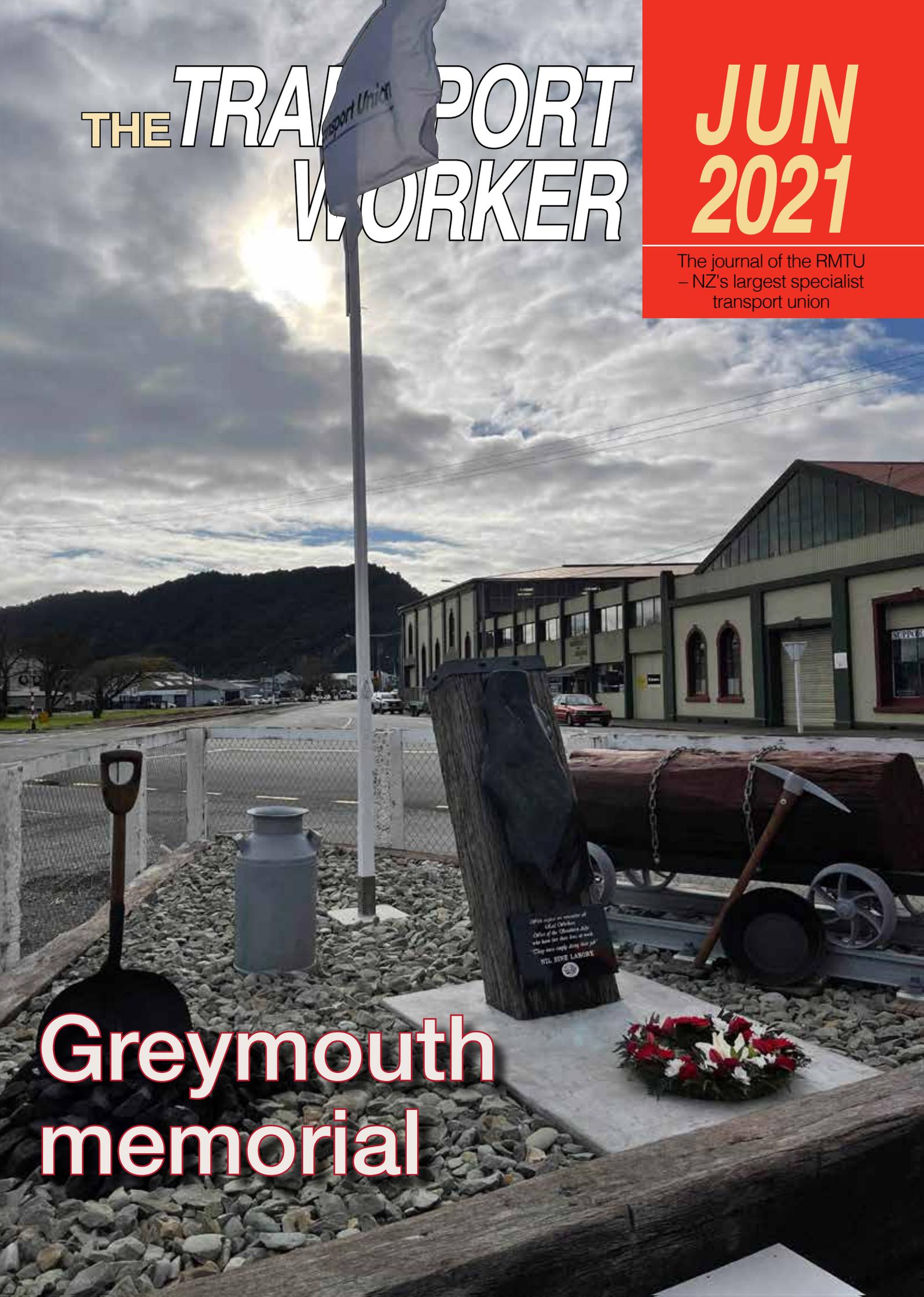


THE TRANSPORT WORKER

JUN 2021

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



Greymouth memorial

12 LONG DISTANCE RAIL

Michael Nicholson looks at the present - and future - of long distance rail in New Zealand.

16 MEMORIAL DAY

Once again workers gather in growing numbers around the country to remember fellow workers who died on the job.

21 PRESIDENTIAL HONOUR

Ex RMTU president, Jim Kelly proudly showing the QSM he received for services to his community and to railways.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: The newly unveiled memorial at the wharf gates in Greymouth – a permanent reminder to those workers who died on the job. See pages 16 & 17.

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**Wayne Butson,
General secretary
RMTU**

Hillside rebirth worth waiting for

THIS year is flying by and it is already time for Issue 2 of our Magazine. It was personally pleasing to see our national president Aubrey Wilkinson being reelected unopposed for a further two year term. Aubrey is an excellent leader for our Union and continues to grow in his knowledge, skill and understanding of our Union and things union. His mana within the wider union movement in New Zealand is a tribute to us and to him.

This issue is a bumper 32 page edition and it is full of reports of the great things happening within our Union and industries we work within. Please read the report from the unveiling of our latest workers memorial in Greymouth (see page 29). It was a great day and the West Coast branch were excellent hosts and obviously have a talent for designing and laying out a stunning tribute to our fallen brothers and sisters. The cover pic of this edition was taken by me and is one of the best shots I have ever taken. It captures the beauty of the memorial and the sombre overtone of the day and event.

I look forward to other branches unveiling memorials in the future as we have an ever lengthening list of branches and sites around Aotearoa New Zealand.

We shall NOT forget. We shall remember and honour!

To my great disappointment I was unable to attend the release of the Hillside Plan in Dunedin owing to a traffic accident shutting down the road into Wellington. This was gutting as I was there at the close when the then KiwiRail CEO Jim Quinn blindly applied the orders of the National Party to shut the workshop down.

We all swore a pledge at the time to never give up fighting for the workshop to reopen and again become a centre for rail engineering and apprentice training excellence in the South Island.

We fought to get this commitment into Labour Party policy and into the manifesto with the help of the local MPs. I am so proud and gratified that Labour have delivered on their promise and commitment and Hillside will become an integral part of KiwiRail engineering again. Sadly, RMTU life member Jim Kelly also could not attend on the day as his health has gotten so bad he cannot leave his house. However, his daughter Lisa delivered a heartfelt few words on his behalf which were

very well received by all accounts.

We have had a number of collective agreements renewed without too much stress and the great surprise for me was the two day negotiation at Port of Tauranga ending with a deal both sides can feel proud of. KiwiRail has been ratified by you and we will be getting right back into it again.

Member expectation is high and what was looking like a challenging negotiation has now gotten even more challenging with the Government announcing that they want those earning under \$60k pa to get good increases and they want much less for those earning over this amount. KiwiRail has long argued to remain a State Owned Enterprise (SOE) so that it can maintain their "commercial" focus and oppose any effort to move them into the core state sector. So it will be most interesting to see what their approach is to the Government guidance in bargaining.

FairPay Agreements (FPAs) is a Government flagship project as it is seen that these arrangements will be a game changer for those in low wage occupations and where they have limited bargaining power. The RMTU strongly supports FPAs and this issue has a report which will hopefully educate members on what they are and how they are negotiated. We do not see them as having an application within the rail or ports industries but we all will feel the effects as the bottom of the wage bargaining tree moves up.

