centre, Min Lwin, in Mae Sot on the Thai/Burma border. One of his concerns is to protect the children from unscrupulous people – many of them criminals – and from possible road accidents.

A recent donation of 150,000 Thai baht (about \$6,000) from the two New Zealand unions through UnionAID has allowed the Centre to increase its vehicle fleet to three, thus now providing 442 of its 551 pupils

safe and certain travel to and from school.

The RMTU and MUNZ's vehicle (pictured with this article) takes around 36 students per trip between three and six kilometres. Min admits these are large loads and, compared to Thai school buses, "ours are crowded".

Even with the added vehicle, Min says they still need to increase the fleet as more and more Burmese flee across the border illegally, seeking work.

He is hopeful that a Japanese union will provide sufficient funds to add a two ton truck to its fleet which will be capable of

carrying over 50 students per trip.

Yet still more students seek refuge at the school. Min says the school opened in 1999 as a nursery/day care for children of migrant workers as they are not welcome to hang around their parents at their work place.

"Additionally, child labour is an existing problem with an average 8 per cent of sewing factories comprising child workers" says Min. "Additionally, criminals also use children to carry their illegal items."

He is delighted with the very real help being provided by the two New Zealand transport unions. 🌐

## Unions have a long tradition of international solidarity.

Becoming a Kiwi Solidarity member is a modern way of expressing that solidarity and helping vulnerable workers in developing countries in our region get a fairer deal.

### Sign up to UnionAID today

UnionAID is the only New Zealand overseas aid agency that places workers' rights at the centre of its work.

tel: 04 385 1334 (ext 810), fax: 04 385 6051, write: P O Box 6689, Marion Square, Wellington, email: [unionaid@nzctu.org.nz](mailto:unionaid@nzctu.org.nz)  
Or phone 0900 UNAID (0900 862 43) to automatically donate \$30.



## AUCKLAND RAIL BRANCH

IT'S been an eventful start to 2013 in Auckland. The major incident of note was on the Mission Bush branch line resulting in significant damage to rolling stock and the line. Of concern, from an RMTU perspective, is that the report into this incident is on-going and could take another two months to complete. In the meantime members and train crew are wondering what the future has in store for them. This can't be regarded as ideal and must be costing a fortune.

Of concern to both KiwiRail and Veolia Transport, are the number of SPADs and wrong routings since the beginning of the year. Five SPADs in two months. Both companies are now adopting a fairly firm approach to the handling of these incidents, so be warned. Remember red lights DON'T stop trains!

KiwiRail is undertaking a programme

of training SA drivers to convert to freight. The first four drivers are in the classroom and at least another two schools are in the pipeline for this year.

Veolia is continuing a full programme of driver training in advance of the arrival of the new EMU fleet. Four schools of six new drivers are programmed for this year. In addition to this, all Veolia drivers have been put through refresher courses since the beginning of the year, to sharpen up on changes to the network and review knowledge of the rules.

The EMU training simulator is due to arrive in the second quarter of the year, with the first unit to arrive around August. In the meantime four RMTU reps are due to go to Spain to inspect the units under construction and ensure we are getting what we have asked for. They are Ray Gosai, Isaac Broome, Chris Harman and Elliot Coupe.

So when you see them after the trip be sure to ask them plenty of questions.

On a final sad note, we are losing our industrial officer of long standing, Scott Wilson. Rumour has it he plans to spend the rest of his life in the back blocks of Whanganui with cow shit between his toes and walnuts hanging from his ears. Scott has been an invaluable assistance whenever things were getting a bit sticky. It was always reassuring to know Scott was there to back you up. He has a pragmatic approach to the job and focuses on getting the best result he can for the person he is advocating for. As a relative newcomer to the branch executive I can say Scott has always been a great help, and a valuable source of advice. Good luck Scott and we will all have to wait and see what and who applies for the vacancy.

That's it from the city of sails for now but remember in the time you took to read this Auckland house prices probably rose by another \$5000! 🌐

## BAY OF PLENTY PORT BRANCH

Our port collective was finalised and we are currently receiving our back-pay. Well done to Phil Spanswick, Kelven Martin, Blair Hammond, Gus Old, Lyn Golding, Graham Harvey and Ian Oakley, for a well-run negotiating marathon. Good to see our team was always ready to negotiate. It sounds as though POT management were not always as ready and seemingly poorly organised. We all got there in the end though but it is worth noting that we had to involve CEO Mark Cairns to sort the issues with us and find a way forward. Fair to say that had CEO Cairns not stepped in, industrial action would surely have, such was the frustration felt by our members.

