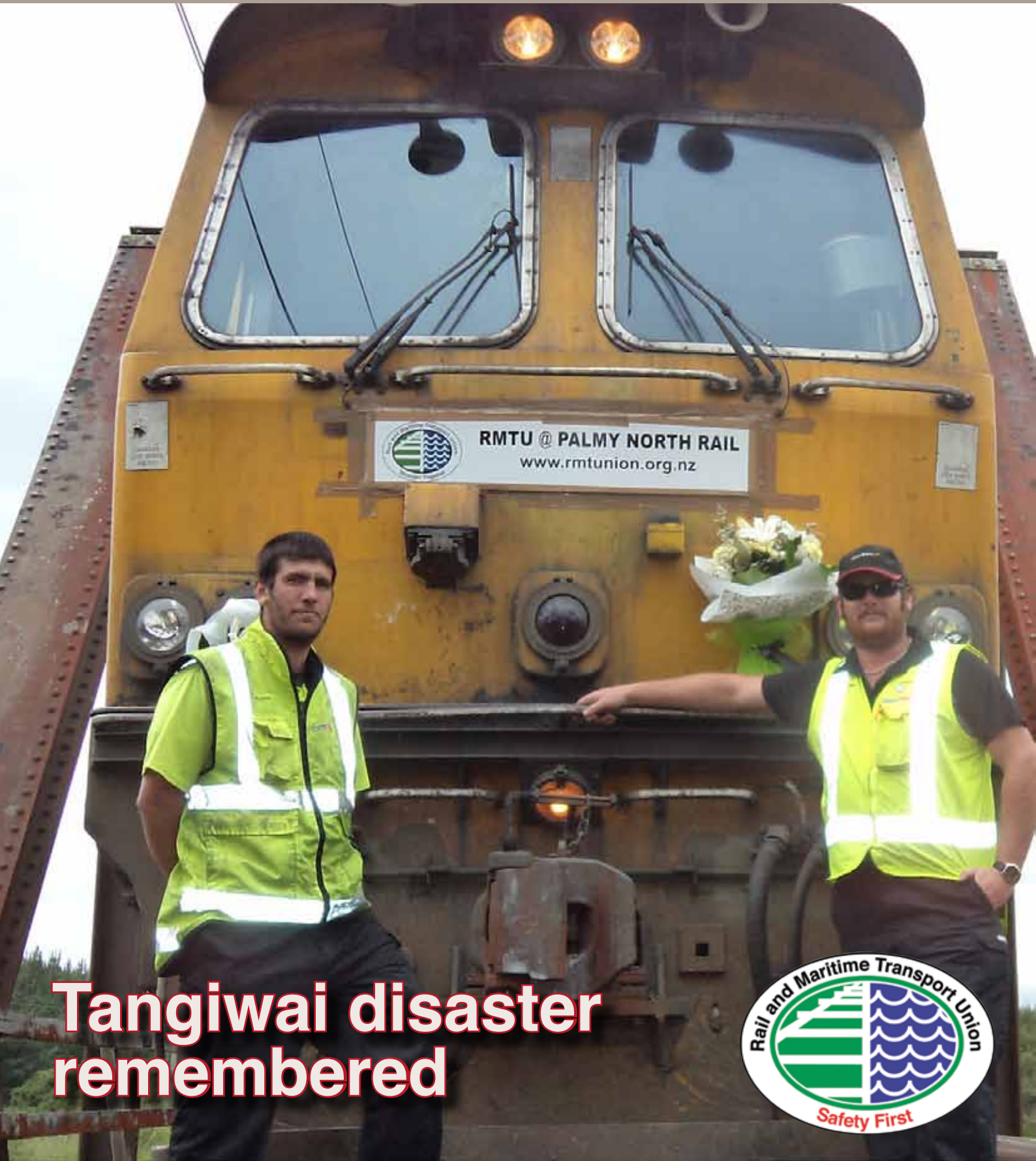


MARCH 2014

THE *Transport Worker*

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



**Tangiwai disaster
remembered**





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The restoration of the old loco, Passchendaele, is on track for the 100th anniversary.

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Thomas the Tank engine meets his modern counterpart at a special Auckland day.

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Ryan Blackbourn and Palmerston North branch secretary, Tim Kerwin lay wreaths at Tangiwai. See story page 32

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Wayne Butson
General secretary
RMTU

A busy year looms

A hearty kia ora and best wishes to all RMTU members and leaders as we head into what is going to be a very testing, stimulating and full on year for us all. A year of campaigning, challenge and potential change will be in store for us all in 2014. We have 16 collective agreements to be negotiated and renewed this year, the largest of which is KiwiRail Group which covers 2,654 of our current 4,650 membership. We will also have to learn how to deal with the new CEO on the bridge of the good ship KiwiRail as I am sure he will have a KiwiRail Board-driven agenda to implement as part of his appointment over Quinn. This agenda, whatever it is, is NOT likely to be the same as Quinn's vision – otherwise, why the change? So we are left to speculate about what Quinn wasn't doing rather than what he was. I have my views on what the Board may wish to see, which I will keep to myself at this stage.

New man at the helm

However, the new man Peter Reidy has certainly hit the ground running. During his first day on the job he split a role that Quinn created called GM People and Safety by appointing a person to a new role called GM Zero Harm. This is a marked contrast to Quinn's entry style into the company where nothing really happened for months in terms of structural change before he began to alter course.

I support Reidy's change.

I was totally opposed to Quinn joining health and safety with HR at the time for two reasons. The first is that there are few people around who are skilled at safety and HR and so the candidate pool would be slim and secondly, HR's goals (as driven by the business needs) are frequently at odds with good established safety practice.

It is undeniable that safety has slipped within KR in the last five years and improvement has been slow and sporadic, with the major operational indicators (SPAD A's and track warrant overruns glaring examples) steadfastly going in the wrong direction.

In my opinion, Quinn's legacy in rail will be more lines closed or mothballed than during privatisation, five siloed business units, little improvement to the safety culture, one less workshop, improved customer and stakeholder relations, improved communication and improved morale.

The report card would show a pass mark but with a note saying "should have tried harder".

◀ Enough of rail though as the waterfront is also an active area and will see plenty of action during 2014. The Port of Tauranga's (POT) container terminal at Sulphur Point is currently operated by C3-employed staff supplemented by a group of full time Port of Tauranga-employed crane drivers and a small pool of straddle operators from Independent Stevedoring Limited (ISL). Part of the operation at Sulphur Point is the container transfer (CT) site where rail and road vehicles are serviced. C3 have lost the contract for the CT site contract which has been won by the POT which is a wholly owned entity of Quality Marshalling.

Strained relationship


If I was to say that relations between management of C3 and POT are 'strained' following last year's ownership change which saw POT's shareholding within C3 lost to Asciano I would be significantly understating the level of tension. Is this move the beginning of something or the end of something else? You may well ask. However, time will tell with the sad reality here being that I am talking about RMTU members, their families, their livelihoods and job security that is in doubt or in question. Yet again, it is we workers who pay the inevitable and ultimate price for boardroom or management games.

Meanwhile, down the road in Port Napier ISO have the pulp stevedoring contract and our members are doing the shipside marshalling. ISO operates the ships gear etc and affects the loading of the ships. There are 'issues' for us with ISO doing the stevedoring already and all are aware of this situation. Port Napier and the shipper now want to increase productivity and wish to use the mobile harbour cranes as they have much faster lift rates and capacity. Watch this space.

Port collectives too

All of the South Island ports have CAs to be renewed this year together with the safety challenges in Lyttelton. The future for our members in Primeport Timaru under POT ownership plus the effects of the new inland port at Rolleston will be keeping us busy in the South.

We will also be holding our first 'biennial' style conference this year in mid-October and so there will be no Port's Forum this year and of course there is the small matter of a general election to be held with the RMTU working to ensure that we have a Labour-led government sitting on the treasury benches of Parliament by year end.

So, let the games begin! 

Trouble likely in I&E

"I prefer a Labour man, you can do a deal with a Labour man," says the property developer character played by Sean Bean in the TV adaptation of David Peace's Red Riding trilogy, a work set in 1970's Yorkshire, a time of social upheaval, industrial unrest and political skulduggery.

It's a phrase that will chime with many union officials.

The reality of being an RMTU advocate for the membership is that at some point we have to be able to do a deal, whether it's to get the best possible pay and conditions, ensure job security or to see that workers are properly represented on matters like health and safety.

The RMTU and its predecessors have a 128-year history of successfully negotiating on behalf of its members. Whilst it's not afraid to take action to support legitimate claims, it has always sought to negotiate solutions. It knows when to fight and when to talk. That doesn't mean it can't be militant on occasions.

Which brings us to the KiwiRail Infrastructure and Engineering Industrial Council (I&EIC), made up of the RMTU and management representatives from across the network who, together, keep the infrastructure of the train set going.

In the past couple of years RMTU I&E members have had their share of woes such as an ill-considered and devastating initiative to take \$200m out of the operation in late 2012 which cost some members their jobs and dealt a body blow to morale.

Successive failures by management to properly consult on contracting out work led to growing frustration and distrust and every time the Union negotiated an agreement it seemed management broke its promise.

There were a couple of very close calls involving contractors and Union members in tunnels, as well as other

safety concerns arising from lean staffing.


Over the summer the latest drama was the bullying and intimidation of a member who raised a legitimate concern over health and safety whilst assisting contractors on the Auckland Electrification Project. The contractor's response was to demand our member subject himself to drug and alcohol testing!

Meanwhile KiwiRail has been downgraded by ACC from tertiary to primary status and one of the main reasons is a failure to properly manage contractors.

The RMTU team on the I&EIC hasn't stopped trying to talk its way out of these problems. Its relationship with management varies across the country and it knows some of them share its despair. Others appear to be hellbent on a collision course with the Union's membership. In particular, the general manager of I&E, Rick van Barneveld, who doesn't appear to understand the principles of working with organised labour.

The RMTU fears the collision will take place at this year's KiwiRail MECA talks where I&E management will push an agenda in support of more contracting out whilst hours of work benefits.

The RMTU remains hopeful that this won't be the case because it knows that the only way to make rail safe and provide exemplary working conditions is to work together. With a proud history of successfully negotiating on behalf of its members the RMTU also knows it takes both parties to negotiate meaningfully.

However, if nudge comes to push, your RMTU negotiations team won't hesitate to recommend action be taken. 

Life saving rules for a just and fair culture

THIS is an initiative which resulted from the summit of the industrial councils last July. A working group made up of management and RMTU representatives from each industrial council was convened under the chairmanship of KiwiRail's health and safety manager, Phil O'Connell. The RMTU is represented by Karen Fletcher (national H&S organiser), Howard Phillips (mechanical council & RMTU vice president), Mike Williams (freight council and NMC rep), Kevin Jones (I & E council), Steve Brown (mechanical council); Jo Carr (passenger council) and Tania Haraki (Interislander council).

The idea of identifying life saving rules – those that, if highlighted and focussed on, should result in the greatest reduction in injuries and harm – is something that has been tried in other sectors, notably aviation and extractive industries like oil, as well as by rail operators and unions overseas.

Done properly, the most important rules that will contribute to a reduction in harm are picked out and given renewed emphasis by everyone – workers, union and management. This is allied to an approach to investigating and dealing with incidents and rule breaches that is known as a just and fair culture. This is not a blame free culture – rather it is an approach that looks beyond individual actions and addresses organisational and systemic issues as well.

One can't work without the other.

The rules are the rules and all we are looking at doing is fairly enforcing the key ones. However, to have a consistent and transparent approach to investigating breaches marks a shift in the company's approach.



Real workers in Dunedin listen to I&E management.

It's fair to say that in the past some investigations have adopted the 'find a scapegoat' or 'blame the worker' approach. This has led to systemic and organisational problems being overlooked. For example, it may have been that managers turned a blind eye to some practices when it meant the job was done quicker, even though the rules were being breached. Also, the blame the worker approach means that members are often reluctant to report breaches for fear of the consequences.

Under a just and fair culture members should be confident that the underlying cause will be dealt with. So if it becomes custom and practice for breaches to be tolerated, then everybody involved – management and workers – should be educated and made accountable for changing it.

Make no mistake, this is going to involve a big change in thinking for some people,

both members and managers. Our brothers and sisters in Britain, the RMT and the TSSA, have been working on this sort of initiative in recent years and report that it has led to real progress in health and safety. A just and fair culture doesn't mean that wilful or deliberately negligent acts aren't punished but it also doesn't mean that people who make an honest mistake, or mess up because they haven't had proper training, are blamed and the organisation gets off scot free.

At the time of writing the working group is surveying the health and safety action teams nationwide to get a feel from workers at the grass roots to seek opinions as to whether we've identified the correct life-saving rules and to find out what their thoughts are about the idea of a just and fair culture.

Those on this working party are very positive about the initiative. As one contributor, who had worked in aviation, said: "We knew we'd cracked it when the pilots started to self-report breaches."

To build a level of trust between workers and managers, where that sort of thing occurs, won't happen overnight but it will make the workplace safer for

Over 100 stage one health and safety reps

SINCE the recent KiwiRail health and safety action team elections there are now over 100 health and safety reps who need to do stage one training. Because of the large number the RMTU and KiwiRail are working on delivering rail specific, in-house training. KiwiRail Group safety templates will be used to tailor the training and participants will be encouraged to think critically about how health and safety can be improved in their work area. The stage one training is NZQA approved and participants can apply for the unit standard 20198 if they choose.