As I type this we are all frantically finalising the arrangements for our port and women's forums and the programmes for both look highly engaging and will see major transfers of knowledge occur to our delegates. I enjoy these forums as the discussions on topics and in workshops ensures we are aligned with our members' wishes and we know very clearly what it is you want us to do.

In unity is strength! 

Resignations

Dear Editor,

Over the past 17 years of working at LPC, I have been blessed to work with many great people. People I call family and friends. I've been taught so many different skills by wonderful tutors, and peers.

I've experienced many years of being part of a union which cares deeply for its members.

LPC gave me many challenges that I appreciated experiencing being good – or not so good. You all helped me become a better person and with much gratefulness, I thank you all.

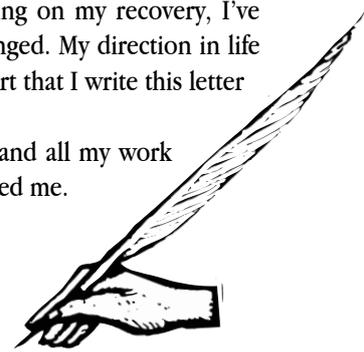
Over the past few months working on my recovery, I've realised that circumstances have changed. My direction in life has changed and it's with a heavy heart that I write this letter of resignation.

I'd like to thank LPC, the RMTU and all my work colleagues for the help you all provided me.

I wish you all the best

Kind regards

Pare-Ana Bysterveld.



Dear Editor,

Please accept my resignation from the Union as I am retiring.

My thanks to Wayne and the team for the work they do in looking after our well-being and conditions.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my 20 years with Rail.

A special thanks to Harvey P.

Regards

Dennis Smith.

Will wage freeze chill our bargaining?

National Office looks at the government's proposed wage freeze.

THERE has been a good deal of publicity around wage setting mechanisms in the media of late. This was prompted by an announcement on Fair Pay Agreements (see page 6) which was trumpeted as the biggest change to industrial relations law for 20 years and by the government also announcing a public sector pay freeze.

In reality, the wage freeze is nothing of the sort unless it invokes special powers after the manner of those used at the height of the COVID19 emergency - which doesn't look likely.

The government employs many people directly, for example customs employees, Defence Force staff, diplomats, the Police and so forth who are said to work in the

'core state sector'.

The pay freeze is aimed at them.

Many more people however, are not directly employed by central government but are part of the wider state sector, for example nurses employed by DHBs and teachers who are technically employed by their school boards to cite two of the most numerous groups of employees.

Most of these workers – both core and wider state sector – are covered by collective agreements often containing contractual obligations. This means individuals receive pay increases allied to their length of service. For example, they will be on a multi-step pay scale and click up the scale at regular intervals or when they obtain a new skill. The employer, whether it's a ministry,

school or DHB- can't simply contract out of those agreements just because Minister Hipkins announced a so called 'pay freeze'.

Secondly, given that collective agreements have a maximum term of three years they will have to be renegotiated during the period of the so-called 'freeze'. The good faith obligations enshrined in the legislation requires employers and unions to negotiate. Government can announce they are not going to pay anyone earning more than \$60,000 per year an increase – 'except in exceptional circumstances' – but they still have to negotiate in good faith with those workers and if those workers choose to take industrial action to make their employer change their mind about doggedly adhering to the Government's pay wish, then it can

A Just Transition for RMTU members

Mitigating the effects of climate change in an over-carbonised world

By John Kerr

ON May Day RMTU West Coast branch delegate Don Hibbs and I attended a forum hosted by the Council of Trade Unions (CTU) and Unions West Coast on the theme of a Just Transition for working people as New Zealand looks at decarbonising its economy.

The list of speakers was impressive and included the Cuban ambassador as well as the Labour list MP for Taranaki. The absence of local Labour MP Damien O'Connor was duly noted.

No denying it

The conversation was held in the context of the Climate Change Commission's recommendations for New Zealand to accelerate decarbonisation. Denying that the climate system breakdown is real or blaming the 'greenies' and putting our head in the sand won't make a jot of difference.

Every major party across the political

spectrum voted to establish the Climate Change Commission. We might not like this but we cannot, in Don's words "cross our fingers and hope".

There are some positives in this for members. For example more freight should be moved off roads and onto rail and coastal shipping, and there will be more public transport.

The bad news is that across the coal mining and oil and gas sectors, between 600 and 1,100 more people could lose their jobs by 2030 - in addition to the 600 job losses already projected. Some communities will be disproportionately effected - such as the West Coast.

The message we received from union representatives in Taranaki, where the decision to stop offshore oil and gas exploration three years ago made a big impact, was that people have to seize control of the process of change.

Taranaki Tu organiser Jen Natoli and delegate Charlie Ross explained how the

urgency created by the offshore oil and gas exploration halt brought people together who had previously been at loggerheads.

For the first time, employers, unions and environmentalists started to focus on what they had in common rather than their differences and began working on a roadmap to create high value enterprises which would provide well paid secure employment.

Our members have to be in the faces of local and national politicians and working with businesses on the West Coast to look at securing the rail links with the rest of New Zealand. We must also put in place retraining and redeployment options for those who may lose their jobs.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't be fighting to maintain current roles until a substitute for high grade coking coal in steel production is found.

It also doesn't mean we should sacrifice our children's future on the altar of denial.



very quickly get messy.

For reasons best known to itself, the Government seems to have backed itself into a corner. Even worse, the workers who are being targeted by the pay freeze announcement are largely those who played an enormous part – and continue to do so – in our response to the COVID19 pandemic. To attack health workers and border staff in particular seems non-sensical when many private sector businesses have benefitted from wage subsidies and the like over the last year.

It's not that New Zealand's public debt has ballooned out either and we need to limit public sector spending to offset this. At 22% of GDP our public debt is lower than half that of Australia (49%) and much less than the UK (97%) and the USA (107%).

KiwiRail, with whom the RMTU has its biggest collective agreement, is a State Owned Enterprise and as such is part of the wider state sector. The pay freeze announcement does not apply to KiwiRail or other state owned enterprises but it will

cause confusion in that both managers and employees in the wider state sector will be trying to make sense of its implications, if any.

Will the Government's so-called pay freeze have an impact on the RMTU's bargaining?

Not directly as we don't cover workers employed in the core state sector. RMTU rail and port workers negotiate their pay directly with their employers and while many of these are wholly or partially publicly owned, we have the right to negotiate and to take industrial action if necessary in support of our claims in bargaining.

Of course, if public sector workers accept the suggested pay freeze then a general downward pressure on wages will result.

For example, we can all safely anticipate some bosses will try and use the 'pay freeze' during negotiations to try and justify limiting their pay offers. However, what we do about that is up to us.

If I'm a tradesperson and my employer pays the living wage, it means the gap

between my hourly rate and that of an unskilled worker is much less. How does that help me?

All wage systems are built from the bottom up.

If the gap between what you are paid as a tradesperson and the living wage, or the minimum wage for that matter, narrows, the employer may face problems recruiting people like you. After all, the incentive to take on the responsibility and pressure that goes with being more skilled is reduced as you could earn nearly as much doing a less skilled role.

Therefore, it is in the employer's interests to maintain the 'relativity' or gap between wage rates.

Sometimes bosses don't get this, so the fact many workers are prepared to fight to maintain these gaps is often what it takes to convince them.