Our casuals are enjoying their new job titles (permanent part time). While the back pay is slow in arriving, they are all enjoying their elevated positions and have not forgotten the excellent work done by Craig Malpas who highlighted this anomaly to the Union

and identified the wrong being perpetrated. After the RMTU's day in court, we now have a decision of 'When is a casual not a casual', so hope that other members are scrutinising this decision/case to better the lot for our casuals where possible. National office would be more than happy to make the information available for the benefit of our members I'm sure.

C3 is now wholly owned by Patricks, a subsidiary of Asciano. There were a lot of upset RMTU members within C3 when Port Of Tauranga had to sell their shares to Asciano under a shotgun clause, as it was the port's desire to wholly own C3. Things have gone quiet with regards to the sale and there are too many scenarios to run as possibilities for the future. We have not seen a better organised or better run operation within the Port of Tauranga than the Sulphur Point operation. We watch with interest to see what will come of the financial machinations. RMTU members had

a huge role to play in not only improving conditions but also career paths and wages for us all. Training and H&S are big agenda items too. These have all added to a top result and are strong reasons why the port wanted to wholly own C3.

The branch are now running a monthly draw, the lucky winner receiving a voucher or gift to the value of \$100. How does the executive know what to get for the winner? They have to find out. Guess it is a way of getting to know your members. How neat.

Whilst the port collective has been settled, C3 negotiations are still continuing with the next set of meeting dates being 28 February and 1 March.

The Orica negotiations kick off on March 4, 5 and 6.

Champion Flour Mill has been sold to Nisshen Flour Milling and all our members have been transferred to the new company with the same terms and conditions of employment. 🌐

## BAY OF PLENTY RAIL BRANCH

ISSUES that have arisen in 2013 are:

■ The use of contractors on the Murupara fire run, where KiwiRail have failed to consult on their use, there have been

discussions on the matter, and the issue will hopefully be resolved in the near future; and

■ The settling in of the flexible workers

is problematic as there seems to be a lot of confusion over their allowances. This matter should also be resolved in the near future. 🌐

**A**LL the best for the New Year. At our first branch meeting (30/01) of the year, the following issues were discussed;

- The need for the executive to have training on handling disciplinary matters, as it was felt that the local management were getting the better of the executive members in dealing with disciplinary issues. It was agreed that the organiser would set up delegate training seminars for the executive members on this issue;
- Dust in the yard is still a problem. It seems that senior management are not prepared to fix this issue;

## WAIKATO RAIL BRANCH

- Rosters are a continual problem which affects the taking of annual leave, working longer hours and increasing H&S issues. The underlying problem is that there are not enough workers to run a proper roster. The branch have decided to take the matter up with Ian Hill to see if more workers can be employed;
- It is with regret we hear that Bob King the CT manager passed away on New Year's Eve. Bob was a long time KiwiRail employee. Our condolences to Bob's whanau;
- There are two investigation reports that are of interest to the members, they are the Kaimai Tunnel report by Peter Dix, and the Whistleblowers Report by Phil McQueen. We are looking forward to improvements in the workplace as a result of these; and
- Alby Barr, the Networks delegate was redeployed to Northland as a result of the Networks restructuring in 2012 and is enjoying the fresh challenges in the far North.

All the best until next time. 🌐

**S**O far 2013 is looking to be a year of change at Port Taranaki with all the senior management roles being disestablished by the Board and new roles needing to be applied for. This is a major shake-up which we will keen to know how it will end up – watch this space!

## TARANAKI PORT BRANCH

Sadly one of our long term members, Ken McCracken, passed away at home on January 4. Ken had been a union member and part of the security team for Port Taranaki for over 29 years, having com-

menced on 23 May 1983. He will be sorely missed. Ken's sudden and totally unexpected passing was a big shock to us all. 🌐



**W**E had a busy season in the Naki with rumours that we are going to get even busier. Hopefully the infrastructure will grow as well. Is it time to have another look at the SOL? It's good to see plenty of concrete sleepers being laid

## TARANAKI RAIL BRANCH

between Whareroa and the Port. KiwiRail must think it has a future again.

A recent shunting mishap at Whareroa put our busy operation under the spotlight. Our members involved were stood down for

a lengthy period and were really concerned by a lack of communication. This has been resolved now and our guys are back to work with fair outcomes. 🌐

**W**ELCOME back. Trust we have all entered into the New Year in good health and resolutions upheld. Firstly, congratulations to our general secretary on becoming a 'papa' to a grandson at New Year's.