Tap Root

A form of accident/incident investigation for Port Napier




everyone. It's easy to be cynical but there are some veterans on this working group, both management and RMTU, that are pretty excited about this kind of change.

It remains to be seen if senior managers and the wider membership alike will get on board and make it work.

The rules are the rules and whilst there will be discussion about which rules should be made life saving rules (LSR), we don't have a problem with rules being enforced (fairly). The health and safety action teams (HSAT) should be encouraged to give feedback (via the survey) on whether the rules make sense to their work. The purpose of the rule is to identify the most important rules for preventing serious injury or death. Incidentally, there is currently talk (from KRG senior management) of changing the term 'life saving rule' to 'life saving behaviours'.

The just and fair culture process is important for workers because:

- It will provide a consistent process for decision making when a rule has been breached;
- The process looks at the contributing factors for why a breach occurred rather than taking a blame-the-worker approach;
- The process will make all levels of the business accountable for safety. EG; if a rule breach is custom and practice the management will be held accountable for allowing the breach to occur; and
- The process for dealing with rule breaches will be consistent and fair and hopefully encourage confidence among the workforce to report safety breaches so the root of the problem can be addressed.

The RMT union (UK Rail Maritime Transport Union) says the just and fair culture process has had a positive effect over there. 

IN May 2013 the Napier Port Company undertook a contract with Winston Pulp International (WPI) to receive, store and marshal WPI pulp and timber for export, for break bulk vessels and containerisation.

The Port handled this product many years ago in a palletised format but lost the contract to Centre Port around 1995 - if memory serves correctly.

Somewhere along the way, Wellington went through a transition of relinquishing the fork machine and pallet style operation, to engage in the current clamp method of handling the pulp.

The shape, size and weight of the pulp are pretty much a constant, though at times we have struck inconsistencies which can give some grief to hoist operators, particularly when there is a variable between the width of the two packets being hoisted – 99% of the clamp lifting is in unit pairs, in essence, 12 pre-wired bales. Whereby once, expensive pallets were required ship loading is now done by a nest of hooks off the ships hook (Cranston gear) pushed through rounds of wire around the vertical centre of two bales. A unit is made up of six bales and bales in the most are lifted in 24s – or four units shipside.

New 'Linde' clamp machines were pur-

chased to serve for the movement of the pulp through the port from rail to shed, labelling and then loaded to truck, to ship.


This is where Tap Root investigation comes into play.

As a consequence of a forward tip of a clamp machine while lowering two units of pulp from the 4th height position from the stack the Port company undertook, through its 'Just Culture' regime, to hire an Australian-based company Capabilities Resources to investigate the WPI operation as a whole.

Peter Berkholz, an experienced Tap Root investigator, led the group to look, access, advise, and report on the WPI pulp operation in full, from its commencement to the present.

Three RMTU members were assigned to be part of the investigation team which assisted in the Tap Root analysis and its outcomes. Dave Makea (pulp shed supervisor), Robert Phipps (mechanical workshop foremen) and your scribe along with other representatives within and external to the company.

Without going into detail, the essence of the enquiry is based around four key techniques: events charting; casual factor for identification; root cause (tree); and corrective action.

The investigation was very thorough, looking from front to back, back to front, possibilities, 

probabilities, assumptions, actual facts and involving all, from the coal face to senior management and the supplier/ reps of the Linde machine.

The Tap Root method exposes all aspects of the operation, warts and all. It is not a blame tool. It is to learn what needs to be done and what didn't get done. So it was not just about the hoist tip but an all-encompassing analysis, to ensure we are being pro-active in keeping the job safe across all parts including training, equip-



... and the heart of the issue

ment, communication, product variation, safety, procedure, manufacture.

To date we have had a brief draft summary of the Tap Root investigation.

Under the Port 'Just Culture' banner: to engage an external scrutiniser can have its merits but also its draw backs, for management and worker alike. This form of examination identifies not just the positives but uncovers the flaws or weaknesses too. To my way of thinking this was a brave step by the Port company. As opposed to companies that turn a blind eye to internal mishaps and cause, as we see presently in both the logging and mining industries.

Heading into the new year it will be interesting to see what conclusions have been presented in the fullness of the report and what the findings may bring us in terms of change and whether corrective measures will be applied. More importantly, how much is acted and delivered on. 🇳🇿

Dave Marden, NMC NI ports rep.



Hillside – gone but not forgotten

FORMER workers from Hillside workshops in Dunedin gathered last December 20 to mark one year since the closure of their past workplace.

"We shouldn't be here today marking the anniversary of Hillside's closure. Hillside played an important role in our rail industry, and there was ample reason for it to stay open," RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson said. "What was needed were government ministers with a commitment to local manufacturing and a willingness to take a whole-of-life view on procurement instead of opting for the cheapest products available – whatever the long term economic and social cost is to local communities."

He added: "KiwiRail's decision to not bid for either the \$500 million contract for Auckland's new trains, or for some or all of the 4000 flat top wagons directly contributed to the closure of Hillside." Manufacturing may not have the showbiz appeal of the film industry and it doesn't get you invited to parties in Hollywood, but it remains New Zealand's third largest employing industry and deserves better much support from government."

Butson said Hillside had made a huge contribution to the New Zealand rail industry and the Dunedin economy over the past 130 years, and its workers wanted to reunite a year on and share some memories of their time at the site. 🇳🇿

NZ Railway Road Services Woburn bus garage

All ex-garage drivers and stores staff and partners welcome to a reunion on April 12, 2014 at the Bellevue Hotel, Lower Hutt. Starts at 4pm.

Bring your photos.

Enquiries to: Hari Kamaru,
027-563-6270

Reunion



Supporting Burmese workers

In a show of solidarity and support for Burmese workers, RMTU general secretary and vice president, Wayne Butson and Howard Phillips, crossed the Thai/Burma border to visit some fledgling Burmese rail unions. They were joined by ICLS general secretary Satori Yamada and ICLS president Edgar Bilayong from the Philippines.

"It proved to be one of the most deeply moving and emotional experiences I have encountered," said Phillips. "Unions are almost a forgotten concept in that country. They existed when the British ruled but were banned after the coup in 1962. There's no one left with any institutional memory of what they are, what they do or what they can achieve."

For the last 18 months to two years workers have been allowed to form unions under strict guidelines. The most stringent of these is a restriction to individual work sites and, over time, the opportunity for similar work site union to amalgamate first regionally and then nationally.

Butson and Phillips met, for instance, with the Yangon Carriage Repair Workers' Union, the Yangon Locomotive Workers' Union, the Mandalay Carriage Workers' Union and the Mandalay Locomotive Workers' Union.

Each of these mini unions must create and develop their own structures and organisation. They are not initially permitted to consort or work with each other.

However, through international support and funding, trained individuals are traversing the country, talking to workers and encouraging the formation of new work site unions.

"The union movement in Burma is at a very fledgling stage," says Phillips. "Ross Wilson (ex RMTU general secretary and CTU president) spent last year working there helping to train these organisers and assist with the formation of these small unions. He has developed a project around rail workers which he is keen for the RMTU to join."

Wilson was instrumental in forming UnionAID a CTU-affiliated charity focussed



(below) Wayne Butson giving solidarity gifts.

on helping workers overseas. The current UnionAID project in Burma is focussed on funding, organising and training activities.

But, says Phillips, many of the problems facing these workers is far more fundamental and personal.

"The British set up the rail network along with dedicated housing, hospitals and social services all of which has deteriorated to near ruin today," he says. "One of the chaps at the meeting brought a huge file of photographs showing all 200 members of his union giving blood to a hospital which has nothing. Imagine - the union is supplying the blood for a hospital. They also wanted us to help repair their broken oxygen generating machine – not just to supply their oxy-acetylene plant but also oxygen for the hospital."

He said that although they talked to the representatives about employers and collective agreements "their real focus is social and looking after the welfare of their members".

Not only are the social services starved of funds but so are the work sites.

"Safety glasses and gloves are only brought out when visitors tour the plants, otherwise they stay in cupboards. The union officials wanted us to buy some to protect their workers. One also wanted us to repair the roof of the workshop which leaked so badly in the rain it caused electrical short circuits electrocuting workers. Basic stuff which we take for granted. The social services - housing, welfare, hospitals, education – once supplied by the railway



companies have gone."

Meanwhile, he says, the generals are still in power and "raping" the economy "purchasing huge swathes" of land and selling to foreign entrepreneurs.

He says the For Sale sign is up in Burma. Railway land is being given to ministers and workers are rightly concerned. Meanwhile the "capitalist vultures fill the planes" arriving to "suck up all the resources of poor little Burma".

"Unfettered capitalism is being unleashed there where they are buying cheap and sucking the life out of the country."

Phillips believes the RMTU's efforts in Burma should go into organising and helping them grow the union movement and keeping their members but adds that it's really difficult to ignore the human needs of these workers.

"If there's one thing the RMTU should do internationally for our brother and sister workers then it's helping these new unions. This is what we should be doing. We can make a difference now that we are aware of their plight." 🌐

Pike's lessons for us all

TRAGEDY at Pike River Mine – How and why 29 men died - and what it's got to do with you!

The tragedy at Pike River, its inevitability, the owners' greed, the Government's inaction and its lasting lessons for workers everywhere struck home to RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson who read the book over the summer. He says this is an important book for unionists to read. He called it an "engaging, sad and depressing read".

The book, written by *The Listener* journalist Rebecca Macfie, describes how the tragedy unfolded in exquisite and excruciating detail and leaves readers in no doubt that this was a disaster that could have – and should have – been prevented.

Macfie said: "The Pike story made me deeply angry and ashamed. I was ashamed that this had happened in our country, and I felt it was a stain on the nation."

Unfortunately, she also concludes that the factors in place at Pike River which led to the catastrophe are also prevalent in many other businesses and enterprises in New Zealand.

The outstanding feature of the book says Butson is the sheer waste of human life and resources for so little return.

"The pit was mined for about a year for a pathetic 42,000 tonnes, about two ship loads. The price? 29 lives and about \$350 million of capital."

The company behind the venture, Pike River Coal, touted the coal as amongst the best in the world. In fact it wasn't but government and investors bought the story and

••••• 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.

became part of the myth.

Macfie was on the scene from the beginning, reporting events and following up with stories focussed on its human cost.

Early on she said she sensed that this was principally going to be a story of profound business failure around a company with a brand built upon "assumptions and mistruths".

Nine things stood out for her in those early days including a false description in the company's 2007 prospectus saying the coal seam had low to moderate gas, when it was well known to be very gassy; the walkout of three of the company's directors at the end of 2006; the blowout in costs; the collapse of the ventilation shaft; improper geological exploration; and more.

Most of this was there in black and white in the company documents. This was a company that had habitually over-promised, and never delivered she said.

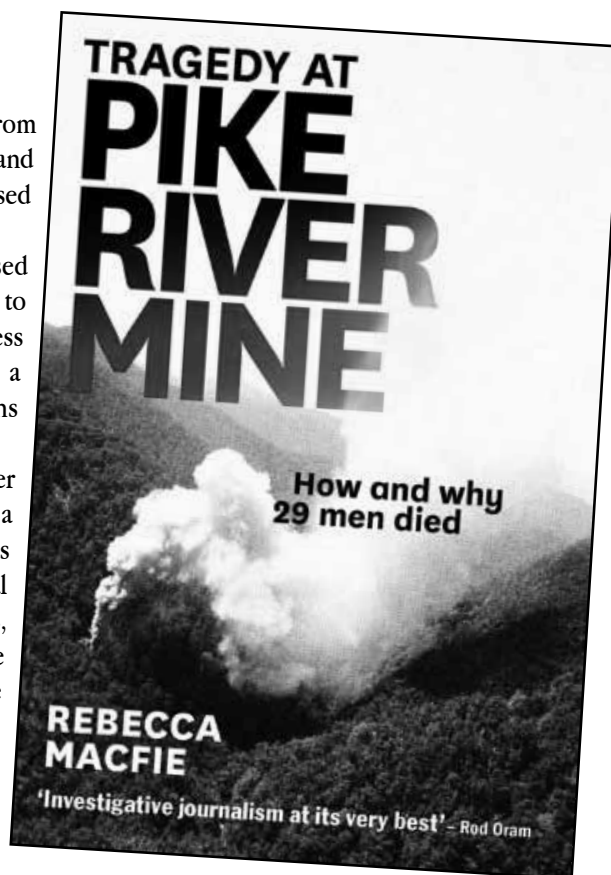
"These were conditions we would normally associate with third world countries," said Butson. "It reminded me of the lead up to the Tranz Rail Ministerial Enquiry where Tranz Rail had put productivity and profit ahead of safety."

West Coast mine owners, safety inspectors and, above all, miners and their families spoke willingly and openly to Macfie as she researched her book

Men from the Mines Rescue Service, she said helped her build a picture of what really happened in those five days after November 19.


"Pike is really two tragedies," she said, "That the explosion of November 19 happened at all, and secondly the appalling mismanagement of the emergency and how bureaucracy trumped effective decision-making. This ultimately meant the mine was left to blow up three more times. It is because of that that the 29 bodies are still entombed in the mountain."