Imagine if the legal minimum wage was set at \$30 per hour. Would you be arguing for a higher rate for tradespersons? We think you would. 

Danger averted with red card

THE RMTU's *Just say NO!* card was waved last month to stop a potentially dangerous situation getting worse at the Champion Flour Mill facility at Mount Maunganui in Tauranga.

The problem occurred at the Champion Flour Mill grain packing facility at Mount Maunganui in Tauranga - a small tin-clad hut at the foot of two large grain silos.

At the time, packing staff were filling bags with grain, checking for metal and sealing and stacking the bags.

The shed had leaked in the rain for some time but on this day it was particularly bad with water pouring through the roof and down the walls.

Some of the equipment they use, including a metal detector used to check each bag, are electrically-driven.

The workers, well aware of the inherent dangers of mixing water and electricity, called a senior worker for support and advice.

Inventory controller Michael Hopa was informed as there was no H&S rep on the site and the site manager had not yet arrived at work.

"I looked at the situation and agreed with the men working in there," he said. "I called over our RMTU organiser, Dasha Van Silfout who agreed and we immediately took photos and pulled out the Union's RED safety card demanding work be stopped until a solution to a dangerous situation is found."

Work ceased and management were informed. Michael and Dasha report management were equally very concerned and totally supportive of the action they had taken.



The leaky tin shed beneath the silo and (inset) a photo of the interior.

"The following day our operations manager phoned me to say thanks to the staff for taking this matter into our own hands," said Dasha

Michael added that he had no problem suggesting the operation stop immediately. "Our primary concern is for the safety of our workers."

"In fact it wasn't just the water running down the walls," said Michael, "the whole place was damp."

While seeking a permanent solution, management decided that no work should be performed in the packing shed during

wet weather - only in dry conditions.

Meanwhile Michael wasn't at all happy that the men working in the shed had felt pressured to continue packing despite the damp conditions and was more than happy to support them making a stand for a safer work place.

Champion senior staff are planning refurbishments to make the shed a safe work place.

Dasha said the effectiveness of the Union's Red Card so impressed staff there they now all want one. 🌐

FATIGUE TRAINING



"Getting to grips with fatigue" Transdev Auckland delegates and H&S reps attend the Preventing & Managing Fatigue course by Worksafe Reps. Do you want to run a course in your workplace? Contact kfletcher@rmtunion.org.nz to arrange.

Fair Pay Agreements:

A radical overhaul of New Zealand's labour laws was announced last month which will place centralised wage bargaining back at the heart of industrial relations law. The new Fair Pay Agreements will be designed to allow unions to negotiate on an industry-wide basis - a process which can be triggered

by as few as 10 per cent of a workforce. The resulting agreements will set minimum wages and conditions, overtime and penalty rates across the country. In this article, PSA solicitor and former NZCTU legal officer, *Avalon Kent* looks at the background for the proposal and its ramifications.

NEW ZEALAND is developing a new system of collective wage bargaining, called Fair Pay Agreements (FPA) of negotiated terms, conditions and standards across specified industries, sectors or occupations.

The agreements will build on a national code of minimum employment rights, but also take into account collective bargaining system.

The upshot is that it can potentially improve the poor wages and conditions which have plagued low-paid and insecure workers for decades.

The agreements could also establish new pathways for collective negotiation.

The successful introduction of FPAs could reinvigorate a spirit of collectivism and unity in employment relationships.

Whether this potential is achieved, how-

ever, will depend on the final structure of the system put in place. If the negotiating system is overly constrained the potential to spark this broader unity could be squandered.

However, if the new system focusses on democratic participation it could spark a profound change in the nature of industrial relations in New Zealand – and perhaps beyond.

History

Like other industrial countries during the neoliberal era, employment relations in New Zealand shifted from collectivist, equality-promoting practices to a more individualised and deregulated approach. In fact, New Zealand's restructuring was among the more extreme of any OECD

country.

The previous long-standing system of wage arbitration and high union density was fundamentally dismantled – quickly and dramatically – in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Most important in these processes were the Labour Relations Act of 1987 (introduced by Labour) which shifted collective bargaining to the enterprise level, and the subsequent Employment Contracts Act in 1991 (introduced by National) which imposed harsh limits on collective bargaining in any form.

In the wake of these changes, trade union density collapsed from about 70% of employees in 1980 to just over 20% by the late 1990s – with a further modest decline since then.

That represents the largest decline in

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A new way of bargaining

◀ union density of any OECD country over this period.

Collective bargaining coverage fell even further than union membership, falling below 20% by the year 2000, and then, further, to just 15% by 2010.

Today collective bargaining coverage in New Zealand is the sixth lowest among all OECD economies with New Zealand one of only a handful of those countries in which collective bargaining coverage is lower than union density – thus reflecting the difficulties of building and maintaining collective agreements at any level, whether at individual enterprises or across entire sectors.

There are even New Zealand workers who are members of a union but are not covered by a collective agreement. There is no doubt that New Zealand's industrial relations regime is one of the most hostile to collective bargaining of any industrial country, and the disappearance of collective bargaining has certainly contributed to the prevalence of low-wage work, stagnant wages and productivity growth, and inequality.

Since 2000 New Zealand has taken some policy measures to support stronger labour incomes. Most important has been a relatively robust national minimum wage policy – among the highest in the OECD.

However, there are other workplace issues needing attention including; wage differentials and pay equity, training and qualifications issues, working conditions.

To this end the move towards revitalising collective bargaining has, in recent years, gathered more political traction.

Origins

Proposals to rebuild industry-level collective bargaining has been advanced by the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) and affiliated unions for at least a decade.

The NZCTU succeeded in having the proposal included in the New Zealand Labour Party's manifesto for the 2017 election in which it committed to: "... develop and introduce a legislative system of industry and sector collective bargaining

that allows unions and employers, with the assistance of the Employment Relations Authority, to create FPAs that set minimum conditions, such as wages, allowances, weekend and night rates, hours of work and leave arrangements for workers across an industry based on the employment standards that apply in that industry."

After the 2017 election, the Coalition Government (Labour, Green and New Zealand First) issued a Cabinet Paper outlining the policy rationale for FPAs. It was promoted as a strategy for lifting industries out of a low-wage structure, and stopping low-productivity and the 'race to the bottom' cycle marked by a hollowing out of middle-income jobs.

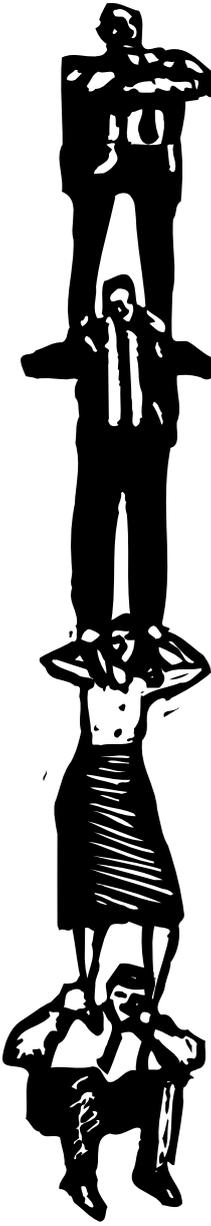
It was also argued that negotiation of FPAs would give firms greater incentives to invest in physical and human capital and facilitate greater industry-wide coordination.