To the local situation. Even though we broke container volume records last year, the expectation is to surpass these figures again for 2013/14, including logs, export apples, squash, Watties products – in essence increased tonnage overall, so the growth continues. As a consequence of a net profit for the previous financial year the return to the regional council of more than 11 million dollars, it would seem that our senior management have done very well in terms of percentage increases. This seems to be the trend across the country for several port CEOs in particular. The difficulty I find in this is the relatively large percentage increases in wages attained by

## PORT NAPIER BRANCH

senior desk jockeys to that of the staff on the coal face. We all contribute to make these successes equally. No matter where senior personnel sit in the food chain they, like members of our Union, are employees. I do not begrudge what they earn; do not get me wrong. What I allude to is the contrast between these increases. At Napier, to be fair, we have an incentive scheme which this year was better than the 0.8% CPI increase we agreed to for the second payment in a three year deal. Subject to earnings, the incentive payment was around 4% for those on the front line, (this payment comes with parameters). This cannot be sneezed at as it is non-contractual. However, in terms of increases at the top end, ours are well shadowed. Sure enough, some of management's increases are performance based, but so is the incentive scheme.

We are all part of the process of mak-

ing CEO's look good, providing company profits are maintained. I am not saying we will achieve or are expecting equality in the percentage increases the boss receives for improved productivity, that will never happen. But, more importantly, I would like to see equity when outcomes on the bottom line have improved through equal efforts. At Napier port we practice what we call a 'just culture' policy/environment. If the term is employed fully, it means fairness, even handed justice. That being the case then these rules should flow to all aspects of the business including increases. We live in hope.

Finally, in regard to the accident at Wellington in early February to our fellow members in Wellington, and on behalf of your RMTU brothers and sisters of Napier Port, our condolences over the loss of Mark Samoa. Kia kaha. 🌐

## HAWKES BAY RAIL BRANCH

**W**E bade farewell to Dean Grant, the branch chair and Shane Airey, long time I&E delegate, who both crossed the ditch to go to work in WA.

As part of the Networks restructuring a number of Network guys were redeployed to freight and are enjoying the new experience of working for a different part of

KiwiRail. Two RCO positions are currently advertised.

We are experiencing a numbers of problems with our manager at present. 🌐

## PALMERSTON NORTH RAIL BRANCH

**I**T has been an extremely busy season in our terminal and while there have been mishaps, the level of tonnage through our yard has been huge. In recent years

there has been a high level of attrition for our yard members so there are a lot of new staff. Our members have done well and deserve a good pat on the back for coping.

We are gearing up for branch elections and a branch meeting in early March. Organising our branch has been difficult to co-ordinate but hopefully we have members keen to step up to positions and get our branch fully functioning again. 🌐

## HUTT WORKSHOPS BRANCH

**G**REETINGS from the sole remaining railway workshop in New Zealand - Hutt Workshops.

The New Year started with a hiccup. The promised pay increases and back payments didn't go as smoothly as we had all hoped. Written apologies from the administrators were quickly forthcoming and all was reasonably corrected by the next pay-run. Thank goodness for keeping payroll people in-house!

The summer weather continues with the ever-present breeze although this makes for uncomfortable working conditions at times especially for those who work in heavy fabrication and the paint shop. These areas are tough all year round and are not for the faint hearted. If NZ television ever wants to produce a home-grown version of 'SAS: Are you tough enough?' they could get recruits from these two areas!

This year appears to be one in which we see more changes. The Organisational Development Team appears to have morphed into Capability & Culture but without any fanfare. Does that mean it's a new name for old, or simply another example of a failure in communication? We are having a restructure, with our process engineering unit getting hashed around under the auspices of LEAN with the theory being that a return to a structure similar to that which we had here many years ago will assist in the achievement of the desired result.

In the last edition of The Transport Worker, one of the scribes mentioned the Action Planning Forum. Since then a small recap meeting was held with the

intention of getting things underway. As we cobble these notes together, the first meeting of the year is yet to take place however it would be fair to say that we have to await the appointment of people to the two vacancies outlined in our recently announced restructuring; this should be finalised around March. (ed. Be wary of LEAN as Hillside was also LEANED and then it closed. My butcher says lean is code for no fat and bugger all meat!)