"People may feel that 'Pike' is over but the legislative framework which failed to



properly assure the safety of the work and compel employers to provide a safe work place still sits on the statutes books – essentially unchanged," said Butson. "Macfie believes that it is a story for all New Zealanders. This was a preventable tragedy, and many of the factors that put Pike in such a fragile position are common in many organisations such as overblown promises, denial of problems, solutions deferred, an unwillingness to listen to criticism and a blatant disregard of the knowledge from the shop floor."

Macfie points to the failings of the company's health and safety system which she describes as "comprehensive and shocking" and while her book focusses on Pike River, believes "there is a little bit of Pike in many of our organisations".

"As rail workers we are well aware of how exaggeration, arrogance, denial and deferral can affect the work environment," says Butson. "Our record is one of improvement. But all the more reason to remain vigilant and to keep the bosses honest. It is incumbent upon us all to be alert to the gradually accumulating perils that may gather under our very noses." 

Safety nightmare from Peru

THE Rail & Maritime Transport Union recently called on KiwiRail to reinspect about 160,000 Peruvian sleepers in the national rail network. However, KiwiRail chief executive Jim Quinn said the sleepers posed no safety risk and the company would never leave "things unsafe".

According to the union, a recent inspection of a section of track in the Buller Gorge highlighted damage to a significant number of sleepers on a curved part of the track.

Union organiser John Kerr said many Peruvian sleepers were rotting from the inside. "A piece on a straight bit is low risk,

but on a corner it is high risk. The worst possible thing that could happen is that the track fails when a loaded passenger train is on it," he said.

Kerr said a 10kph speed restriction was immediately placed on the affected section of the track in the Gorge.

But he pointed out the problem was that the equipment KiwiRail used to check the sleepers was not working properly.

Kerr said KiwiRail had agreed to switch to a new process of checking sleepers, but the Union wanted all Peruvian sleepers to be rechecked.

He called the situation a "safety nightmare" waiting to happen. 🌐

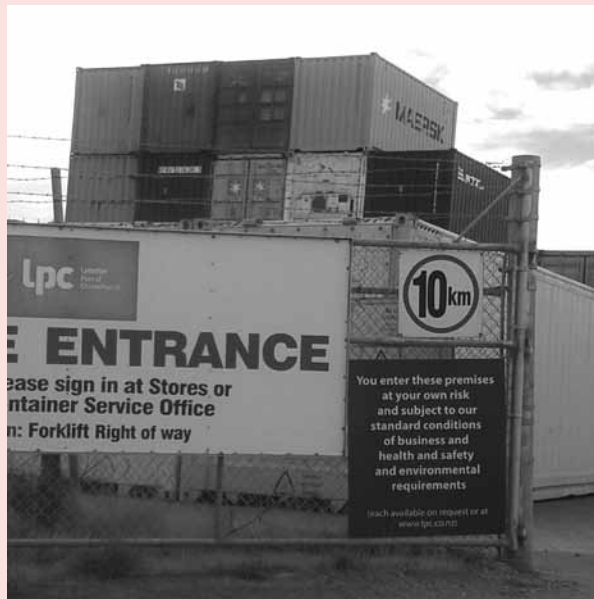
Lyttelton safety highlighted

THE Rail & Maritime Transport Union and the Maritime Union of New Zealand called for a review of safety systems at Lyttelton Port following two recent deaths of port workers.

The Maritime Union called for a meeting with management and safety officials to discuss health and safety at the quake-damaged port near Christchurch, while the RMTU said safety needs serious attention following the two deaths.

One worker died in December on board a docked fertiliser vessel and a contractor killed in a logging truck accident in late November.

RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson said the tonnage of shipments workers were dealing with had increased



during the rebuild "but the footprint is entirely unchanged" making safety issues "a worry".

MUNZ national secretary Joe Fleetwood charged that the port has become more dangerous since the 2011 earthquakes as it has grown busier. 🌐

KiwiRail fails partnership programme safety audit

KIWIRAIL is currently trying to retrieve its tertiary status under the Accredited Employer Programme (AEP), otherwise known as the partnership programme. The recent independent audit downgraded KRG's (KiwiRail Group) status from tertiary to the primary (entry level) status.

The AEP is an ACC incentive programme where KiwiRail steps into the shoes of ACC and provides both injury prevention and injury management systems in return for a reduction in their ACC levies.

Areas of failure included protection of workers from work undertaken by contractors and sub contractors.

The auditor commented that "KRG had some difficulty providing evidence of formal contractors safety monitoring" and recommended KRG formalise its processes around monitoring contractor safety performance and review its process of allowing subcontractors to work onsite without a full induction.

Emergency planning was another area of concern with the recommendation to ensure that trials of emergency procedures occur consistently at all sites every six months.

Evidence of health and safety rep training was lacking with the majority of health and safety reps interviewed not receiving training in the last two years. One of the main criticisms voiced by worker reps was that corrective actions remain on the HSAT minutes without resolution. The auditor recommended better escalation of unresolved issues.

KRG has an opportunity to address the auditors concerns before the decision to downgrade is finalised. 🌐

Serious incident in Otira Tunnel

ON November 6, 2013 workers in the Otira Tunnel were involved in three serious safety incidents during rail recovery work inside the tunnel. The incident prompted MBIE's high hazard unit (HHU) to issue 11 improvement notices and three prohibition notices for KiwiRail to take action on.

The specialist health and safety inspector for the HHU, Dave Bellett, was scathing of the safety management system and identified a long list of safety improvements required of KiwiRail, including the need for workers to be more involved with identifying the hazards they face whilst doing the job, task analysis and the development of how hazards are controlled.

The incidents occurred whilst seven track workers and two LEs were in the tunnel removing excess rail. This task was required to enable the resumption of the TranzScenic passenger train services.

The job started late, at around 1pm, because the first LE drove through the points and there was a stand down until a replacement LE arrived. At around 1pm the work train backed into the Otira Tunnel from Otira. There were six wagons: three with cranes and three for the rail and generators for lights.

After around four hours work, they exited, and then re-entered to finish the job.

Whilst exiting the tunnel with the workers travelling in open wagons they were

exposed to carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide fumes generated from both petrol and diesel combustion. Witnesses reported a cloud of reddish brown fumes engulfing the crew and the detector alarms sounding.

The crew did not have access to their masks and filters because they were put in an open wagon that was not easily accessible. At least three men described CO poisoning symptoms including confusion


travelled on open wagons.

The final serious incident occurred when, due to the incorrect orientation of the wagon, the crane boom hit the wall of the tunnel lifting the wagon from the rail. One worker noticed but did not raise it with the ganger and almost certainly the crane accident was a result of the disorientation the workers suffered from the diesel fume exposure.

Whilst the crane incident was reported on the day the fume exposure incident was not reported until the following day.

In the interim, no workers received medical attention nor were any blood tests conducted.

The RMTU is deeply disappointed by the lack of safety management in the tunnel, particularly in light of the recent joint Otira Tunnel safety review. Work Safe's HHU have identified many of the safety failings within their improvement and prohibition notices issued to KiwiRail.

RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson says: "It is very disappointing that workers felt pressure from above to get the job done to the detriment of their safety and health. No one should ever put productivity ahead of their own or other workers' safety. The RMTU will totally back any of its members if they stop work on safety grounds." 

Right to refuse unsafe work - RMTU survey results

Following the November incident the RMTU surveyed a group of KRG track workers to find out how confident and willing they were to stop the job/task on safety grounds.

Out of the 132 responses, 109 workers reported to be very confident about refusing unsafe work.

These survey results are encouraging.

"However, the challenge is for workers to identify when their work is not safe, to stop the job and speak up," says RMTU health and safety organiser Karen Fletcher. "Better involvement in work planning, hazard identification and risk assessments are essential for workers to have a clear picture of what they're walking in to."

and an inability to think straight.

After less than an hour's rest break and despite a reported reluctance from the crew, the men re-entered the tunnel to continue removing the rails. Again, the men

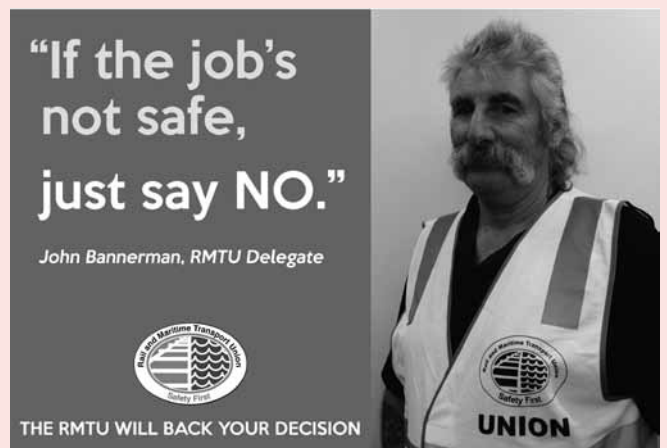
RMTU launches safety campaign

THE Otira gas incident showed workers felt under pressure to get the job done and put work demand ahead of safety.

The right to challenge unsafe work is fundamental and the RMTU will stand by you and support you to stop the job when safety is compromised.

The RMTU has launched a new safety campaign encouraging members to refuse unsafe work and contact the RMTU for advice. A poster is being produced bearing the message:

**If the job's not safe
– just say NO**



MBIE rulings

MBIE are seeking improvement from KiwiRail in the following areas:

- Improve the hazard management system for rail maintenance tasks to involve employees undertaking the work. This involvement can include task analysis, risk assessments and the development of hazard controls;
- Improve gas awareness for employees working in tunnels;
- Ensure that the person who supervises work in tunnels is a holder of a gas tester certificate of competence and that supervision is their sole task;
- Ensure employees working in tunnels wear self-contained self-rescue sets at all times and are trained in the use of the device;
- When locomotives are used with work crews inside tunnels, a set of locomotive engineer safety rules be developed for the particular tunnel and wagon configuration;
- Improve the document control process so that only the latest version is available to employees;
- Introduce a change management process so that deviations from documented procedures can be approved and recorded. If changes to documentation are made, as well as a document control process, a change management process should be in place to ensure all workers are familiar with and able to carry out the changes;
- Install a real time gas monitoring system that displays and records gas readings inside the tunnel. CO and NO2 should be monitored;
- Introduce a trigger action response plan to manage gas events in the tunnel so that workers can quickly respond and protect themselves in a gas event;
- In the event of a gas exposure, a medical treatment process should be developed that clearly outlines the expected treatment for the exposure levels; and
- When re-rail work is being undertaken in the tunnel, surplus track should be removed at the time.

Prohibition notices require KiwiRail to:

- Substitute petrol generators with safe alternative energy sources to address the risk of carbon monoxide in a confined space and explosion risk;
- Replace petrol engines with a safer means of power (inside the tunnel); and
- Maintenance teams enter and exit tunnel from the Arthurs Pass end where possible. If entry and exit from the Otira end is essential, a strict entry protocol is to be developed.

Since the incident both KiwiRail and the HHU have investigated though their reports have not been released. 🌐

Regulator backs RMTU safety message



THE chief inspector (extractives) of WorkSafe's HHU, Tony Forster, strongly supports the RMTU's safety message. He says: "If you're not satisfied with the safety situation, step back and tell your employer your concern. If you're still not happy contact the regulator."

Tony has even gone so far as to offer tunnel workers his mobile phone number and encourages workers to call direct to discuss safety issues in the tunnels. His number is 027-702-3897. 🌐

Sequence of events

0730-0800

Staff arrived at Otira.

0800

Safety briefing and preparations to enter the tunnel.

0845

Loco ran through the points causing delay of three hours.

0845-1200

Down time.

1225-1240

Staff sat on EWR wagon next to locomotive stopping at approx. the 121km mark. Doors closed, two fans operating.

1240-1520

The rail was uplifted onto the three forward wagons. Petrol generators powered lighting and winch.

1520-1530

Staff rode out – two in the cabs, seven on the wagons.

1530

The tunnel doors are opened at the request (LE).

1530-1545

Gas exposure experienced. Brakes released to allow the train to get out of the tunnel quicker. NO power was applied. Both NO2 and CO alarms went off.

1545

Train stopped on western side of bridge 50.

1545-1610

Lighting rearranged.

1610-1615

Train travelled back in to tunnel with staff travelling again on EWRs. Doors closed, two fans operating.

1615-1725

Rail recovery task performed.

1725

Crane boom hits tunnel wall caused by incorrect orientation of the wagons.

1725-1730

Crane issue sorted out.

1730-1745

Rail uplift cancelled, train departed tunnel with rail recovery crew travelling in loco cabs.

Post 1745

A catch up with person in charge at the surface who rang the area manager to tell him about the crane incident.