In 2018 a working group was tasked to make recommendations independent from the government, based on discussions with employers, unions, and labour policy experts. Its terms of reference indicated the outcomes should not:

- harm productivity or business competitiveness,
- create wider labour market inequalities,
- cause unreasonable price rises,
- cause job losses in covered industries, and
- crucially, would not allow recourse to industrial action.

The government made it clear from the outset that industrial action would be excluded from the FPA process.

The Working Group report, issued in October 2018, made 46 recommendations. It also acknowledged disagreements



between its members over whether participation in FPAs should be compulsory.

The report was obviously constrained by the views of groups three different participants.

In an unusual move the government then announced an additional consultation process to seek further public opinion.

The responsible Minister said he wanted to hear "from businesses, workers and the public before we finalise this work to ensure we develop a system that is manageable, accessible and offers benefits for all the parties involved".

This additional negotiation showed the intensity of the debate over FPAs – both within the governing coalition and between government and business representatives.

The second consultation closed in late November 2019. However, due to COVID-19 and the 2020 election, no formal report-back has been issued at time of writing.

Development of the FPA proposal has thus been effectively paused for several months.

In its manifesto for the 2020 general election, the Labour Party made a clear commitment to moving forwards with implementation of FPAs. With an outright majority,

a successful response to the pandemic, its support for greater economic equality and continuing pressure from trade unions, its explicit commitment to move ahead would indicate this policy has a good chance of becoming reality during the current term of government.

Design features

At the time of writing, the final design of the FPA system remains uncertain however several key issues have been highlighted. Some of the most crucial are:

Initiation

An issue that goes to the heart of any industry/sector bargaining system is the ▶

ability of workers to initiate bargaining. The Working Group recommended that initiation must be led by workers and their unions, in one of two possible circumstances:

1 Either a representative trigger is met (with at least 1000 or 10% of workers in the nominated sector or occupation-supporting initiation); or

2 A public interest trigger is met. It was envisaged an independent body would determine whether those conditions are met.

This initiation test was contested by employers who wanted higher thresholds. However, if initiation tests are set too high they would become an impossible barrier.

Coverage

While the Working Group recommended specific occupations or sectors covered by an FPA should be defined and negotiated by the participating parties, the public consultation document introduced new considerations. In response the NZCTU submitted that the ability to initiate and define coverage should be flexible and sensible.

Clearly there is a need for flexibility in determining coverage, so it may be necessary for coverage to be a matter for negotiation.

Scope and content

The Working Group report issued three recommendations regarding the scope (or content) of FPAs:

- Minimum content in an FPA should be set out in legislation.

- The parties would negotiate over additional content.

- Any collective agreements negotiated at the enterprise level must meet or exceed the provisions of an FPA.

They also agreed to a broad list of the sorts of terms and conditions including: objectives; coverage; wages and pay increases; conditions such as working hours, overtime and/or penal rates, leave, redundancy, and flexible working hours; skills and training; duration of the FPA; governance and ongoing dialogue between the parties.

However, the second consultation document opened the door to a more complicated – and perhaps controversial – approach by identifying two broad options:

(a) Listing mandatory and permissible topics, with all other topics excluded; and/

or

(b) Listing mandatory and prohibited topics, with all other topics permissible on the basis of negotiated agreement.

These continuing debates over the permitted scope of FPAs will be important in shaping the nature of the final system.

Relationship to other collective bargaining

New Zealand law provides for two tiers of collective bargaining: enterprise-level collective bargaining and multi-employer collective bargaining.

However, multi-employer bargaining is rare.

The FPA policy is intended to address this failure – particularly in the private sector. A pervasive lack of union strength and bargaining power, again most obvious in the private sector, is clearly a major reason for the general absence of multi-employer bargaining. Its success will depend on the strength of union bargaining – organising sufficient numbers of workers to initiate an FPA, compile and advocate for key demands, and bring pressure on employers.

Dispute settlement

The government made it clear from the outset that industrial action would be prohibited from the FPA process raising questions regarding how disputes would be resolved.

The Working Group made several recommendations and even mapped out an explicit flow chart describing such a process.

The discussion paper broadly agreed but asked whether the mediation stage should be compulsory, whether mediators should be empowered to make recommendations and when arbitration would be applied – possibly a strategy by employers to limit the scope of the FPA.

This will be a critical and contested issue.

Next steps

As the next stage unfolds, there are still several critical debates that will need to be resolved.

FAIR PAY AGREEMENTS

Announced by Hon Michael Woods, 7 May, 2021

Key aspirations

- Increase Bargaining power for employees
- Will set minimum standards for all employees and employers across an industry or occupation
- Will encourage competition which isn't based on low wages
- Incentivise businesses to invest in training
- Will level the employment playing field and create sector wide coordination
- Values the work done by workers in critical roles such as cleaners, drivers, etc.

Key drivers

- While the economy has grown over the last 30 years, wages have lagged behind. The highest earners have seen their wages increase at twice the rate of middle-income earners.
- Less than one-in-five New Zealanders are represented in collective bargaining – down from around 70 per cent three decades ago. There is increasing evidence in some sectors of businesses competing for contracts by reducing wages or employment conditions.
- Legislation planned to be introduced to Parliament later this year and passed in 2022.

Employer groups, by now, have likely resigned themselves to the fact that some form of FPA system will come into effect. However, they continue to resist.

Compulsory application

The power of the FPA system depends on it being binding on all industries or occupations covered by it. This was certainly the view of the union and Government participants. However, business has resisted consensus about the need for the FPAs to be compulsory. A voluntary system, in which individual employers could choose whether to participate, would have the same fate as multi-employer bargaining – a process which is formally permissible but virtually non-existent.

Standards

The goal is to ensure all workplaces within a defined sector or occupation meet desired standards of compensation, working conditions, and other matters. But are

◀ those benchmarks understood as minimum levels, or something higher?

The Working Group indicated FPAs would 'build on, rather than replace, existing minimum standards'.

Bargaining

The mandate of representative bargaining parties in FPAs is likely to be another hot topic of debate.

From the unions' perspective, the logical bargaining parties to FPAs would be the relevant unions paired with employer representatives. The notion that only unions would initiate bargaining on behalf of workers is consistent with New Zealand's system of enterprise and multi-employer bargaining, which also requires union involvement.

The public consultation document, however, raised the prospect that non-union groups could initiate and conduct bargaining.

The idea of implementing FPAs without union representation could be linked to Australia's novel system of non-union collective agreements. It may also reflect employers' desires to prevent FPAs from becoming a channel for expanding union membership and power.

Coverage

Asked to consider 'whether the FPA opened the door to including contractors in the new industry standard setting system'

the Working Group recommended a more inclusive approach: 'It is important for agreements to cover all workers – not just employees – to avoid perverse incentives to define work outside of employment regulation'. This would help to mitigate against the risk of a 'two-speed' labour market structure and incentivising regulatory evasion.

Flexibility

Another fault line emerges over the extent to which there should be exemptions allowed from the FPA, and whether FPAs should feature built-in flexibility.

The Working Group recommended that limited flexibility should be permissible, under certain circumstances as defined in legislation. However, the public consultation document broadened the scope of these discussions and introduced several more far-reaching potential exemption provisions including the possibility an employer could be exempted from the entire FPA.