### Positive fallout

A positive fallout from the wage round was the Training and Progression Agreement and the processes surrounding it. We are currently mulling it over via the LCC process in order to progress the assessment of staff currently languishing on M/E Level 3. It is hoped that the APL process (Assessment of Prior Learning) can be cost-effectively applied to confirm any deficiencies in knowledge and/or skills, and implement a corrective programme accordingly. One additional output of this (we hope) is the fixing-up of that shemozzle known as the skills matrix. It appears that a group of people have previously expended a lot of effort producing charts of meaningless rubbish. More on that in the next lot of notes.

We recently had visits from the Green's Julie Anne Genter, and Labour Party leader David Shearer who enjoyed a walk around the site complete with a face-to-face meeting with the committee. We hope that we continue to receive visitations by influential MPs as no matter who is in central

Government at any particular time, we as a national infrastructure asset company remain under their watchful eye. We need to keep our profile high and communication lines open. They need to know there are real New Zealanders doing their bit for the country despite being part of a political football on occasion!

### New apprentices

After what seemed like a long waiting period, we have got six new apprentices on-board (two from within and four from outside). We hope to keep some form of forward momentum going as it is vitally important to inject new blood into the industry and transfer the skills from the old hands (artisans!) to the newbies. They won't be short of work either as we've got a full order book and a steady stream of out-of-course work. We've even had to take on 12 people from a temping agency to maintain our customer-focused workflow and get us over a couple of workload peaks! I would reiterate to readers that we still have some (unadvertised) vacancies for mechanical engineers here at the workshops. If you want a change, get in touch!

We recently hosted Karen Fletcher taking photos for the Workers' Memorial Day posters. The models (yeah right) were chosen from a group of volunteers for the lunchtime shoot and it will be interesting to see if she has to apply some airbrushing (ed. more like close cropping) to the resulting pictures!

Until next time – watch out for your mates and work safe.

We are stronger together. 🌐

**K**IA ORA to all our fellow brothers and sisters, we hope and trust one and all had a safe and enjoyable festive season as we contemplate yet another year of challenges.

Sadly, this year has started on a sombre note with the loss of a number of past members and fellow mates. In tribute to some of Wellington's more notable figures we offer our sincere condolences for the loss of friends and loved ones. We acknowledge the passing of one Wellington's more famous, or notorious, identities, depending which side of the fence you were sitting. Jack Stewart, who was more affectionately known as 'Black Jack' was a legendary character. He was farewelled with a great turnout of old mates and whanau alike. Jack was a long time stalwart of the railway fraternity who understood the benefits of unity and basic workers' rights and was fondly remembered for having that unique ability for calling a spade a spade. In comradeship, as a mate or with trepidation as a foe, each will have their own fond memories. It says a lot of the common man that his last simple request was to be laid in his beloved Warriors' jersey. Kia Kaha!

We note the passing of Frank Howe a former Wellington based locomotive engineer, the serious illness of Fred Hamer who is reported to be in a coma at the time of writing, the death of Tranz Metro train manager Gary Carter's son who was once a Wellington-based passenger operator – our sincere sympathy to the Carter whanau. We also note with great sadness that locomotive engineer Dennis Sawyers who had been accepted for medical retirement was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer after 49 years of loyal service. Dennis is one of those ever-cheerful friendly chaps that you are always happy to chat to and it is with heart-felt compassion to Dennis and the family that we wish them all the very best as the battle wages with the disease.

On a more positive note we are happy to announce that Perry Carter is on the mend after successful surgery to his injured shoulder and is currently on light duties. Perry was extremely lucky to escape a near death experience within the Wellington

## WELLINGTON RAIL BRANCH



*Phil Gibbs and John Fahey with a combined 101 years of driving experience..*

rail freight yard last year after being hit and dragged 71 metres. We wish him all the best with his ongoing recovery and look forward to once again hearing and receiving his cheerful banter.

The branch extends its sympathies to both John and Scott Sargent at their tragic loss of a much loved son and brother. A terrible thing for any parent or sibling to endure and one that fellow staff and employees acknowledge with heartfelt sincerity. There wouldn't be a member in Wellington that does not hold John in the highest respect.

It appears that KiwiRail CEO Quinn has stepped into the breach to progress the ongoing consultation process for the proposed new freight yard amenities complex which has reached a 4th design stage with no immediate end in sight. Only time will tell as to whether all parties to this process can reach an amicable conclusion. Though the branch has tabled its requirements in terms of adequate signage and space for RMTU notice boards, posters and mail/ballot boxes as well as a staff social board. Now wouldn't that be nice!