7 November

1300

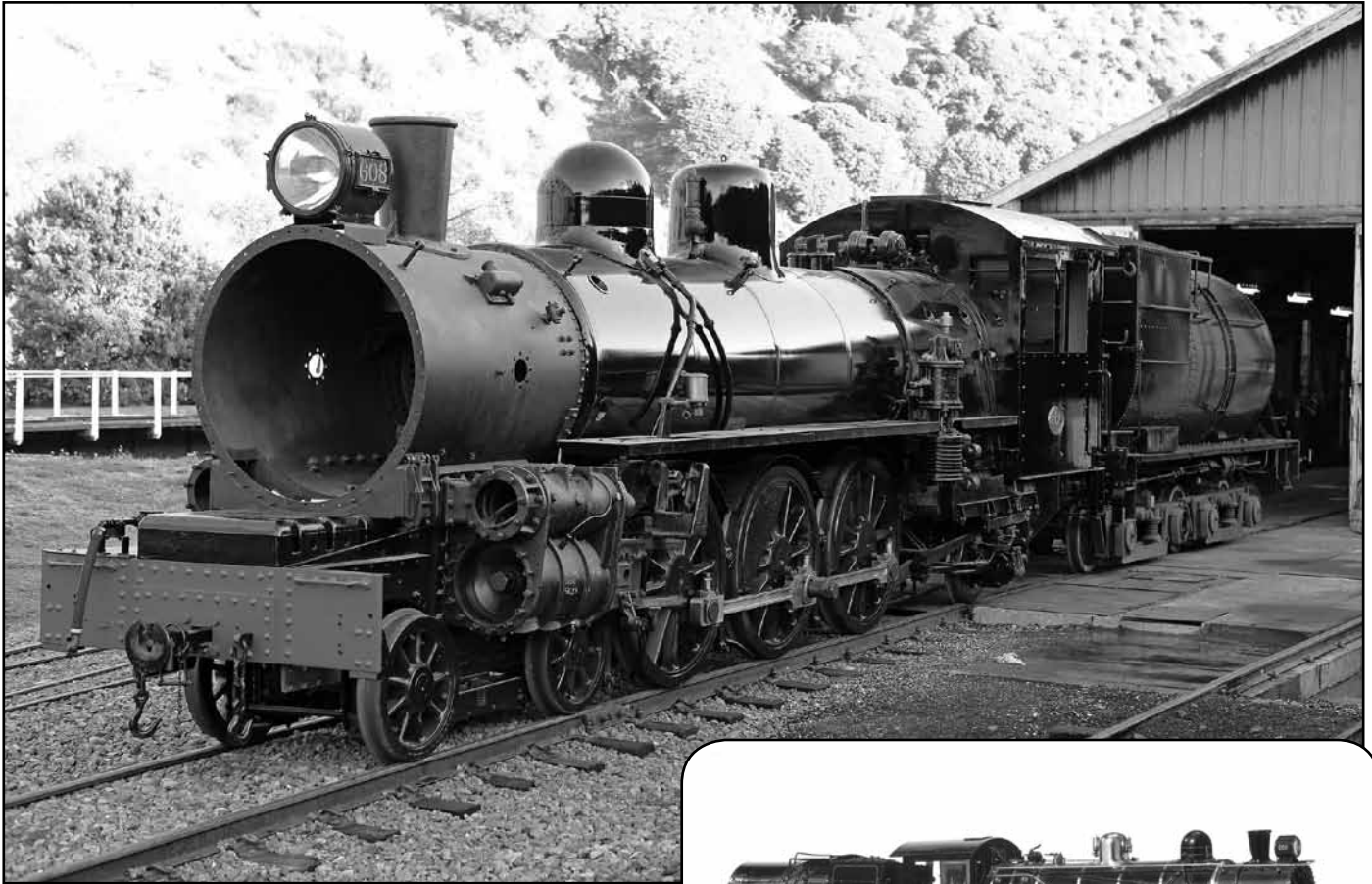
Area manager made aware of incident.

8 November

0730

Area manager reported to regional manager.

Passchendaele loco almost restored



THE restoration of the First World War memorial steam locomotive Ab 608, Passchendaele, has reached the final stages.

When recommissioned, the historic locomotive will be able to feature on commemorative trains, hauling appropriate period carriages, in association with events marking the centenary of the war.

Staff and volunteers, including a number of RMTU members, at Paekakariki's heritage rail operator Steam Incorporated are working on completion of the overhaul and rebuild of the locomotive, which marks its own centenary in 2015.

The objective is to have the locomotive operational early next year, in time for the First World War centennial commemorations.

Ab 608, Passchendaele – the only steam locomotive officially given a name by the New Zealand Government Railways in the 20th century – was the first of the class when introduced in October 1915. It went on to become the most numerous class of steam locomotive to run in New Zealand,

finally totalling 151 locomotives by the late 1950s.

In 1925 the minister of railways, Gordon Coates, agreed to a proposal to name a locomotive in memory of those members of the New Zealand Railways who fell in the Great War. More than 5,000 railwaymen served overseas between 1914 and 1918 (out of a total workforce of 14,000), and 447 were killed.

After considering the names Somme, Le Quesnoy and Ypres, Coates chose Passchendaele, the battle in which the New Zealand Division suffered 18,000 casualties, including around 5,000 deaths. The locomotive selected to carry the memorial nameplates was Ab 608. A replica of the memorial nameplates is part of the war memorial unveiled on Armistice Day, 2010, at Hutt workshops.


After 50 years the locomotive was retired in October 1967 when its boiler required heavy repairs and was subsequently given to the New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society Inc for preservation. In 1993 it was

arranged for Steam Incorporated, which specialises in the restoration and operation of heritage rail equipment, to restore it to operating condition.

After many years of work, during which the boiler underwent major repairs and the tender was rebuilt from the frames up, the locomotive began to be reassembled in late 2012.

The boiler was reunited with the frames on December 12, 2012, and the wheels were fitted soon after. Since then many fittings, including the rebuilt cab and running boards, have been added.

To date, more than \$300,000 has been spent on the project.

Donations to the project are tax-deductible (#29197). Work remaining, includes final commissioning and test-running and is likely to cost up to \$100,000, so donations, large or small, to aid this nationally important project are welcome. 

Enjoy your holidays

VACATION: a period of time that a person spends away from home, school, or business usually in order to relax or travel; the number of days or hours per year for which an employer agrees to pay workers while they are not working.

THE overall purpose of a vacation is to allow workers time to recoup energy levels, spend time with family and generally wind down and relax.

Workers on leave should not be viewed as a pool of idle hands waiting to be called

in to work when rosters can't be filled such as happened to one our members in the South Island.

He was called three times to fill holes in the roster and finally gave in when he was spun a sob story of cancelled trains and unhappy passengers.

Our member was entitled to his full annual leave AND entitled to spend it without being hassled by the Company. Maybe they suspected he would be a soft touch but if the depot was fully staffed and the roster

better organised there would have been LEs to cover the shifts without having to plead with members having a well-earned rest.

The Union strongly believes that a well-spent vacation not only recharges the batteries but makes for a safer and better work environment.

In the story outlined above the bosses admitted to making an error and in that case the matter is closed.

However, it is a warning and a 'heads up' for us all. 🌐

Les Box staunch Otago rail branch unionist recognised

AT someone's instigation we met at Dunedin's Toitu Museum at 9:30 am on January 17: Brothers Spence, Box and Kelly (pictured). Sister Julia from national office was fashionably late. Clearly, whoever picked the venue and time had failed to factor in the tourism trade because the Museum does not open until 10am! Instead, we

wandered along to the iconic Dunedin Railway Station to partake of coffee and cakes and to engage in some very pleasant social intercourse.

After consuming our refreshment we ventured back to the Museum where Brother Kelly recognised the loyalty, commitment



and dedication of Brother Box to the trade union movement and, more particularly, his involvement with the RMTU and its predecessors. He presented him with a certificate of appreciation from the RMTU.

It seemed appropriate to capture the occasion in front of a steam locomotive given that Brother Box had been a steam man during his career. The locomotive

Josephine (a double ended Fairlie) was chosen which, contrary to rumours, Brother Kelly did not actually build but Brother Box did drive on its inaugural run from Dunedin to Port Chalmers.

We all wish Brother Les Box a very long, healthy and peaceful retirement. 🌐



ARE YOU A MEMBER?

NZ Harbours Superannuation and KiwiSaver Schemes



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



ICLS Hat Yai Forum Nov 2013

THE International Centre for Labour Solidarity (ICLS), held its 2013 forum in Hat Yai, a city in southern Thailand, on 16 - 18 November under the banner: Global workers unite – fight for another world!

The forum was hosted by the State Railway Workers' Union of Thailand (SRUT) and was well attended with representatives from eight nations from around the Asia-Pacific region. You may recall that the RMTU hosted the 2012 ICLS forum in Wellington.

General secretary, Wayne Butson performed the role of moderator during the forum and national vice president Howard Phillips delivered an informative presentation on International Solidarity.

One day one forum attendees participated in a friendship tour which started with a street march from the hotel to the Hat Yai Railway Station and then to the local SRUT offices where we were introduced to the SRUT railway workers and unionists who have been unlawfully, in our view, sacked from their job for raising health and safety concerns. These unionists are true heroes and are paying a high personal price for their actions – actions taken to save the lives of their fellow workers.

Some years ago the RMTU gave a donation to assist the Hat Yai branch of SRUT to set up a shop. The shop generates revenue which is used to help support the families of the sacked workers.

After visiting the SRUT offices we toured the Hat Yai locomotive depot.

The provinces in the south of Thailand are not particularly safe. There is a war being engaged by separatist groups and the hijacking of trains and other similarly dangerous activities have occurred. Locomotive engineers wear body armour and carry firearms when they drive into the southern provinces. We understand four locomotive engineers have been killed in the last year. I believe it is unsafe to put locomotive engineers into such a position and that until routes can be secured all trains into these areas should be suspended. When we commemorate Workers' Memorial Day on 28 April we will remember those fallen brothers and others like them.



We then travelled back in time and into the jungle where we visited the underground encampment of the Malaysian Communist Party (MCP) on the Thai side of the border. The MCP effectively formed an army and have fought Malaysian government troops for over 25 years. They have developed an extensive network of tunnels within a fortified hilltop deep in the jungle. Their actions meant they were not readily able to return to Malaysia without facing some form of punishment and they have no legal status in Thailand.

In what I believe is a magnanimous gesture, the King of Thailand granted the former members of the MCP the right to remain in Thailand, and he gifted each family a portion of land so that they might be able to maintain themselves.

They have since made a museum of the tunnels and former encampment, have created a fish farm and have extensive plantations of rubber trees. They have become a sustainable community within this corner of Thailand.

Days two and three saw us in the forum proper.

The main theme was to Identify Strategies to Strengthen Workers' Power.

This was explored by way of four themes; Organising in other sectors; International solidarity; Connection with politics; and Cooperation with citizens' organisation.

Speakers presented on a range of topics in support of these themes, with opportunities given to forum attendees to ask questions or add comment.

Presentations included work on the Hope Bus Project in Korea, neo liberalism and its impacts on world economies and workers and volunteering and cooperating with community organisations to achieve common goals. Some were truly inspirational.

I encourage readers to check out the Hope Bus campaign at:

bit.ly/1fuQ0xX



Loco crew member wearing body armour for a regular run.

and the Forest Seawall project in Japan at:

bit.ly/LQE2fq

We found that despite the fact that we are working in different countries under different regimes, we face many of the same challenges. These include: moves towards privatisation of state assets; the role and presences of multinational organisations; increased moves towards casualisation of the work force; and a reduction in secure work as well as promises made by politicians prior to elections which are forgotten or not actioned when they gain the seat of power.

Check out the RMTU website for more information on campaigns and links.

rmtunion.org.nz 

"Made my day"



RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson congratulated organisers of the State Railway Union of Thailand (SRUT) for their success in getting 13 members – six from Hat Yai and seven from Bangkok – reinstated on full pay with no blame attached to their records plus back pay, when they were summarily dismissed some four years previously.


"This is excellent news," said Butson. "My day has improved immensely and I am rejoicing in your victory."

However he advised caution in their celebrations noting the intransigent and anti-union attitude of the governor of SRT.

"As I recall the SRT governor is hostile to the union and the leadership and so may struggle to sign off the reinstatement orders."

SRUT leaders have promised to keep the RMTU informed of any hiccups and when the men finally return to work.

He called their actions "brave" and looked forward to them getting back to where they belong.

The Thai workers were fighting for a safer rail network, arguing that under-staffing, lack of safety measures and persistent driver fatigue were rife and were the true cause of a number of recent accidents. The employers thought otherwise and did nothing so the SRUT took action. State Rail and the government retaliated by dismissing workers and bringing in raw recruits. The dispute escalated and gained support from unionists worldwide. 

Interislander Industrial Council

FOLLOWING the elections last year, Vern Steele was elected as a new ferry operation (outside) South rep. Welcome on board Vern and welcome back to the rest of the team. The IIC had a reasonably productive year in 2013 with three meetings held and the terms of reference for this forum



Vern Steele ferry operations outside south rep.

bit.ly/M9VMDI


being agreed and signed off. There are at least four meetings planned for 2014.

There have also been separate meetings of the IIC to work through a KiwiRail-initiated market study of terms and conditions for all Interislander employees.

The market study is being carried out by the same company, DSD, that did KiwiRail I&E and mechanical roles. It is fair to say there is a fair amount of cynicism from members for the market study, with the diverse roles that members perform.

What is the market and would any comparison be relevant? Time will tell.

To date members have provided input on their roles and provided position descriptions, the IIC has met and gone line by line through the drafts that DSD are preparing.

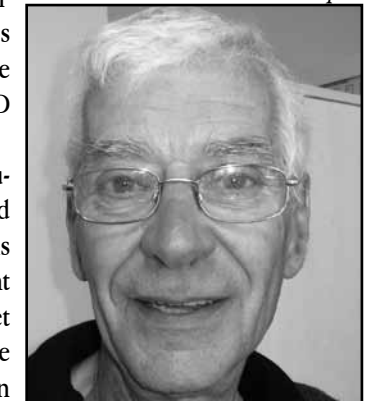
From here, final documents are being prepared and a list of companies is being prepared to represent the market, then the market study will take place. The IIC will hold meetings in both terminals to present the results. 