Again, the different tone adopted by the discussion paper would seem to reflect employer efforts to win as much flexibility and space for exemptions as possible.

Type of arbitration

In light of the government's prohibition on industrial action, the Working Group determined that the new FPA system would include a system for the arbitration. Design-

ing this will be contentious and will revolve around degrees of compulsion.

Conclusion

The 2020 election gave Labour a clear opportunity to move ahead forcefully with its pledge for a system of FPAs.

However, there is still a long road to travel before the policy is fully formulated and implemented. Important debates remain regarding its goals and employers are still striving to limit its scope and ultimate power.

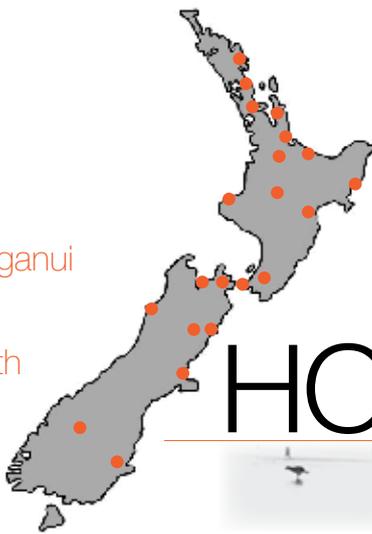
Lessons from international experience have helped inform the development and to clarify what FPAs are.

While the FPA model remains a unique and promising approach for collective bargaining it remains to be seen to what degree a genuine breakthrough will be achieved or whether the various constraints and exemptions imposed will dilute its ultimate impact.

It will be fascinating to see whether FPAs succeed in genuinely re-collectivising employment relationships, and facilitating stronger union representation in New Zealand workplaces. 🌐

NB This article was extracted from an original essay by Avalon Kent. Should you wish to read the full article email the author at Avalon. Kent@psa.org.nz

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RMTU WOMEN

The RMTU fully supports equal opportunities for women and men

Annette Telfer

Onboard service manager, Tranz Scenic, South Island.

What is your role in the RMTU and how long have you been a member of the union?

I am the Canterbury branch chair and the South Island women's rail representative and delegate.

I have been a member of the Union since I started at KiwiRail nearly seven years ago. I have been a delegate for the last three years and been branch chair and women's rep within the last year.

What does your job involve?

My role as an onboard service manager involves managing and maintaining the safety and efficiency of our services and helping the crew exceed the expectations of our customers. Also motivating and encouraging the crew to embrace and act on our zero-harm culture and ensuring our operational compliance whilst onboard and



managing disrupted services and guests.

What do you think about working in a male dominated industry?

Within my role at Tranz Scenic it is quite diverse. I am also involved in different

aspects within KiwiRail and with the Union which are heavily male dominated. In the beginning I did find it intimidating, but I have learnt, and continued to learn, to find my voice where I feel supported and encouraged in doing this. I think it's important being a strong wahine to encourage other women to find their voice and know they are supported. KiwiRail has been supportive by helping me expand my skill set by granting me a scholarship to study a bachelor of business to further my career within KiwiRail.

What would you say to women school leavers who were thinking about a career in rail?

I would say absolutely do it. The opportunities are endless and you can make yourself a life long career in so many different aspects within the organisation. The support to advance and develop is always available and there are opportunities to gain qualifications in areas that you are passionate about within KiwiRail. 🇳🇿

\$1,500 AD&D

All members of the RMTU are now covered by a \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit provided through American Income Life Insurance Company, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children. This is an automatic membership benefit of belonging to the RMTU. **Members have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year.**

Members must return an AIL reply card or reply online at AILNZ.co.nz/Request in order for an AIL representative to deliver your certificate of coverage and explain additional insurance coverage available. If you did not receive a reply card, please call the number listed below. This is very important to you and your family.

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 for \$5.

A.M. Best, one of the oldest and most respected insurance ratings companies, has rated American Income Life as A (Excellent) for overall Financial Strength (as of 7/20).



Mario Soljan
Telephone (09) 973 5254
Mario@AILNZ.co.nz
AILife.com



Promoting public transport

A new ITF campaign focusses on public transport

THE forgotten or ignored heroes of the last year's COVID 19 response were front line transport workers who, daily, put their lives – and the lives of their families – at risk as they took essential workers on their journeys.

Bold investments in public transport could:

- Create 4.6 million new jobs by 2030 across 100 cities,
- Cut emissions from urban transport by more than half by 2030, compared to business as usual,
- Reduce air pollution from transport by as much as 45% in some cities,
- Protect workers in lower income and service sector jobs who rely on public transport for their livelihoods, and
- Connect city residents to work, education, leisure and each other.

Join the movement. Take action together to protect livelihoods, create good jobs, and confront the climate crisis.

thefutureispublictransport.org/

"These elite essential workers, our comrades and fellow unionists, accepted the responsibility and to the best of their abilities, maintained services," said RMTU

general secretary Wayne Butson in support of a new ITF worldwide campaign to affirm the need for public transport. "At first through empty streets with few passengers and, later, with mask-clad patrons grateful to find a way to work."

'The future IS public transport' is the tag line given to the campaign launched last month by the ITF.

It is a no nonsense drive in support of public transport and the workers who keep them operational,

After more than a year under the cudgel of Covid 19 public transport workers feel the time is right for proper recognition in a campaign which does not only acknowledge their jobs as essential workers but also recognises the critical importance of tackling climate change.

The COVID-19 crisis has made it clear we need urgent investments in public transport to deliver safe, reliable and affordable services for the millions of residents living in our cities.

The call is out for workers, mayors, union leaders and residents across the globe to stand together to call on world leaders to make the transformative investments to drive a green and just economic recovery to confront the climate crisis – and concurrently create millions of jobs.

Through decent work conditions, environmentally efficient transport, ticket prices



to suit lower incomes, reliable schedules and assured safety for women and children.

The ITF family launched The Future Is Public Transport, a worker-driven campaign, to secure millions of good union jobs in public transport, in partnership with C40 cities who represent 100 of the world's largest cities.

The ITF is calling for transformational change for working people around the world.

New C40 research shows that through bold investments in public transport, 4.6 million jobs can be created worldwide by 2030.

Butson says the RMTU will "stand strong" with its union sisters, brothers and comrades to make it clear to governments worldwide that there is no excuse for neglecting public transport systems. 🌐

Loyal membership



(l) Richard Rahm 40 years and Graham Ealam.

(above) Keith Turuwhenua 60 years and Wayne Butson.

(r) Duncan Browne 45 years & Will Stringer.



Long distance passenger rail



With the opening of the Hamilton to Auckland link, long distance lines are in for upgrades and discussion. **Michael Nicholson** looks at the state of play in the North Island.

Te Huia - Hamilton to Auckland

Fledgling inter-regional passenger rail between Hamilton and Auckland began on April 6 under the brand Te Huia.

This route has huge potential to succeed. Growing traffic congestion and regional population growth spurred by more affordable housing, an awareness of our carbon footprint, comfort and the ability to use travel time productively has spurred the interest.

Continuous improvement and ongoing investment will be needed to ensure this route becomes an integral part of our transport network. Government has indicated they are supportive with Transport Minister, Michael Wood saying: "There are a range of potential improvements the Government is exploring, including more stops along the way, different timetables, and expansion beyond Papakura into Auckland."