Lastly, it is with great pleasure that we announce the implementation of the team leader concept into the Tranz Metro arena, with the newly appointed applicants enjoying the added bonus of a fully binding legal judgement made in their favour on all counts. That new team leader roll fall within coverage of the collective agreement thereby ensuring that they can continue to enjoy the benefits and protection of collective bargaining.

Metro celebrations for long service achievements include: John Vannisselroy

Last month RMTU organiser Todd Valster, on behalf of the Wellington Rail branch, received the following letter from the Red Cross:

*Dear Todd*

*Thank you very much for your generous donation to the Cancer Society. Without your support we would not be able to provide the wide range of services to those in our community coping with cancer. The funds you have generously provided will be used by us to fund our Men's Health Programmes. Please extend our thanks to all the staff who participated in helping to raise these funds.*

*We receive no Government funding and are heavily reliant on the goodwill of the public, so than you once again for your contribution.*

*Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about our services.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Steve Kenny*

*National Men's Health Coordinator.*

*Wellington division.*

(40 years), Graeme Whittle (30 years), Tom Standen (30 years), John Fahey (50 years) and Phil Gibbs (51 years).

Sports teams and tramping clubs have started up again.

More security cameras have been installed at outer depots to battle tagging.

The Ganzs continue to hold the fort until an order is placed to purchase more Matangi units.

## Bus members

Most of the NZ Bus Wellington members held their first meeting for 2013 at the RMTU offices last month. A new delegate, Paul Abigail, was elected and Peter Clayton re-elected. Work to be done in the near future is preparing for the collective agreement negotiations, tidying up some concerns over roles in the new structure and addressing the poor facilities in the cramped communications centre.

Talk to you next time. 🌐

## WELLINGTON PORT BRANCH

**W**E are getting ready for the upcoming (multi-union) collective agreement negotiations with CentrePort. These talks are due to start in the next few weeks. Also we are going to be dealing with the fallout from the loss of a large chunk of work to another port. Here's

hoping the company find use for what will otherwise be a large empty shed!

Our year has started tragically with one of our colleagues not returning home after his shift. Mark Samoa was killed in an accident while marking up and marshalling pulp on a night shift. Mark is remembered

as being a caring guy with a great sense of humour. His death has shocked our members and while we cannot turn back time, we must be more vigilant, watch all our brothers and sisters backs and make sure we all make it home after a shift. 🇳🇿

## MARLBOROUGH RAIL BRANCH

**G**REETING from sunny Marlborough. This year is set to be a challenging one especially for our Interislander members. It is clear management want change and it will be a battle to make sure any changes are fair and that our members are not the only targets.

The usual issues after a bunch of public holidays have happened again this year. Typical concerns raised include: "Did I get paid right for the stats?" or "My timesheet was changed and no one even told me about it." and now "What has happened to my leave totals?" The changes to live leave

totals has come out of the blue – no warning or input sought. Our members are quite rightly concerned that management will try and manipulate the use of that leave. They certainly tried to when the totals weren't live so the fear is it will be no holds barred now. Why wasn't there any consultation? 🇳🇿

## CANTERBURY RAIL BRANCH

**T**HERE'S a plenty going on in Canterbury. To start on a positive note, well done to remote control operator (RCO) John Reizinger for the part he played in organising his fellow RCOs around New Zealand in preparation for the last MECA round (see story page 9). John will be the first to admit that he didn't do it all by himself but his workmates at Middleton are grateful for the work he put in. John and the RCOs are a model of what good unity and organising is all about. Our collective agreement isn't something that pops out of a vending machine when you pay your union fees. It takes commitment, work, unity and solidarity across all sectors of membership.

### Brightest leaving

The local loco engineers are sorry to see that one of our brightest young stars, Jason Lawn, is leaving KiwiRail to take up an opportunity with the Christchurch rebuild. Jason has a background in building and the skills he's developed as an RMTU delegate obviously helped to grow his confidence and a desire to improve. Good luck in your new career Jason, and thanks for the work you've done in your time as delegate.

The LEs have been working on rostering at Middleton with management. This has

been a long and difficult path and the end is not in sight. Fundamentally the issue boils down to the difficulty of retaining trained staff so we have enough people to staff a roster that gives a good work/life balance. KiwiRail CEO Quinn has stated that he doesn't have an LE recruitment problem and he doesn't care about retaining existing LEs as he will train new ones. This shows a lack of vision and awareness of the pressure he's putting on his staff and the organisation while the training gets done.