John Finch ferry operations outside north rep.



Tania Haraki Scale 1 south rep.



Chris Hanna Scale 1 north rep.

RMTU supports Korean workers



RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson and ITF rail section chair, Oystein Aslaksen, joined the protests in icy conditions in Korea.

THE Korean Railway Workers' Union's, (KRWU) 23-day long strike against privatisation is over. Late last year the KRWU reached an agreement with the Korean National Assembly to form a subcommittee called the Development of the Rail Industry which will include KRWU participation.

Despite striking for 23 days, the union was unable to achieve its central goal of stopping the Korean government from establishing and licensing a private company to run the new high speed Suseo KTX line. Instead the union claims the government rushed through this process in a 'cowardly and legally questionable' manner. The KRWU has filed a suit for the cancellation of the operating license.

Nonetheless, the KRWU claims significant success in that the struggle against rail privatization became a struggle for the whole Korean labour movement. The strike also gathered widespread support among Koreans from all walks of life many of whom actively participated in the struggle by sending financial and material contributions and posting signs with such slogan as: "I am not fine!" making their opposition heard through social media and coming out in mass to strike protests.

The union is also grateful to the

international support it received with close to 15,000 people signing a petition calling on the Korean government and employers to respect railway workers' right to strike. In addition, the ITF international day of action on December 10 and continued protests at Korean embassies after the raid on the KCTU office on December 22 demonstrated the global significance of the struggle. The presence of two ITF missions in Korea during the strike gave tremendous support to members

Meanwhile, repression against the KRWU has not disappeared. Dismissal of some 490 members and other forms of disciplinary measures for many more are predicted. The KRWU leadership is still wanted for arrest and the suit for damages against the union and its leadership worth over 7.7 billion won is still outstanding.

Support from the international community continues to be important as the KCTU calls for protests around the country. The international union community is asked to keep up their measures of protest and demand the withdrawal of criminal charges, the damage suit, dismissals and disciplinary measures against the KRWU, and end to labour repression in Korea. 🌐

Protest at Wellington Korean Embassy



RMTU organiser Todd Valster and members of the Wellington rail branch (Metro, Interislander, I&E and Freight) stood united with members from EPMU, SFWU, TEU, PWU, NZCTU staff and Labour MP Andrew Little in support of Korean railway workers who were protesting against the Korean government's unpopular rail restructure/privatisation programme. The band, Brass Razoo, played a series of rousing songs including 'I've been working on the rail road' and a specially written Korean song to mark the occasion.





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Assaults in Auckland

IN the space of three days one recent weekend, five RMTU members were involved in three incidents of assault – one attack left a member with a fractured jaw, another with a fractured eye socket and a third with cuts to the face and smashed glasses.

Clearly Transdev are falling down in their responsibility to provide a safe work place. After a series of less serious assaults last year a security manager was employed and Maori wardens increased but these changes have not added the extra protection to keep our members safe.

On January 29 a train was disabled at New Lynn due to the brakes not releasing. As this now empty service was returning to Westfield depot a male attempted to get on and was refused entry. As the train departed he climbed the outside of the train in an attempt to train surf. He was then taken into the carriage. While inside he set off a fire extinguisher and kicked at the doors as the train approached Avondale station in an attempt to get off. As the doors opened he punched train manager Deepak Anand in the shoulder, and then punched Kiwirail mechanical engineer Scott Wedlake twice, fracturing his jaw.

The following weekend, Saturday February 1, a group of eight youths boarded a service at Ranui and attempted to hold open the doors. Train manager Wayne Clayton asked them to stop and was immediately surrounded, punched in the face several times by one and kicked in the abdomen by two others. He received a fractured eye socket for doing his job. This same group later attacked train manager Deepak Manga at Swanson. His hand held device was knocked to the ground and as he went to pick it up he was hit by one of the group knocking his glasses off his face. Then they were smashed by one of the group stomping on them. Deepak was treated for a cut to his eye.

Transdev have a few bridges to repair with members if they hope to control this situation. The International Federation of Transport Workers says: Rights and protections should be recognised in agreements with employers, fully respected and implemented.

Too often our members have felt that the finger has been pointed at them while not enough has been done to prosecute actual offenders. They also complain of a clear lack of support, action and understanding of what it is like for members when they have been the victim of similar unprovoked attacks.



It would appear that these attacks are increasing and the RMTU has highlighted this in talks with Transdev in August 2013 asking that a greater effort was required. It was agreed that conflict avoidance training would be conducted – the Union is still waiting for the pilot course to be run and an opportunity for some participants to then give feedback to see if the course is viable.

The RMTU has called for those assaulted our members to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. RMTU Auckland organiser Stuart Johnstone says: "Our members should not have to fear for their safety. These are honest hard working people who, like every other worker, deserves and expects to be able to come to work do their job and go home safely at the end of the day. This kind of anti-social behaviour is not acceptable and neither our members – nor anyone else – deserves to be the butt of such treatment."

In an email exchange Transdev security manager Stephen Morgan, wrote: "As you can imagine, we too are seriously concerned about the recent events and have been working closely with the police and Auckland Transport (CCTV), to identify and hold the persons responsible to account."

He added that Transdev would seek prosecution, maximum penalty and full publicity of the cases and will serve trespass notices banning the perpetrators from the rail corridor.

In the incident involving Wayne Clayton police located the group and are presently taking action via the youth justice system and in the assault to Deepak Manga and Scott Wedlake police arrested the offender who has been charged with serious assaults.



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
Or phone 0900 UNAID (0900 862 43) to automatically donate \$30.



Education is the key

DARRAN ROLES, a recent graduate of the New Zealand Certificate in Employment Relations, believes education is the key to success and is something everyone should continue with for life – despite decreasing funding.

The UK-trained locomotive engineer arrived in Auckland as a new migrant in 2009 and has followed – and continues to follow – the principle of life-long study. In the past he focussed on studying social sciences, health and safety and electrics and now, having completed the above course, is embarking on a study of applied management while training to become a freight locomotive driver. He also has his eyes on further health and safety courses and a leadership course currently being tested.

Darran has been a union member since he joined rail in Manchester in 1981. First with the NUR and later, after getting his locomotive engineer's certificate, with ASLEF. He had no hesitation joining the RMTU when he arrived in New Zealand.

RMTU general secretary, Wayne Butson, applauds Darran's endeavours saying: "It is not only a right for our members to up skill themselves and undertake further study but an essential part of life. It's a crying shame that this Government has slashed funding to later-life learning destroying the concept of life-long learning."

The employment relations course was

subsidised by the RMTU and the CTU and is run by the CTU through the NZQA.

Darran said: "The course was interesting and covered a lot of information. In the end the focus was on solutions and how to talk through different opinions offered by companies, management and workers. The course helped me understand how negotiations work, how unions represent members and the different laws we all live with. In the final analysis it gave me a better insight into the whole process of negotiations from start to finish."

The online course is run by Don Farr from the Wairarapa. He says: "While it is only a Level 2 course it is easily adapted to suit differing levels. For instance senior nurses and polytech teachers have completed it."

He adds that the course has not been picked up by any training institution in the country. The CTU is the only place which offers the course so he has a precise picture on who has completed the course since it started five years ago.

"And I can tell you that only about 25 union delegates have completed it – not a



PHOTOGRAPH: Ant Vaughan

single manager."

Overall, Don has been involved with the development and running of the course for 14 years and is currently putting the final touches to a Level 3 course which will focus on leadership skills.

"This one will be more classroom-based," he said. "Curiously, considering that the course focusses on employment relations, a significant number of graduates have been put into leadership roles within their workplace by their bosses, which to me speaks of how well-respected and thorough it is."

The Level 2 covers five main topics: Our rights at work; workplace relations; getting organised; the role of union delegates; and the legal framework we all work under.

Students are given two months to complete each unit. 🌐

A true unionist

TONY DREAVER is one of the RMTU delegates in Toll TranzLink in Christchurch. He's part of a team that ensures our members are well represented on site.

Tony has worked for Toll for six years, starting not long after he moved up to Christchurch from the deep south. Like everyone who has been around for the last three years he's an earthquake survivor, the difference is that he volunteered to be a delegate only a year or so after the February 2011 shake, taking on a role that many of our members see as demanding and stressful.

"It's not too bad really," says Tony.

"When I took on the delegate's role I was told that as long as I kept the flow of information going between the national office and the membership I was doing 90% of the job, the rest I'd pick up as I went along."

And that's just what Tony has done. He has had the benefit of delegate training along the way and has proved that he has a talent for signing up new members of staff into the RMTU. "Nobody's turned me down yet," he says with a rueful grin.

Tony is a quietly spoken person but takes his job at Toll seriously and views his delegate's role in the same light. Toll branch manager Doug McNichol speaks highly of him, knowing that he is a responsible and



diligent worker and an honest advocate for the members. The membership also values Tony's support and work, they know that if they need help they have someone to turn to who is calm and level headed.

Thanks Tony, it's people like you who make the RMTU one of the most effective unions in New Zealand. 🌐



Thomas calls by for a visit

MANY will know that Transdev, through its 'Spirit' programme, together with partners KiwiRail, Auckland Transport and Murphy Buses ran shuttle trains between Papakura and the Glenbrook Vintage Railway on the Mission Bush branch. This was to give members of the public a novel opportunity to travel on this route from anywhere on the Auckland Metro network, transferring to shuttle trains at Papakura, to attend GVR's 'Day out with Thomas' over the weekend of November 9

& 10. An ADL DMU ran each day running three services to Glenbrook and four return.

Transdev staff volunteered their time to both learn the route to become certified for the Mission Bush branch and to drive the trains on their rostered day. Your scribe was assigned the role of officer in charge at Glenbrook and that too required gaining a qualification, together with some tutelage at Glenbrook on the first few trips.

The weather was fine for the weekend and with marketing of the shuttle trains in

addition to GVR's own marketing, very good patronage was experienced. With good luck, all passengers who turned up at Papakura station were able to be accommodated (just) so the shuttle concept could be judged a success.

It was so busy each time a shuttle train was at Glenbrook there was no time for a photo to record the occasion, so we "staged" a photo opportunity so that the weekend could be properly recorded for posterity. 🇳🇿

CAPTION COMPETITION

WIN \$100 prize

Entries close 28 APRIL 2014.

Winner will be contacted and name and entry published in the JUNE 2014 issue of The Transport Worker.

Entries can be sent to admin@rmtunion.org.nz

Last issue's winner

The winning entry came from Eileen Kerr of Christchurch:

Intelligence, charm, brains, good looks..... and three blokes!



Make up an appropriate (or even inappropriate) caption for this photo and win a cash prize of \$100.

EARLY February 2013, the start of our collective bargaining talks, was also the beginning of a dispute focussed on the employer's wish to impose a four-hour shift on permanent workers in the cargo section and for it to be inserted inside the collective. This of course went down like a lead balloon when presented to members – and rightly so.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was proposed with strict rulings around how, when or if it is used, limiting it to a maximum of two per week. The MOU expires one day before the end of the collective and, most important, sits outside the collective.

At the time of writing, the employer has still not utilised this MOU.

Warren (Stoddy) Stoddart, branch secretary has finally decided to hang up his hook

WELLINGTON PORT BRANCH

and call it a day. Stoddy was raised close to what's referred to as NZ's little Italy, Island Bay. Softball was a popular sport in the Bay and it soon became one of Stoddy's passions. So much so that he was selected coach of the NZ representative side. In his younger days he pitched with some success. However, when it came to running bases his gangly figure and large feet soon had him saddled with the nickname of Flipper. He's a great ideas man and even better delegator. With these skills he established what must be amongst the best softball tournaments in NZ. He's still coaching and NZ softball owes a lot to his enthusiasm.

His work career took him briefly to Australia and then to a Hawke's Bay meat works before returning to Wellington to work

for the Wellington Harbour Board as the plumber's workshop driver. After the port reforms of 1988 he moved to the plant operator's pool where opportunities arose for him to show his ability as a crane operator.

His natural ability as a coach saw him take on the role of port trainer and as an NZQA assessor. Many a straddle driver and crane driver have learnt their skills from his expert guidance.

He saw all workers in the cargo section port gain NZQA certification in cargo handling. In 2006 he became chair of the branch and was a fair and honest spokesman – always willing to go into bat for anyone getting a raw deal.

Enjoy your retirement big guy and keep on slugging! 

HAPPY New Year from sunny Nelson where there is plenty happening. Currently, we have proposals on the table to form a dedicated marine team for the floating plant. Consultation started late last year and continued with a meeting on February 12. Positive progress has been made and we await a response from Port Nelson. Also, there are new roles in the cargo section being proposed.

Our collective agreement expires in June so we are preparing for the talks to kick off


NELSON PORT BRANCH

early May.

On the H&S front, the branch is keen to make sure members take H&S seriously, to challenge themselves and others if they think their actions or inactions could cause harm. The employee participation agreement was signed off in 2012 so this year it is timely to measure the reality against what was agreed.

There are plenty of challenges: to make sure members are treated fairly with training and work opportunities; the varying

employment status; and who gets training and who gets work which causes conflict when we are looking for unity (a collective effort in our workplace) regardless of employment status.

Our branch president, Peter Hoff, was injured at work in early January and due to complications became very unwell. Thankfully he is now on the mend. We wish Peter a speedy recovery and our thoughts go to him and his family. 