Te Huia is a Waikato Regional Council initiative in conjunction with NZTA. It has been funded for a five-year trial and KiwiRail has been contracted to operate services. Currently two morning trains depart Frankton (0546 and 0628), with two afternoon trains south from Papakura (1642 and 1825). There is also a Saturday service with additional off-peak and weekend trains mooted to be added progressively.

Currently passengers change at Papakura to the Auckland Transport (AT) train services. Total travel time from Frankton to Auckland CBD is about two and half hours.

Start-up investment includes three train sets (12 carriages total) which were refurbished at the Hutt Railway Workshops. The refurbishing included comfortable seats, toilets, cafe and bar, Wi-Fi and bicycle racks. New or upgraded stations have been created at Frankton, Rotokauri and Huntly with possible new stops at Ngaruawahia,

Te Kauwhata, Pokeno and Tuakau to be added in time.

Reopening the central Hamilton underground station or building a new central station close to Seddon Park as well as a new station at Claudelands (east side of river), are being discussed.

Extending trains north to the new Puhinui Interchange is likely to take place sometime in 2021 thus taking trains 12km closer to Auckland CBD, improving overall travel time, giving a direct connection to the Eastern and Southern Lines and doubling available AT trains for transfers.

Possible future options could include running trains in continuous loops out-and-back to Hamilton

Finishing electrification from Pukekohe to Hamilton would seem a logical and urgent development. Electric inter-regional passenger trains could then travel directly from the Auckland Central Rail Link tunnel to Hamilton's CBD and freight and long-distance passenger trains could use clean electric energy between Auckland and Palmerston North.

Capital Connect - Palmerston North to Wellington

This is a well-established inter-regional service which has been operating for around 30 years.

Immediate plans are to replace the current carriages with two refurbished train sets identical to Te Huia. Additional morning and afternoon peak services have been discussed as well as off-peak weekday and weekend services.

The new rolling stock will be used as a shared pool of regional rolling stock operating over both regional Wairarapa and inter-regional Palmerston North routes. There has been talk of some sort of hybrid

railcar technology, consisting of possibly fixed four carriage consists. An order of between 15 and 25 railcars has been discussed and it would seem hopeful, from comments in the media, that an order will be at the upper end for reasons of future proofing and reduction of price per set.

Horizons Regional Council has indicated they would eventually like to incorporate Wanganui, Marton and Feilding to the inter-regional passenger rail system.

Auckland to Wellington

KiwiRail is currently undertaking a feasibility assessment on passenger rail services between Wellington and Auckland.

Regional authorities along the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) have been promoting the introduction of a 'connector' passenger train on this route, which connects four major cities and 42% of New Zealand's population plus numerous smaller centres and a large catchment area not well served by public transport. There are also many attractions in the National Park area, such as skiing, walks, cycling etc, which could be well served by such a service.

The service would have the added convenience of city-centre to city-centre departures, efficient use of time while travelling, ability to connect smaller communities as well as larger ones, act as an economic and tourism enabler, would be a safer travel option than road transport, reduce and avoid road traffic congestion and create significantly less carbon emissions per passenger than other modes.

Sleeper trains

Auckland to Wellington has been identified internationally as an ideal route to operate modern overnight trains. All measures compare favourably on this route, ▶



including: distance, travel time, passenger potential, improved community connectivity, improved travel safety and reduction of carbon emissions in the travel sector.

Modern overnight sleeper travel could serve different needs in the travel market.

Sleepers for longer distance city-to-city connectors would provide comfortable travel at convenient departure and arrival times, between the four major cities along this route. It is the only realistic way to attract people from domestic air travel (which is very polluting), over longer distances.

Seating carriages would cater for shorter trips and also improve travel options and flexibility on the Auckland to Hamilton and Wellington to Palmerston North inter-regional corridors by adding evening departure options. They would connect smaller centres and also provide a convenient option for those people on a limited budget.

Evening departures at around 2030 and arriving after 0830 would avoid commuter peak periods in both Auckland and Wellington. Overnight train travel is not about the speed of a journey but all about convenient departure and arrival times and the comfort of the journey. Twelve hours journey times enable convenient departure and arrival times, make-up time to ensure reliable on-time arrivals, smooth train handling and additional station stops. Modern passenger rolling stock could include innovations such as tight automatic couplers for reduced train slack and for a smoother ride, Wi-Fi and showers.

Day trains

Northern Explorer trains currently operate three times per week focused exclusively on the tourism market. For a daytime connector train to be effective, trains would need to operate daily in each direction. Daytime trains could provide two classes of

travel: Tourism Class and Connector Class.

'Tourism Class' - Could provide more comfort and a high standard of catering to suit higher paying tourist travellers (domestic and international), aimed at longer distance leisure travellers for which time is not an issue while at the same time servicing business travellers over shorter trips.

'Connector Class' - Shorter journeys suited to daylight connector style train travel with six hours seen as the reasonable limit, after which overnight journeys are seen as a more attractive option. This rough guide is promising for this daytime route, given that National Park is centred at the midway point of just over five hours travel time. Daytime connector travel could mainly target National Park attractions, connect towns-to-cities, provide day returns north and south of National Park, and would also complement the Hamilton-to-Auckland and Palmerston North-to-Wellington corridors. Secondly, it could encourage full journey travel to those people on a limited budget.

New, purpose-built rolling stock would seem to make sense: modern self-propelled, fast acceleration, able to build-up and reduce the size of trains as required, fast self-loading with saloon luggage racks (checked luggage only in 'Tourism Class') and large exterior doors for shorter station dwell times. In fact a standard railcar type for New Zealand's daytime long-distance inter-regional and corridor services could simply be fitted out as required.

The current Northern Explorer AK carriages could be sent to the South Island, forming a consistent South Island carriage fleet perhaps facilitating the initiation of a Christchurch to Dunedin service?

Leadership

KiwiRail pretty much scoffs at any suggestion of passenger rail expansion. They seem perfectly content with their little

tourism operation. While this is deeply disappointing to many New Zealanders, especially in light of the many positive developments and massive investment internationally, this position is not entirely KiwiRail's fault given the limitations of being a State Owned Enterprise.

Central Government has declared a climate emergency and made commitments to reduce carbon emissions in New Zealand. The largest contributor of carbon emissions is the transport sector and passenger rail could make a positive and real difference.

Government policy on reducing carbon emissions needs to be followed up with real alternatives to air travel and road transport.

For progress to be made in developing inter-regional and long-distance passenger rail, responsibility needs to be taken away from regional councils. It is unrealistic to expect a national passenger network to fall out of ad-hock developments such as Te Huia and the Capital Connection.

Central Government needs to set-up a passenger rail authority, which would coordinate and oversee strategy and the development of a national passenger rail network. This agency needs:

- expectations and goals,
- to be tasked with the develop of a strategy for network development, including corridor service, connector and tourism development plans,
- to assess station placement and development opportunities in each community, taking into account catchment areas and integration with other modes,
- to aim to provide an easy-to-use, integrated low carbon system,
- develop plans for the purchase of appropriate rolling stock and plan for the introduction of new rail passenger services,
- to set timelines and targets, and
- have realistic funding for development and a mechanism to fund ongoing operations. 

A plan for NZ rail

AT last, a plan for New Zealand rail. May 6 was a momentous day for rail in New Zealand. At 0730hrs in the Wellington container transfer site Ministers Wood and Clark (pictured right) formally launched the new 10 year foundation for the restoration and future growth of the rail industry.