### Growing concerns

There are growing concerns about the safety of crews on the Midland Line with the retirement of Barrie Drummond in Cass as he provided the emergency 'seek, find and report' function for the area. The matter has been referred to the KiwiRail Industrial Council for resolution which will have met by the time you read this.

The earthquake rebuild is proceeding at what seems like a glacial pace. Aside from the hassles with roads, houses, insurance and schools, at work we're still largely muddling through in many areas. The networks depot at Midas Place still has its office block closed, and two years after the big one the mechanical staff have just had a new, temporary, refuelling facility opened. It's far

from ideal, and whilst we appreciate that everyone on the ground in Christchurch are doing their best we sometimes wonder if management in Wellington has any idea how this sort of stuff grinds you down. Let's hope things improve soon or we may have to rattle some cages to make real progress.

### Roads Vs rail - an uneven field

The so called 'Cost Improvement Programme' in infrastructure and engineering has taken a huge toll of the goodwill of I&E staff in Canterbury. Too many of us in rail have been through this sort of thing too many times. A few weeks ago we learned that the Ferrymead road bridge that connects Sumner to the rest of the world was being replaced at a cost of \$32m – all very necessary but no one is expecting that bridge to turn a profit, unlike our national rail network. The irony is that after cutting jobs in Christchurch the company is now advertising for staff!

Meanwhile we hear that the British are committing to building high speed rail links between major cities. In Christchurch we have a golden opportunity to get rail back on the map as a public transport option, but what is the National Government doing? Laying off rail workers! Talk about a lack of vision! 🇳🇿

'I've never seen anything like it and I never want to see anything like it again,' said one of our veteran track workers about the weather we endured here in January 2013.

The Buller Gorge was closed for nearly two weeks with 42 sections of flood damaged track. The heavy rain that hit in the New Year meant that streams burst their banks, choking culverts and drains with debris. This resulted in widespread damage on a 22km stretch through the Gorge. The worst damage occurred where there was no access other than by rail. A helicopter ride was needed to make the first damage assessments.

Our members in Westport have fought long and hard to maintain the Westport track gang's level at four staff, arguing that this is vital for health and safety for



## WEST COAST & WESTPORT RAIL BRANCH

the loco engineers and others running through the Gorge. We couldn't have had a better illustration of the truth of this in recent weeks.

It's easy for the bean counters in Wellington to put out press releases praising us for doing 'an amazing job' to reopen the line but they need to think about times like these when they're cutting staff to the bone. Railway workers are the best there are. We'll do what it takes to keep the line open but don't forget us when the rain stops and things are running smoothly. You never know when you might need us again. We're seeing this over here as KiwiRail is rehiring people they made redundant before Christmas.

Barrie Drummond is retiring in March from the ganger's role at Cass (see article page 8) and Kelvin Prendergast has taken up a role based in Arthur's Pass. This is a job that is vital in maintaining the safety of the Midland Line and one that emerged from the fight we had to keep jobs as KiwiRail embarked on their so called 'cost improvement' scheme.

In other news, the RMTU fought a successful battle to save the job of one of our members who was threatened with disciplinary action before Christmas. What made the difference in changing management's thinking was real union work – our members signed a petition in his support which gave the delegate on the ground the ability to speak for all of them in pressing the case. You couldn't have a better example of the



fact that our Union is the membership and whilst it's important that we have the backing and advice of our paid officials, it's the members on the ground who make the difference when push comes to shove.

Life is eventful on the Coast. It has been a busy summer. 🌍

**W**ell it's halfway through February and following on from the job losses of 2012 we find even more being announced in the media. This Government's record on jobs is rubbish! Key's Government should hang its head in shame, still trying to convince the average Kiwi that its job creation schemes are working and that were all doing ok. Talk about a Tui's

## TIMARU RAIL BRANCH

moment – yeah right!