FROM the freight members we would first like to thank all the guys in the track gangs that have helped keep our line open, they have done an incredible job considering the limited amount of staff, and we all appreciate their efforts.

On the gripe side we continue to get locos up here that are not fully serviced, sometimes not repaired and often not fully equipped. This is a real problem as we carry no spares and end up robbing Peter to pay Paul just to keep the trains running.

There seems to be an expectation that LEs are able to identify speed restrictions from the bulletins. This was brought to light after there was a bit of confusion with the placing of some speed boards. Speed boards up here are vitally important as there are a lack of visible mileage pegs due to track side growth. In the terrain we trans-

NORTHLAND RAIL BRANCH


verse the expectation that we have sufficient time to search through two or three pages of restrictions is very unrealistic.

On a more positive note, while log tonnage has been a little down we are still managing to keep Portland supplied. Dairy tonnage certainly seems to be up on last year, and Wellsford is still going strong.

On the I & E front many of the boys trekked down to work the Auckland block of lines over Christmas, others staying locally to work in the yard on a major drainage project.

With the summer holiday traffic and ever increasing numbers of logging trucks due to the strong demand for export logs, driving around the roads is becoming hairy. Members get lumped with other regions

rejected 'has beens' slow old trucks, just able to keep in front of touring cyclists up hill. Nerves get frail having to contend with corporate hotshots from Cram Jam City heading to beach, driving the likes of Audi SUVs, jet skis in tow, taking suicidal risks. These captains of industry need to think not only of their trophy wives and privileged kids, but also of other road users who cop it when things get terribly wrong.

Seriously, the point is our guys are further exposed by old trucks that struggle to maintain normal traffic speed, are old, smokey, noisy and uncomfortable to ride in and with axles weighted poorly for the job – a safety issue. So come on KR stop using the 'line under review' excuse and do right by your staff. 

NORTHLAND RAIL BRANCH [cont]

◀ On the political front our branch chair, Alby Barr, has been appointed to the Whangarei Labour Party candidate selection

panel. Alby reports all hopefuls are strongly rail and worker rights focused. Now that's winning!

The rail/port amalgamation is heading to a conclusion and is in the hands of national management to confirm. 🌐

NORTHLAND PORT BRANCH

HAPPY New Year to you all. We have recently welcomed five new members to our ranks, while others (with no union background) are asking questions and considering signing up. This is a good

increase for us given our small numbers and the contact from the local rail branch is building momentum, to hopefully one Northland branch.

While life ticks along up here very nicely

without too much hassle, the rail link to Marsden Point is recognised as essential for growth. While there is no set timeline on when this will occur, sooner is clearly our preferred option. 🌐

WAIKATO RAIL BRANCH

IT has been a quiet Christmas/New Year period, with the exception of the dispute that has arisen over ARSH duties, a meeting with management on the February 10, may help to resolve this issue.

There is the issue of speeding in the yard and RCOs and ROs are receiving coaching letters if the locos go beyond the speed limit. However the RCOs and ROs do not have a speed gauge readily available so that

they can monitor the speed of the locos.

The branch is holding its remit meeting on Monday February 25. There has been a lot of discussion about putting forward remits to improve the manning levels. 🌐

BAY OF PLENTY PORT BRANCH

WE are preparing for a dispute over the introduction of Quality Marshalling onto Sulphur Point. Their arrival will dramatically affect the job security of our members.

Quality Marshalling, having lost a substantial amount of log marshalling contracts to ISO, are now, with the support of the Port of Tauranga, being moved into Sulphur Point as its days are numbered in logs.

Once again the company are more worried about keeping businesses viable than having any concern about job security. Meanwhile, it's the guys at the workface who are ensuring that the high productivity levels remain the best in the country. 🌐



\$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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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.

BAY OF PLENTY RAIL BRANCH

into place the report's conclusions!

A date for remits is to be set. 🌐

NAPIER PORT BRANCH

KIA ORA sisters and brothers, a safe and abounding new year to all, though not such a good in some parts unfortunately.

Already this year we see the forestry industry and the port sector coming out on the wrong side of the ledger in terms of unwanted incidents – Napier Port included. It is a reminder that we must maintain vigilant at all times. Most of us work in places of high risk and are, at times, exposed to work instances that put not just ourselves but those working around or with us, in situations that have the potential to cause harm. It is our responsibility to ensure we do what is right to prevent any events. At the end of the day (where we all want to be at work's end) is part and parcel of our jobs. So let's think safe. If we see or hear

something which is not quite right, fix it.

An ounce of prevention is worth far more than the pound of cure: "zero harm" is a credo both company and employee should build into their culture.

To the day this column was written, Napier Port staff had borne one lost time injury in the last 764 days, and that occurred on the 543rd day. In this scribe's view it is a result of some worth.

As we move toward another busy season there will be increases on last year's volumes, both in containers and break bulk. The current statistics indicate the arrow has already surpassed the previous targets. In turn we see more staff engaged, permanent and casual, which will see growth in our

Union also. All good!

Union activity within C3 Napier continues within the logging section. Phil Spanswick our Tauranga-based organiser has had recent meetings with members, we have around 12 signed up. C3 operations here are managerless currently, the last manager left at Christmas after approximately 12 months. From the writer's perspective things have changed since being taken over by Oceania. The competitive nature of the log marshalling at ports nationally continues to be cut throat, as the non-union affiliated companies fight for larger pieces of the business and port company bosses and their boards are keen to back them!

Maintain the fight! Kia kaha. 🌐

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

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

NAPIER RAIL BRANCH

KIA ORA brothers and sisters. Well Christmas and New Year are over and 2014 is well underway. Structures, track and signals teams are all busy in the Bay. It has been a warm summer so far with heat runs and an earthquake south of Napier.

Everyone in Napier would like to wish

Shaun Hopper and his family the very best with his transfer to Invercargill with KiwiRail. We also welcome Hayden Anderson to the Napier branch. Hayden has joined the signals team.

RMTU remits will be coming up in the next few weeks, so now is the time to discuss and submit any remits.



All the best for 2014. Stay safe, be safe.

The branch's I&E remits will be discussed on Monday February 25 at 7:30am. Freight and mechanical are still to set their remit meeting dates.

TARANAKI PORT BRANCH



FROM the end of last year to the start of 2014 has seen Port Taranaki at its busiest with all berths being occupied and seven ships off port at anchor. This is properly a common site for most ports around New Zealand but in my 18 years plus this experience of seeing vessels of this size anchored just off the port is the first for me. It was awesome to see.

It was a case of one-ship-out-one-ship-in and it was great see and experience being part of the professional teams of pilots, pilot launch crew, tug crew, mooring (rope shed) staff and of course, the radio operators/se-

curity staff maintaining the communications of the smooth operations of a busy port.

With the offshore hydrocarbon exploration has also increased a few extra offshore support (tender) vessels with the round the clock operation. This operation has created new employment on fixed terms for approximately 18 to 24 months, and a team of crane drivers operating on a 12-hour 4-on-4-off shift cycle roster.

The offshore hydrocarbon exploration had raised concerns with Greenpeace supporters in New Plymouth against Anadarko. These protesters raised their banners on

Ngamotu Beach stating their protest to offshore deep sea drilling. Security around Port Taranaki was on higher status, just in-case they ventured into the realms of an unwelcome protest level within the port operational area. Thankfully their protest was just a march along the beach waving their banners and voicing their protest.

From the Port Taranaki RMTU members we wish our RMTU brothers and sisters around New Zealand, the staff of the national office and the National Management Committee a great and wonderful 2014.



TARANAKI RAIL BRANCH

THINGS have been pretty hectic in Taranaki. The summer seems to have avoided us and we have been hit with this constant wind.

Things have been busy at the hub Whareroa. The boys there are slowly getting to grips with the new operations building, which has been added along side the smaller more compact OP hut. The new area for concern for the Whareroa lads is the milk hut which had been infested by

mice and rats. This building is a little trickier because it's owned by Fonterra and is on Fonterra land. Fonterra came down and proceeded to smash holes in the walls in there determination to look for the vermin. Happy to say the mice and rats are gone but the wind chill factor has made the place like a fridge. So we are now in negotiation with Fonterra to supply a new building with amenities so the guys can wash their hands and have something to eat.

The locomotive engineers' roster in Whareroa is very unsocial and un-family friendly. The LEs are becoming increasingly miffed at the constant weekend work and late running trains, which doesn't make for a happy work place. Fonterra are expanding the rail siding with in the site but as is the usual it looks like it may be a an operational nightmare to work, with very little thought going into how a rail site should function efficiently.

Stratford are going through a bit of a shake up with uncertain times ahead for

the 10km long Kapuni branch. The LPG that used to be loaded there is now being done in New Plymouth so we wait and see what the outcome will be.

New Plymouth staff are keeping busy with a heap of extra tonnage. The LPG fuel sidings are due to be expanded to accommodate more gas. The port is in a constant state of change and with more ships this

It has been all go in Palmy over the Christmas period, with derailments, loco faults/failures, heat restrictions and short staffing all contributing. I am glad to say that our brothers and sisters did a fine job in working around these factors and continued to maintain our services against very high odds and with minimal error and, of course, to our high standard. Christmas is a stressful time for any industry but more so in a safety-critical environment like ours. Well done to all for a strong and enviable work ethic.

The New Year brings new staff. We welcome, Chris Carran, Cameron Perron, Bradley Winchcomb (son of one of our senior locomotive engineers) and Tom Te Amo (Toll freight operator). We wish you well in your chosen careers and look forward to your growth and input.

Special mention to Grant V Allen (AKA Sparky). Sparky reached the 40 years service in the locomotive sector which was celebrated by many people on the job and retired staff. Stories and photos were shared over a fine spread. Sparky has had many achievements over his years, becoming a

It appears that we all (except the rail ferry Aratere) survived the Christmas period. The main building here (Plant 1) was closed for three weeks to allow the asbestos contractor to do his thing prior to our LEAN and structural re-strengthening projects getting underway – hopefully later this year. There is an isolated section requiring special attention however that should be sorted by the time you read these notes.

As a result of the above, the work-groups that had to shift all their gear out for the contractors have now had the opportunity to reposition things as they brought everything back and set it up with the much-heralded LEAN culture thought(s) in mind. Word has it that the LEAN consultants have identified a number of non-value-add tasks/operations

TARANAKI RAIL BRANCH [cont]

means more tonnage for the rail.

The gangs are being kept busy with concrete sleeper lays. Outside contractors came into fix up the cool store leg in Stratford. Trouble is, and rightly so, the local track gang won't sign off their work so the leg remains closed for the immediate future.

Some of the LEs have had a battle with rosters not complying with the ROM.

Radio reception within some parts of Taranaki is patchy however, the Company issued cellphones shouldn't be used as a back up to the dodgy radio system. 📶

PALMERSTON NORTH BRANCH

mind, a steam locomotive fireman and driver and now a relief team leader. His passion still lies behind the controls of a DX loco where his enjoyment shines through. Special mention to his lovely wife, Maria, and his family for supporting him through all the shift work, the late trains and the call outs. Well done Sparky and here's to another 40 years!

We are still having issues with bullying in our area. The RMTU and HSAT delegates are working very hard behind the scenes to stomp this out. The branch would like to remind you all that bullying will NOT be accepted. Please come to your delegates if you feel bullied and we will assist you with dealing with the issue. You do not have to be alone – we are here to help.

A paid branch meeting is planned for mid March to discuss and submit remits for the 2014 MECA wage round. We would like to see another good turnout. Remember, YOU are the Union so come forward and help make a change.

We have also heard from our loco sector

brothers and sisters that the heritage groups are still pushing to man their locomotives. An open letter was very loosely distributed to KR loco engineers from a heritage group called Steam Inc. The letter basically intended to go through backdoors, directly to the LEs, and bypass the RMTU. When will they realise that LEs and the rest of us are the RMTU? It seems they still won't allow KR to train professional staff to operate their machines on the network so I guess the current stalemate will continue, which does not benefit them at all. Quite sad to see all that hard work put into the restoration of those steam engines just to have them sit in their sheds. The RMTU want to help but apparently our help is not an option for them.

Until next time, please remember to take your breaks to stay refreshed, make your team leader or rosters aware that you would like to be finished on rostered time – it is your right! And spell it out if you have to. Hard of hearing can be an issue when discussing relief! 📶

HUTT WORKSHOPS BRANCH

that can bring us some further savings. We hope to compile some examples for the next issue.

Our workloads remain variable but we are hungry for additional work to ensure we can flatten out the highs and lows. ZHC conversions are continuing and there are a handful of locos being overhauled. We have had some unfortunate staff departures in recent months due to ill health, retirement and the constant lure of better pay and/or working conditions across the ditch.

I was asked to comment on the parking-up of surplus locomotives on site however, to date the only items stored here are the surplus Ganz Mavag EMUs (destined for

shipment to South Africa in February after several delays dating back to 2013), a DBR loco and the damaged rail breakdown crane. It would appear that the locomotive fleet is still in good nick and required for service.

The Aratere (the ship with two shafts but only one propeller) and its associated costs may have a negative impact upon us all this financial year. Whilst we have some very creative accountants in the company, even they may struggle to hide the true costs that this latest failing will bring. The edict to control spending and the resurrection of the sinking-lid policy have come into play in the interim. What we should all look for-

HUTT WORKSHOPS BRANCH [cont]

ward to is the TAIC report (and that of any other investigative body) and the company's response. Accountability will be raised and we shall see if heads roll as called for in Parliament late last year.