Wayne Butson was an invited guest to the launch, recognition for his and the RMTU's passionate advocacy to have rail restored to its correct position as the key transport infrastructure intrinsic to the future of our nation. A battle he and the RMTU have waged since privatisation.

The Plan for the first time sets out a 10 year funding horizon for the industry and sets out the way the Government will invest in the below rail infrastructure.

The plan sees spending on below rail treated in a similar way to spending on the road network with funding coming through



Min. of Transport Hon Michael Wood and Min. of SOE Hon David Clark.

the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF).

The NLTF is predominately funded by fuel excise duty.

This means at last the industry can recruit staff and take on apprentices knowing there is a 10 year funding pipeline of work in place to keep them gainfully employed.

Rail is a long term infrastructure asset and to have its funding dependent on annual grants through budgets is no way for a grown up country to treat key infrastructure assets. 🌐



Mental health and well-being - a global issue

Youth rep for the ITF Urban Transport Steering Committee Jas Giri, reports

I was given an opportunity to present the importance of mental health support in today's world to the ITF Urban Transport Steering Committee. I was able to give an update on ITF mental health research and how it is a key issue for young – and all – workers.



The committee decided it would conduct research to highlight the importance of a workplace policy on managing mental health and wellbeing.

The ITF young workers department, together with the urban transport team, is initiating this research on mental health and the wellbeing of young workers in public transport. Mental health problems for young people and workers has been building up for a long time.

During the pandemic one in two young people showed signs of depression and anxiety and during a recent ITF global meeting of young railway workers, mental health and wellbeing was their main issue.

At Transdev Auckland, there has been a significantly increasing need for support for mental health issues since 2019 and up to 2020 – from 19% to 75%.

The research will focus on identifying the main mental health issues for formal and informal public transport workers; how employers have responded in the workplace; how trade unions have responded and what informal support mechanisms young workers have organised for themselves.

The research will identify a global strategy and actions unions can take to address mental health and wellbeing issues for young workers in public transport. The findings will be presented at the ITF urban transport conference.

The following are the results of a poll conducted during the committee meeting:

Question: Has your union addressed mental health issues for public transport workers?

Response: Yes 72%; No 6%; Not yet 17%; Don't know 6%.

Question (via the chat function): What has your union done to address mental health issues?

Answers:

- Online seminars (Barbados);
- Mental health is covered under health insurance policy negotiated through collective bargaining (USA);
- Awareness posters, zoom meetings with union delegates and health & safety reps, online training for H&S reps (Australia);
- Workplace safety committee meetings (Thailand);
- Many larger public transport operators in Japan have a department in their company to deal with mental health issues of their employees, based on a government recommendation (Japan);
- Monitoring of stress is happening in workplaces since 2016 and when identified workers are referred to doctors/counsellors (Japan).

NZ leading again

WE may be far away from the world's major centres of news and opinion – but we are definitely noticed. Our actions against COVID 19 and the firm stance against the racial outrage in Christchurch are just two recent actions which have been noted on the world stage. So we're pleased to announce that an article in one of last year's Transport Workers was also noticed.



Last month RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson received a request to comment on the case brought by the Polisario Front to the New Zealand High Court to end investment by the Superannuation Fund in Western Sahara phosphate mining - something the RMTU has long been opposed.

It seems our protests, articles and petitions to government have been noticed.

In the letter the writer asked Butson to comment on the Court's decision (on 15/3/2021) against Polisario and in favour of the Super fund. He is writing about the case for the European Broadcasting Union based in Switzerland.

In his response Butson reinforced the RMTU's position saying:

- The RMTU has actively campaigned against the import of blood phosphate into New Zealand for a number of years, including at major import ports such as Tauranga and Lyttelton.

- Alternatives are available including reserves of rock phosphate within New Zealand's maritime economic zone.

The Polisario Front

The Polisario Front is a rebel national liberation movement of the Sahrawi people (of the Sahara) which aims to take control of the Western Sahara, currently controlled by Spain, Mauritania, and, as of 2021, under the rule of Morocco.

The UN considers the Front to be the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people who have a right to self-determination. The Front is outlawed in the parts of Western Sahara under Moroccan control. It also lays claim to the phosphates being mined there - much of which is exported to New Zealand.

That the RMTU is disappointed the High Court dismissed the application for a judicial review.

"This is not the end of the matter," said Butson. "We were interested to note the Court sent a clear message to government saying blood phosphate imports posed a reputational risk to New Zealand's wider

interests.

"It is the view of our Union that it is inevitable the imports will end as international concern grows about the plight of the Saharawi people."

New Zealand is the only country in the western world still importing phosphate from Western Sahara through fertiliser companies Ballance and Ravensdown.

In 2019 the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU) passed a resolution condemning the imports and calling on government to halt it.

"We are aware many pension and investment funds worldwide have excluded investments in companies involved in the exploration and extraction of resources in Western Sahara," said Butson. "This trend acknowledges reality."

Butson added that in December 2020, New Zealand Minister of Finance Grant Robertson wrote to the Super Fund asking it to adopt ethical investment policies to help "lift New Zealand's reputational standing as a responsible investor in the international community".

"In this context," said Butson, "we believe the Super Fund has been given clear direction and must now act as a responsible investor to protect New Zealand's international reputation.

"The RMTU is committed to continuing the campaign until imports of illegally mined phosphates from Sahara ceases."



RAIL - TAKING STRESS OFF NORTHLAND ROADS

It's time to reconnect Northland's extensive railway network enabling industry to use the safest way to move freight and increase high value rail tourism.

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union Fully Supports re-opening lines to Dargaville and Otiria. Reconnecting rail to Kawakawa - Opuia for rail tourism.



Rail is the Strategic missing link to Northport.

- Logs • Woodchips
- Dairy • Bulkloads • Tourism
- Large Consignment freight



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WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY

TIMARU



Port Napier reflects on the effects in her work experience. She hopes, similarly affected, may see a rough their own travails.

me is Roz and I am a ghost of the person I used to be. Worker's Memorial Day is us to honour our fallen comrades who lives or been injured at work.

Health and worker welfare is still being relevant by many unscrupulous employers. of undue stress at work, followed as and burnout are far too common. is having a heart attack. I let my boss hospital, and why.

se was to ask me if I would be back night shift. It turned out that my heart mptoms were a result of stress.

aches, I had gut problems, and I

ked for brain tumours and stroke be- n was no longer working as it used to. ear later it still isn't.

ng ongoing burnout and anxiety prob- take day-to-day life difficult. Despite me n years of my life to my employer there e of care for me. Only tick box actions.

lk to two professionals but actual genu- om my employer was not forthcoming. choice but to leave my job because I had lth first.

duced and dehumanised by my employer.

simply my problem and that was that.

Health and stress in the workplace needs

eriously. Workers are not just costs on

, or a necessary evil to generate profit.

ed to realise that their workers are peo-

ple. We are people. We are people.



HUTT WORKSHOPS



MECA - tough bargaining ahead

WE believed that the last bargaining round for the renewal of the KiwiRail Multi Employer Collective Agreement (MECA) for the 06-2020 to 07-2021 was tough and complex

– largely due to their decision that there would be no general wages increases.