Here in Timaru, we have been able to welcome Graham Frazer to our terminal team and James Turnbull to our CT site. Graham has come from the Coast and has fitted in very well and young James has been a casual employee for seven months and so

under the MECA provisions became a full time permanent and has slotted in well with the whole CT team. This small but efficient team is working well and sometimes has Christchurch CT staff helping out. With huge truck movements in and out of the

Continued on the next page ▶

TIMARU RAIL BRANCH [cont]

◀ site the new gatehouse is proving its worth. The branch is in good health and we are happy that the Timaru Port branch is going ok after all of the slash and burn last year. Congratulation to Mike for his co-delegate of the year award (with Dave Kearns ex Hillside and now LE trainee) at Conference in 2012. It is good to see that many members have been taken back on. The freight terminal staff are very busy with large numbers of containers across

our client base. It is also good to see I&E staff spending many hours repairing our yards. We have a couple of guys on sick and light duties leave (ed. Good to see Doug Blakie back at work!). A sign of our aging workforce perhaps. Get well soon Gavin and Bill. The upside of this though is that a little overtime is being shared by all staff. Temuka's yard remains a big problem for KiwiRail with more articles appearing in the *Timaru Herald* complaining of dust and

noise pollution from the site (ed. sounds familiar to many other sites like Te Rapa for example). The work environment is difficult for RMTU staff as well as the Temuka transport staff. Environment Canterbury is monitoring the situation. We hear that KiwiRail has just again pushed back planned work to reseal and re-rail the yard. Come on KiwiRail let's get the work completed before the new milk season and make it so that I can proudly say I work for KiwiRail in Timaru! 🇳🇿

PORT TIMARU BRANCH

THE RMTU Timaru branch remains alive and kicking. After last year's decision by Maersk and Hamburg Sud to cease calling at the port, which led to a major restructure and a gutting of the workforce, we've slowly been getting ourselves back on our feet. At the 11th hour Mediterranean Shipping Lines announced they would be calling at the port and over the summer trade has slowly picked up. We've had a cruise ship call in twice now, the Seaborne Odyssey, from Akaroa and Bluff and a bigger ship is expected to call in shortly. On 31 January

we exported 7,200 head of live heifers, many in-calf, to China as part of a continuing diary industry programme. A few of our members have been offered 24 hour guaranteed work as the company is faced with the challenge of retaining skilled workers who have the option of working elsewhere in the rural economy and going up the road to Christchurch. We've maintained our Union branch organisation and kept up our profile within the RMTU by participating in the activities of the wider Union, not least of which was attending National Conference. As we look

around New Zealand we can see that the problem that our members face – a lack of job security – is shared by many NZ working people. In Dunedin we've seen our brothers and sisters at Hillside face the axe and we know that many KiwiRail track workers went through the same sort of restructuring that destroys the livelihoods of ordinary people like us. We know that the only way forward is to stay organised because that's the one way in which working people are guaranteed a voice and a fighting chance in this world. The heart of Timaru Port remains beating and we remain 'Stronger Together'. 🇳🇿

PORT OTAGO BRANCH

HAPPY NEW YEAR to all from a very warm and sunny Otago, we hope you all had a restful break and have come back to work refreshed and ready to continue with the struggle that all workers seem to be facing presently. We are in the middle of our busy season and once again we face ghosts from the past with a gross shortage of labour. So, again, we see people being hired – which is great – but we also know from the past that when the work dries up we then face the discussions of decreasing the numbers. It worries me because we are so busy and have an increasingly fatigued workforce. Members feel under pressure to take shortcuts to meet workloads and deadlines which is resulting in H&S being very much compromised. No job is too urgent that it cannot be done safely. I don't want to be

standing at Workers' Memorial Day remembering one of my workmates. The port faced its biggest exchange in history recently with a dual exchange of 4,300 moves. There was a lot of discussion about whether we could complete the work because of space constraints. The exchange went brilliantly and was



Martin Kett.



Chris Lydiate and Renay Hope.



completed with no major hiccups and a number of hours ahead of schedule. It was a huge and satisfying job well done by all. It even resulted in a bit of humour by a cartoon being drawn by 'the Fox' (whoever they are) about the number of managers that graced POL with their presence over the weekend. A bonus was offered to all staff who worked over the week of the exchange. Last year I wrote of the reluctance of POL to pay the profit share. I can now say it was paid but it was accom-

panied by a memo stating that it may not fit with the business anymore and it would be reviewed. Some of us cynics think we have probably received our last one. Of course this will not be accepted without a fight! I guess it fits with the increasing change of management style we see evolving within.

Brian Byas become a local hero recently

**O**UR highly esteemed and respected immediate past president has finally left the ranks of the working class and has retired to take up painting, his house anyway, and we are all thankful that the 'Pink Hoose' of Caversham will be nooo more! We wish Jim all the best for a long and happy retirement and our sympathies go to Liz and Lisa. His worth was clearly underestimated by his employer because they have had to get two people to replace him. The mechanical depot now has two new workers from Hillside to take up where Jim left off. Welcome to Peter and Rodger.