By the time you read this, our new CEO Peter Reidy should be firmly in the hot-seat vacated by Jim Quinn. I would hope that our general secretary has had the usual one-on-one with him and will report on that meeting in this issue (Unfortunately, the meeting will take place after deadline - Ed.). Given that the new CEO is from an infrastructure background, it will be interesting to see if he reshuffles the deck chairs – based, of course, on riding orders received from the Board. Reidy was tentatively scheduled for a site visit in late February so we hope to bring you a note on this in the next issue.

Our final paid union meeting last year was held in early December. Our guest speakers were Anna Kenny from the United Credit Union, the Rt Hon Winston Peters and our own inimitable general secretary. Anna gave us an insight to the financial benefits of hooking up with a Credit Union and we recommend readers who want to save a few dollars and/or get a cost-effective loan actively consider it as an alternative to other financial institutions. Winston, as expected, gave a rousing speech on politics and over the last 20 years or so and an overview of NZ First's vision for rail and shipping (you can read his speech if you Google™ dated Dec 6 2013). Wayne wrapped up our union's industrial progress this year including the international scene, and finished off with an insight into what we can expect in 2014.

Other upcoming events for us include a health and wellness seminar, an introduction to the new H91 accident reporting form, a reshuffle of the HSAT team, a new local HSE advisor and continuing hot debates at our fortnightly LCC meetings.

For the rail-based readers, you are aware that the MECA is up for renegotiation so we hope that you have exercised the opportunity to modify and/or fine tune your pay and conditions by way of the remit process. The Union wage round bargaining team needs your input so that

A corked brew

A HHHH, election time! Much like selecting a good bottle of wine. Last term's vintage was another dismal failure.

When selecting a reputable bottle of political vintage, one must be prepared to experience the odd corked bottle or two. An experience we can well do without. Not only does it incur an exorbitant cost, you must endure an overwhelming attack on the senses.

Depending on what side of the political divide you sit, you could argue that it simply requires another term to mature. However, our advice is to hastily vacate the offending material into one of the few surviving socially provided spittoons. The very real fear is, if one partakes of such vintage for too long, you could become somewhat aloof to all social needs while slowly taking on an irreversible skin shade of blue for which, short of amputation, there is no known cure.

Take a well matured two-term bottle of John Key vintage for example.

Were one stoic enough or somewhat naive enough, to open such a volatile political vintage, one would instantly be overwhelmed with an aroma of self-styled well-aged corporate greed from barrels created from the finest ideologically grown, right-leaning oak to achieve that desirable elixir of economical growth.

Let it breathe. You will then pick up subtle bouquets of hands-free governance.

This grape, with a potential of being one of the finest, through inept handling, has befallen a fate despised by wine-makers: the \$5 bin specials.

Its blend of long-suffering aromas infused with a youthful

full-bodied directionless enthusiasm combined with a slightly immature aftertaste of self centred indulgence leaves a lingering impression of an insatiable need for instant wealth and self-gratification.

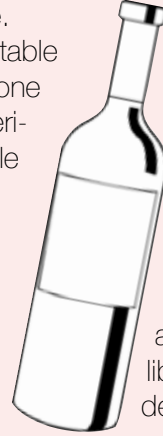
So-called pests and fungal diseases such as unions, political dialogue, public consultation, social considerations and more which were quickly and ruthlessly dealt with by a liberal spraying of back door deals, new industrial legislation and short-sighted quick fix solutions with the help of international pressure. Unfortunately, such spraying endangered vital micro organisms such as rare home grown industries and businesses, essential state-owned utilities and environmental watchdogs.

The J K vineyard has the ideal harsh soil conditions for a memorable vintage including a low wage economy, ever growing poverty, sub standard housing, fewer skilled labourers, mass redundancies, un-regulated industrial deaths, state-owned industry closures, a never-ending downward spiral of dog-eat-dog industry acquisitions and increasing unemployment – all topped with the OECD's highest suicide rate per capita.

The warnings for all to see is the well being of the core root stock at the expense of the upper foliage. Disaster awaits!

Fortunately, there is hope. In the proper hands, this grape could make an exceptional vintage. The imperfections can be eliminated with the steady hand of a master vintner and a dedicated team of socially grounded passionate devotees. 🍷

Mani Raumati
Wine critic



they can determine how best to represent our interests when they get around the table with management.

Please remember that we have a General Election this year. Are YOU enrolled to vote? Have any of your teenage children/Whanau/etc reached voting age? If so, get them enrolled because we need everybody to play their important part in the running of the country.

KIA ORA, to all our fellow brothers and sisters from the capital. We trust and hope you had a safe and enjoyable festive season.

We start with a big congratulations to Antony Thomas for successfully completing sign-off for his freight locomotive engineer's certificate and to long-serving and much respected member, Dave Aiona, for his successful transfer from Tranz Metro to Wellington freight. It is pleasing to see natural progression at play for the many years of service. Well done guys!

On a more sorrowful note we wish to acknowledge the extraordinary levels of love and devotion shown by Brian Avison, a once senior and highly respected member of Tranz Metro Wellington, who was left with no option than to resign from his lifetime career as a train manager to care for his lovely wife Gayle as she struggled through a long period of terminal illness. Unfortunate-

PLENTY of challenges for our KiwiRail members, both at the Interislander and freight, with the issues related to the Aratere's failing last year. Our terminal members have been providing the best customer service under the circumstances and freight has been flat out running the container transfer operations needed because of the lack of a second rail ferry. Plenty of questions being asked about who

HAPPY New Year 2014. Members had a collective sigh of relief with the announcement that proposals to move the ferry operations to Clifford Bay have been shelved. The uncertainty caused while the proposal was being considered or just being in limbo caused a lot of stress for our Picton members, their friends and families as many were unable to plan for the future when the future was unknown.

HUTT WORKSHOP BRANCH [cont]

Whilst the date is yet to be confirmed, it will be on a Saturday at a hall near you. All you will be required to do is get there and vote.

We need a rail and shipping-friendly government in power!

Finally, a belated note of thanks to our National Office team, omitted from

our December notes. They work tirelessly for us and do a heck of a good job. We acknowledge that at times they must feel like an octopus that is having its tentacles pulled in all directions by the branches but they somehow continue to deliver a sterling service to us all. Thank you to Wayne and his team. Arohanui. 🌐

WELLINGTON RAIL BRANCH

ly, late last year, Brian, whanau and friends farewelled Gayle at the local whenua tapu chapel. Such long-term unselfish devotion was heartfelt within the Wellington ranks. The branch also acknowledges the loss of Joe Nichol's wife and Moe Whare's recent loss of a much loved family member. To you all our sincere sympathies. Kia kaha.

We are pleased to advise that after a brief period of meaningful consultation the standardisation upgrade of the Hutt Road I&E depot has commenced. In short, more favourable, practical considerations were agreed upon for a more realistic practical functioning RMTU presence within the depot. Although the implementation process is in the early stages, it is envisaged that a successful outcome will become the national standard for I&E depots.

On the subject of upgrades it is with

considerable time and much effort that the branch can advise of a major upgrade of an RMTU presence within both the Wellington Interislander lodge and departure terminals. To celebrate, the branch will be providing Interislander members with a weekend barbecue in the near future.

Special thanks to the local management for their blessings and encouragement throughout the process. Thank you Peter and team.

As always the IMP machinery is working overtime in Wellington with the greatly appreciated assistance of volunteer delegates. Remember, no delegate, no IMP!

Finally the branch acknowledges the ever increasing numbers of new employees into Tranz Metro with a strong emphasis on part time passenger operators. We welcome you all into the fold. 🌐

MARLBOROUGH RAIL BRANCH

is making the poor decisions in KiwiRail with the temporary Aratere replacement, the Stena Alegra, being unable to take foot passengers and lacking stabilisers! Some are asking is the Stena another Aratere! Ironically the oldest ferry in the fleet is the staff's favourite because at least it is a rail ferry and KiwiRail owned.

KiwiRail are planning another flurry of activity with warranty and other work on the new wagons to be done in the Picton mechanical depot. The manufacturers will be doing the warranty work and other improvements will be done by KiwiRail staff. 🌐

MARLBOROUGH PORT BRANCH

So all good for now.

Long term member Ken Bose retired recently. We wish Ken a long, happy and healthy retirement. Ken retiring enabled Bernard McManaway to take up a full time position in the port security centre. Congratulations Bernard.

After the last wage round there was concern that the number of port security of-

ficers would go to eight if there was a retirement but Port Marlborough have decided to retain nine officers. So again, all good.

Members are preparing for the renewal of the Port Marlborough/RMTU collective agreement which expires at the end of June this year. Another piece of work will be introducing a new D&A policy for Port Marlborough this year. Busy times ahead. 🌐

CANTERBURY RAIL BRANCH

FIRST the good news – at long last the rebuild is gathering pace. Wherever you go in town it's apparent. The buildings are going up instead of coming down, the pubs are full of blokes in hi-viz gear on Thursday and Friday evenings and some of us are actually getting our houses repaired. There's plenty of work about and wage rates are climbing – something to think about as both the KiwiRail and Toll Tranzlink documents are up for renewal this year.

The bad news is that according to the CTU the rate of inflation in Canterbury is around twice that of elsewhere in New Zealand – so that'd be around 3%. Again something to think about with wage talks coming up.

Other signs of recovery are that passenger numbers on the TranzScenic, both the Coastal and Alpine services, seem to be up on last summer. We're hopeful that KiwiRail doesn't do anything silly like axe either of these services. At the rate Christchurch is recovering it would be criminal to lose tourist attractions like these.

We're hearing that double lining is being looked at between Rolleston and Christchurch. Why did we rip it up in the first place? Anyway, the

volume of freight is only going one way for the foreseeable future, what with Synlait and the new Metroport coming on line. What we need now are some politicians with vision to get behind commuter services from Rolleston and North Canterbury into town.

I&E remains an area where morale is low. We're still paying the price for the madness of the so-called 'Cost Improvement Programme' in late 2012. The latest manifestation is the inability of members to access training courses as there are now so few directly-employed frontline staff that we're all needed on the track. Allied to this there seems to be a plethora of people working on planning. At one meeting there were seven managers and planners organising a job that involved three workers!

The mechanical people at Middleton have new smoko facilities which is progress.

We're not hearing much about what is planned to replace the loco depot at



(from top left) Middleton LEs Peter Harmon and Paul Swainson, and Gilbert Bryan (Greymouth).

Linwood. Our fear is that ad hoc solutions will become permanent by default. It's one thing to cope with less than ideal facilities for a few years, it's another when there is no end in sight. By the time you read this it'll be three years since the big February shake, Å

Freight is working flat out and it's good to see Jed O'Donoghue back driving. Management's loss is the RMTU's gain. The inability of management to see KiwiRail as one entity is evident as freight is being stymied by I&E who seem to think that if only they could get those trains off the track then it would be much easier to maintain. Meanwhile there are thousands of tons of coal sitting over on the Coast that needs shifting to Lyttelton.

Toll Tranzlink is also very busy. The challenge is keeping staff as many people are looking at what can be earned in construction and are voting with their feet. Once again, a point to consider in this year's wage round.



(right) Train manager Duncan Brown (Christchurch) and (below) delegate training.



LYTTELTON PORT BRANCH

THE Inland Port, (or City Depot as the Company prefers to call it) at Woolston has been in the news of late, for all the wrong reasons. What's in a name you might ask? Quite a bit if you work at Inland Port (our preferred name). The Lyttelton Port Company (LPC) insists on City Depot and did so all the way through the hearing at the Employment Court last year when they appealed the decision of the Employment Relations Authority which

had ruled our members were covered by the wider RMTU/MUNZ-LPC collective agreement. The upshot was, after a three day hearing and nine month wait for Judge Couch's reserved decision, that LPC were successful and our members were deemed not to fall under the coverage of the wider collective.

Which sets the scene, and the agenda, for 2014. Port of Tauranga has acquired a half share in Prime Port Timaru and a large

new inland port facility is coming on stream at Rolleston. It's clear that the industry is restructuring itself without the benefit of central planning. We've always said the industry needs to rationalise but have been adamant that if such changes occur it needs to be done with central government intervention in order to ensure the wider interests of New Zealand inc are looked after. It seems that the change will be left to the chaos of market forces after all. Add the fact that Lyttelton is restricted in its ability

to expand because of the geography of the site, and factor in the enormous pressure on the port because of the re-build and you have a formula for a very challenging few years ahead.

Inland ports are one of the ways to get round the congestion. So are blue water ports and coastal shipping hubs. All of which means the landscape in which we conduct industrial relations is changing and if we don't adapt and respond we risk being marginalised. Put simply, we can no longer allow our thinking to stop at the Lyttelton tunnel. If we aren't organising and bargaining in the Inland Port all our members are potentially disadvantaged.

The good news is that Lyttelton is experiencing growing volumes, good profits and can afford to pay its CEO \$1 million per year – so there should be plenty of cash in the kitty to settle this year's wage round.

At the end of last year we had a joint meeting of the Canterbury rail branch and the LPC branch. The focus was on this year's negotiations in KiwiRail and LPC. Our mem-

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bers are very clear that success in bargaining isn't based on who is on our negotiating team, it's based on what our members are prepared to do to support our negotiators in pursuit of our claims. And that means having remits that aren't based on a whim, but are deeply and widely felt issues that people care enough about to take action over if push comes to shove.