The Taieri Gorge Railway is enjoying a

**T**HE issue of fuelling locos is being worked through both locally and nationally. Years ago the company made the guys who fuelled and serviced locomotives redundant and contracted the work out to mini tankers. Now they've figured it's too expensive to pay contractors to do the work so they want us to do it, again. There are a host of practical problems, some of which are national issues that apply to all depots, but others which are site specific. We're working through the site specific matters with local management and we reckon we have reached agreement with KiwiRail on 80% of the problems. We will be focusing on the 20% that still needs sorting over the next few weeks.

Another matter that has got people going around here has been the application of the coal allowance from the MECA settlement. There is a difference of opinion between the branch and KR on the interpretation of the relevant clause in the MECA. Needless to say, KR argues it doesn't apply to what our guys do at Nightcaps and we are arguing it does. This is going to the KIC for further discussion. Once we have a response from that body in the affirmative it will be sorted. If not then we'll then see what our options are for getting KR to

## PORT OTAGO BRANCH [cont]

when, in the course of his duty, he overheard on the radio some fishermen were in difficulty off the coast of Taieri Mouth. Maritime New Zealand couldn't pick the conversation up and thanks to Brian's quick thinking he was able to contact MNZ with all

the vital information and they were rescued. POL rewarded Brian with morning tea but neglected to invite any of his workmates. So from your workmates: well done Brian, fabulous outcome saving three lives. 🇳🇿

## OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

prosperous cruise ship season and giving the railcar regular outings to broaden their suite of tourist opportunities.

Our shunting yard has benefited from some overdue maintenance and the fuel site is being prepared, although, at the time of writing there have been no moves to establish the who, when and for how much to operate it.



Mark Scotson and Dave Kearns.

The locomotive engineers have taken a novel approach to creating a new roster by having a ballot. The revamped roster is due for implementation in March. Mike Caley has been given sole charge of trains after completing his OJT. Alister Grant will, in all likelihood, retire in the near future after a very lengthy career in the rail industry. Until next time. 🇳🇿

## SOUTHLAND RAIL BRANCH

open its wallet.

We held a lively and well attended branch meeting at a local pub last month, attended by general secretary Wayne Butson, South Island rail NMC representative Doug Blakie and Southern Regional organiser John Kerr. The two items above were the focus of much of the general discussion but the most important part of the meeting was a presentation to our branch secretary Phil Jones by Wayne. Phil is stepping down after many years serving the branch and this was marked by the presentation of a certificate. As Wayne reminded us, the full time officials and staff are not the RMTU, they are only the hired help – our Union is our members and our delegates and branch officials and it was great to see the warmth and appreciation Phil got at the meeting. Kelvin Wilson is considering stepping up to act as branch secretary and judging from the job he did at our meeting he'll make a good one.

In other news, we're keeping a close eye on contractors on the track. We recruited contractors into the RMTU last year when we found they were being treated illegally and forced to pay for their own protective



(l to r) Branch chair Gavin Mortimore, Kelvin Wilson, Phil Jones and Wayne Butson.

gear and safety boots as well as being paid at a lower rate than the MECA provided. All this undermines our jobs by making cheap labour attractive to the employer. By signing these guys up we sorted the problem very quickly and got them on a higher wage rate and stopped the rort over the protective equipment.

The flashbutt welder is still working the line in our area but progress has been slow, it doesn't help when it rains.

We have a number of new members who have come on board in recent months. It's great to have fresh blood coming into the rail industry and the RMTU, as Wayne told us, rail workers stick together and new people coming are not just starting a job, they're joining the railway family. 🇳🇿



*Summer storm damage on the West Coast.*



## Rail's level playing field - yeah right!

**T**HE summer storm damage to rail infrastructure in the South Island is testimony to just how UN-level the transport playing field really is. When a similar storm cut the Manawatu Gorge road, Government funds were readily available to fix the mess. When rail suffers similar catastrophe they are nowhere to be

seen or heard. Instead KiwiRail must find the resources to repair the tracks from its own budget.

Hence the closure of such links as the Napier-Gisborne line – cast adrift through an act of nature and a callously uncaring government which sees a level playing ground that favours its mates in road

transport.

If this West Coast rail damage pictured here had been to roads not rail they would have all been fixed through the public purse. As long as road receive the subsidies rail will remain the poor cousin and the public will gradually lose an invaluable asset. 🌐