The other reason the inland port has been in the news is because of health and safety failures culminating in one of our members being hurt when a container fell on his forklift. Worksafe, the new name for OSH, issues 'improvement notices' and highlighted a range of areas where the company had to do better. These included lack of supervision, uneven ground, lack of signage and speed limits, excessive hours, inconsistent training and induction as well as containers stacked seven high. These documents were leaked to Radio New Zealand and received a fair amount of coverage. What was disappointing was that

the CEO seemed more concerned about the leak than the health and safety of his staff. Listen to the interview here (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/audio/player/2584434>), and our South Island organiser John Kerr's response, here: (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/audio/player/2584443>).

On a more positive note former delegate Paul Dennis has been appointed health and safety manager for LPC. We are very pleased at this decision as we have confidence in Paul and we're sure that he will help deliver a safer working environment. Well done Paul, we look forward to working with you in your new role.

We're doing our bit by getting the recently elected health and safety reps trained by the CTU and the company has come to the party by paying for this, so it's not all doom and gloom.

A big year ahead with wage round and an election. Hopefully with Lianne Dalziel as mayor the Nats will shelve any mad ideas they have for selling off local assets. 🇳🇿

HERE in Timaru we are seeking to re-negotiate our collective agreement.

This is in the context of Port of Tauranga acquiring a share in Prime Port and the recent announcement about the establishment of an inland port in Rolleston. It's clear that the industry is re-structuring itself without central government intervention. So instead of rational central planning looking after the interests of New Zealand Inc, it is being left to market forces. We're not optimistic about restructuring of this nature being good for New Zealand ratepay-

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ers or workers.

At the time of writing we have submitted our claims, which largely seek to restore some of the terms and conditions we lost in the last two redundancy rounds. It's fair to say this hasn't been greeted with delight by management. Having said that it's early days, so who knows. By the time you read this we might have a deal that we can get over the line.

The irony is that the Canterbury econ-

omy is humming, what with the re-build gathering pace in Christchurch and the continuing boom in commodity exports. This has put pressure on wages, as there is a growing skills shortage in the region, and inflation which according to the CTU, is running at twice the national average.

So it promises to be an interesting autumn in Timaru – once again! 🇳🇿

HELLO from sunny Timaru where things are in full swing tonnage wise and full trains are heading north or south.

Currently we are affected by heat restrictions and like so many other areas around the country, train timetables are tough to manage. Some restrictions are up to 30 km long and at 40kph take time to travel over.

The CT site has been working very hard handling large volumes of containers however, a very solid relationship between rail and CT staff is keeping things running smoothly.

The CT staff are keenly awaiting a visit

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from KiwiRail to start the local talks on pay and progression. Staff are looking towards increased pay and recognition and also a good back pay – as per the MECA talks held last wage round and developed by KIC council reps.

Currently our yard operations' team is very busy working big hours to cover sick leave and annual leave. Shunts in our area are busy and with the increased tonnage at Primeport, more local companies are shipping locally instead of railing to Lyttelton and Port Chalmers.

This year is a very important one with remits being called for the 2014 wage round talks. They must be in to RMTU head office by end of March.

We note the passing of Bryan McNally's wife recently. We all remember Sue as a young woman working at the Timaru Railway Station in the cafe and over the years we have been spoilt with her talents as a wonderful baker and cook. Her bubbly personality will be missed by us and all members of the branch and staff send Bryan and his family our deepest sympathy. 🇳🇿

WEST COAST BRANCH

TO start with a positive note, Westport LEs had some success after withdrawing its goodwill over three months as a reaction to the imposition of a new roster. We had, after several meetings with management, advised them that unless we got our old roster this would continue. KiwiRail eventually accepted our position and have decided to reinstate our original 13-link roster. It's a pity what we were compelled to take action like this but we're the ones that have to live and breathe these rosters, along with our families. This is a deeply and widely felt issue. It is a challenge to keep everyone happy in the three depots that serve the coal route and the Midland Line. Perhaps the company should be considering LE's remuneration more seriously in the forthcoming wage talks. Money does talk.

In Greymouth one of our veteran LEs, George Whyte, retired late last year. George had done over 50 years on the footplate and was a stalwart union member, holding office in the branch and being active working for his fellow members for much of his career. Many of the terms and conditions we enjoy today were fought for and preserved by the likes of George. We should never forget that. We all have a responsibility to maintain our conditions of employment, not just for ourselves and our workmates but also for those who will follow us. George never forgot and we'd be letting



Westport track gangs don't need modern equipment to clear rock from a slip, a sledge hammer is just fine. It's not the norm, however, a slip in the Gorge meant they needed to break a large rock so the LRV could pass.

him down if we did.

The track guys are working hard to keep the trains running. We had a near miss with gas in the Otira Tunnel in November last year and it was only luck that prevented serious harm, or worse, happening to a number of our members. Both national office and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment have been clear that we have to exercise our right to question – and ultimately refuse to do – unsafe work. Prohibition and improvement notices have been issued requiring KiwiRail to undertake a variety of tasks, ranging from improving hazard identification and task


analysis, to the use of self-rescue devices. Specialist health and safety inspector Dave Bellett spoke to our members and didn't pull any punches. It's up to us to just say 'no'.

Peruvian sleepers remain a bugbear. We're not convinced the contractors that are supposed to be identifying these things are doing their jobs properly. Our structure's members are on top of the issue on bridges but we're very wary of what's going on elsewhere on the network.

Wage round this year: let's learn our lesson from the success of the RCOs in the last round. Make sure those remits are focussed on deeply and widely felt issues, are consistent and are backed by a willingness to do something in support of



(l to r) Kevin Gubb, Mike Guthrie, Robbie Harris, Jonathon Rubin, Mike Rubin, and Jim and Wayne Colgar.

your negotiation team. Remember, we are the Union! 

OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

WHAT happens if we, as the working units for this company, lose trust and confidence in our manager or managers?

We know what happens if the company loses trust and confidence in us.

The job of Dunedin operations manager was advertised and what we thought was a robust process gone through.

Later, we found out that the interview notes for the four internal applicants were not even read by the manager doing the hiring – a local manager who was on the interview panel.

The hirer was changed to the area

manager.

We found that the job was to be Dunedin based for 18 months, then it was moved to Invercargill.

No mention of this in the advertisement or at the interview.

And the final pay rate was well above that of the advertised position.

Now we all know that most jobs advertised already have a very short list for the hiring manager, we accept that. But we also need to know that the selection process is robust, equitable and that those applying have a chance to promote themselves fairly.

Not seen to be done in this case.

Also not done in the case of the South Island OCM position in Christchurch.

Now the person appointed to that position may well be fit for the job, but where was the advertisement and interview process?

If the company or this manager continues to by-pass due process, how do the very capable people in this company promote themselves and their skills?

Oh that's right over the ditch.

Heat restrictions are taking their toll on the train time table. There were plans afoot to spread more ballast on the affected areas but we lost a propeller.

And as noted in the last Transport Worker branch notes, staff shortages are still

◀ affecting our ability to get leave. It's nice to see that we in the south are not the only ones suffering from this problem.

We have several new bees, both in the yard and out on the high iron. Good luck out there with your trainers. Your new skills are really needed.

It is hoped that by the time these notes appear in print that the issue of the AM/FM radios in locomotive cabs will finally be satisfactorily resolved and that the fix will be permanent. There would appear to a genuine lack of enthusiasm being shown



by the South Island mechanical management and that they do not appreciate the importance of this equipment in helping the locomotive engineers to remain alert

through the length of their shift.

On a much brighter note our immediate past president (and life member) Jim Kelly came out of retirement to perform a very pleasant task on behalf of the membership. He presented recently retired member-Brother Les Box with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Union to recognise all the years of support and participation he gave to the RMTU and its predecessors. 🇳🇿

SOUTHLAND BRANCH

GREETINGS from the deep south where we are enjoying long summer evenings and working hard to keep the economy growing.

Welcome back to stalwart RMTU member at South Port, Evan Lewis, who has had some time off after surgery but is now back at work and keeping the flag flying for our union in Bluff.

The Workers' Memorial Stone is progressing nicely courtesy of the CTU and the local council. With any luck it will be in place for our Memorial Day commemorations on April 28. We might have to tap up National Office for a few hundred bucks but we know the general secretary always looks favourably on requests from his old stamping ground.

The flash butt welder is doing a great job down here, if the improvement to the Ohai line is anything to go by. The welding on this line is complete and only have a few kilometres to go back and tie down properly.

When all this is completed the speed on this line will be increased to 50kph. A start has been made on the Bluff branch line with the formation work and ploughing out new ballast. At the time of writing the welding is scheduled to commence very soon.

Phil Jones, our former branch secretary, has put up his hand and offered to help our brothers in Christchurch keep the freight moving for a while. Good for Phil. He gets a change and good company and they get an experienced driver. In our last branch notes we overlooked our the two newest yard staff who have been signed off so well done Rata Shearer and Braden Hikawa.

By the time these notes appear in print

we will have farewelled Zeke (father) Wilson who has retired after 50 years of service to the railways. Zeke was well known the length of the country as an operations team leader and he takes a wealth of knowledge and experience with him. He will be missed by all in the depot as he is the last remaining member to retire who came up through the ranks from the station platform to guard on both freight and passenger trains, before finishing up in the office. We wish both him and Joan all the best and a long and happy retirement.

We've had a couple of instances of rule breaches being addressed down here. It would appear that management have decided that nothing less than 100% adherence and compliance from staff is expected. On matters that affect health and safety that's fair enough.

We all have to be accountable and one of our senior members has taken the criticism on the chin and volunteered to put his hand up to champion safe practices. It's easy to slip into bad habits but we can all learn from what's happened.

We're hearing a lot about the Just and Fair Culture that Kiwirail and the RMTU is working on. We understand this will mean accountability will work from top to bottom in the organisation, hardly something we can argue against.

With that in mind we do have a few continuing issues with equipment. In no particular order these are: vibrating cabs; radios that turn off while in use; radios that won't transmit; radios that won't receive; vigilance systems that send out false alerts; anti-fatigue AM/FM radios that don't work;

bull hooks TEMs that don't fit the fleet (935 recently had to have the TEM tied on with a strop); brake pipe leakage exceeding cod and more.

I'm sure any operating member would be able add to the list. We know that many are being worked on and we know that we have to be patient and keep reporting faults. The question arises though about how long do we keep raising issues before we take action and simply not accept equipment that is not up to standard? On any given day if we did take action we would probably shut down a third of the trains on the network.

Like everyone, we're anticipating the KiwiRail wage round this year and wondering what will be the impact of National's changes to employment law. We had a rally in Invercargill late last year attended by CTU president Helen Kelly, who spoke about how the removal of the duty to conclude bargaining with a collective agreement, together with allowing employers to apply to the Employment Relations Authority to declare bargaining over, could make it harder for unions to negotiate deals for workers.

All very worrying.

Now that the Select Committee process is over and the Government has ignored the objections of the CTU, we're wondering what Plan B is. Yes, we'll vote for a change of government this year, but it would be good to hear Helen Kelly calling for direct action before then.

In the meantime, we encourage you all to think long and hard about what you want out of this year's negotiations and to get organised. Our negotiators are only as strong as our members! 🇳🇿

Disaster remembered



Tim Kerwin throwing the wreath from the Tangiwai Bridge in memory of those who perished 60 years ago.



THE RMTU Palmerston North branch remembered Charlie Parker (locomotive engineer) and Lance Redman (fireman) and all the other souls lost at Tangiwai on the 60th anniversary of the disaster on December 20 last year.

At 2222 hours on Christmas Eve 1953 the Wellington-to-Auckland overnight express passenger train No 626 plunged into the Whangaehu River at Tangiwai taking with it the first six of its eleven carriages. Of the 285 people on board only 134 survived in what was New Zealand's worst rail disaster and sixth most deadly.

The branch commemorates this tragedy each year and lays wreaths on the memorial stone and also on a locomotive which travels slowly across the Whangaehu River bridge.

This tradition has been carried out since the disaster in 1953 and usually involved the north bound Northerner passenger service up to its cessation. It now utilises a freight train which crosses the Whangaehu River close to the hour that this tragedy occurred.

No one has ever been held to account for the deadly carnage and according to documentary maker David Sims who investigated the crash 11 years ago, and a mountaineer who warned of a potential calamity 18 months before the unstable wall of the Mt Ruapehu crater lake burst to create a deadly lahar, the lack of accountability was no accident.

The Auckland Herald describes the circumstances that led to the express tumbling into a normally sedate river during the peak of a flash flood were "ridiculously unfortunate".

They wrote: An official inquiry into the tragedy essentially pointed the finger at dumb luck. However, that conclusion doesn't sit well with a member of an intrepid group of mountaineers and canoeists who made several trips to study the crater lake in years leading up to the disaster. What they saw were rising water levels and temperatures and increasingly dramatic glacial melt. It alarmed them. A huge lahar had tumbled down the mountainside in 1925, damaging but not destroying the Whangaehu rail bridge. The group wrote to the government volcanologist in Rotorua and the Railways Department warning a similar event was brewing. The Wanganui Chronicle published a story about their findings, but no action was taken.

A relatively simple solution was available. A farm drain-sized pipe through the soft crust that would eventually give way would have provided an outlet for the glacial melt that was causing the lake level to rise.

Sims believes serious negligence contributed to the disaster.

Last December, freight service 390 and 218 lay wreaths in the river and at the memorial. 🌐