As a result the Union negotiators were determined our goals would focus on terms and conditions including increases

to superannuation (including KiwiSaver but excluding GSF), sick and bereavement/tangihana leave.

The Union also informed KiwiRail it expected them to honour their market study



Canterbury Rail branch members at remit meeting for next KiwiRail MECA.



Middleton: Operations report back.



Otago Rail branch secretary Dave Kearns – the devil checking the detail.



Westport: Kevin Gubb perplexed by the deal.



Wellington operations and mechanical report back.



Bay of Plenty report back.

◀ commitments from the previous CEA.

Early discussions agreed to increased sick leave and employer superannuation contribution (excluding Government Super which has a contribution setting mechanism separate to collective bargaining). This was a good benefit for members.

When we called for remits for this year's bargaining we were aware member expectations would be high. This has been borne out by the large number of branches endorsing a remit calling for a 30% general

pay rise for all.

As I write this, remits continue to come in.

We did not expect the Government to announce they wanted to focus on the lower paid (those earning under \$60k) in collective bargaining.

This year's bargaining has just become much more challenging for all parties as a result of the Government announcement and this will affect Transdev Auckland bargaining as well.

The important point for us all to remember is that our strength comes from unity of purpose and a clear vision as to what winning will look like.

When your bargaining team meets in late June we will all have to think of the greater good and all pull together. It is important to remember that this Government has put almost \$7.5 billion dollars into rail over the last few political cycles. 🇳🇿

Wayne Butson, general secretary.



(centre) Emma Marsh New Zealand's first female ganger.



Technology assisting Waltham depot report back to the meeting.



New Plymouth: report back.



Palmerston North: Report back.



Whanganui: All still smiling after the report back.

ANZAC Day at Petone

HELEN ROGERS (pictured) the Group GM for Government Policy and Funding, gave the key speech in which she thanked the Petone Community Board for this long-standing invitation to KiwiRail to honour its men and women who fought for New Zealand.

"While Anzac Day is forever associated with the ill-fated landing at Gallipoli, today we remember all New Zealand's servicemen and women," she said.

"KiwiRail and its predecessors have been part of the nation's story for more than 150 years – a story that has too often involved the horrors of war."

She said that whenever there's a call to arms, railway employees have responded positively citing as proof in 1914, the New Zealand Railways employed around 20,000 full-time and casual workers – more than any other New Zealand employer.



By the time the war ended in 1918, more than 7,500 railwaymen had enlisted.

"Almost 5,000 of our 14,000 permanent employees had served overseas," she said adding that at least 450 of them lost their lives.

"No other single employer lost so many."

In the Second World War, 8,200 rail employees served, and 391 of them died.

This year, the RSA focussed on the experiences of women and the military and women who were left behind after the 850 railwaymen died in the two world wars

"They left mothers, sisters, girlfriends, wives and daughters, and when they never returned, the women bore that terrible loss for the rest of their lives."

She also acknowledged the new roll of honour plaque at Wellington Railway Station for those who died in WW2. 🇳🇿

(1) The wreaths laid at the memorial at Petone Railway Station.

My mihi challenge

Learning a language is about starting out small and taking a first step.

This year Te taura whiri i te reo Maori/The Maori Language Commission has a new challenge for New Zealanders: learn how to introduce yourself in te reo Maori by saying your name, where your ancestors came from and where you live.

A mihi (or mihimih) is an introduction which can take place at the beginning of a gathering or meeting. It is used to establish links with other people present and lets them know who you are and where you came from.

With more members taking roles of responsibility, being able to introduce yourself in te reo Maori is a helpful tool we can all use at work or in our everyday lives.

Step 1- Your name

My name is _____

Ko (first or full name) toku ingoa

Step 2- Where your ancestors come from

My ancestors are from _____

No (place name) oku tipuna (or tupuna)

(If you want to say more than one place add 'me' (and)

right before the final place name.)

Step 3- Where you live now

I live in _____

Kei to noho au ki _____

(You may find the Maori place name for where you live in maoridictionary.co.nz)

For more information:

tuku.reomaori.co.nz/learn_your_mihi

Bernie Snook retires

AFTER 43 years at Rail, Bernie Snook has decided to retire and spend more quality time with his partner, Sue. For most of Bernie's career he has been active in the union through representing the RMTU and its members:

- at a local level in the Waikato Branch;
- at a regional level as a LE Industrial Council rep;
- at a national level as a National Management Committee member;
- on the Cab committee's before the Industrial Council were set up; and
- the RMTU internationally.

At Bernie's retirement send off at the TeRapa depot, many amusing stories were told about his career and more stories later on at his 'shout'. We wish Bernie a long, happy and healthy retirement.



Jim Kelly

ON February 26th 2021, RMTU life member and long serving president of CURE and the RMTU, Jim Kelly, became a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the trade union movement.

Jim was presented the MNZM by the Dunedin Mayor, Aaron Hawkins, who was representing the Queen, in the Mayor's Chambers together with family and friends.

Special thanks to Jim's daughter, Lisa and to Claire Curran, for making sure Jim's lifelong commitment to railway workers was recognised.

Jim was tireless in his fight for Hillside and he was very pleased with the Government's announcement of the Hillside development plan in the May Budget.



AROUND THE BRANCHES

AUCKLAND RAIL

Contracting out is the big issue with disputes on the horizon

BUSY times in Auckland. The branch meeting on April 25 had an outstanding turnout of over 50 people. There were a number of issues raised and dealt with by the branch exec. This was followed up with a second meeting to allow KiwiRail members to put forward their remits for the upcoming bargaining.

Contracting out is the big issue in KiwiRail here at the moment and we are deep into a dispute in this area in signals. The nub of the issue is a failure to consult as per clause 29 of the MECA. Those of you paying attention will know we had a big dispute which we believed had been resolved prior to Christmas. Clearly there is room for education because it is still the case that breaches of clause 29 are continu-

ing to happen. Underlying this issue is the systematic underfunding of KiwiRail by successive governments and, as a result of this, a major failure in recruiting and retaining staff numbers at a level that would avoid the need of contractors for core KiwiRail work.

Transdev Auckland is currently going through the pain of the tendering process and we will know who the successful bidder will be by the end of June.

DDO work continues and there is currently work being done around risk assessment on the platforms and ergonomic analysis on the cab layout.

The ROM rewrite continues and RMTU, health and safety organiser Karen Fletcher, provided fatigue management training to the members on this team, along with some

roster delegates.

We have bargaining coming up later in the year and by then the tendering process will have been sorted and we will know who we are dealing with.

The Toll collective has settled but, just as we we did so, we learnt the company had been sold to Australian private equity firm, Allegro Funds, who offer acquisitions, restructurings, turnarounds, management buyouts and buy-ins, along with expansion and replacement capital.

What this means for our members remains to be seen but the collective agreement means it will be taken on by the new company with no loss of terms and conditions or service. 🌐

WAIKATO RAIL

Demand on workers recently merits wage increases

THE 0% wage increase was not received well by union members in network services Waikato. It has strengthened our resolve to be better recognised for our work through the pandemic and massive infrastructure overhauls that have been taking place in the golden triangle through the next round of negotiations. KiwiRail are continually mentioning at road shows how much money KR has, and is going to have in the coming years. With high investment, the demand on the workers has never been higher. This needs to be reflected in our wages for skilled and

experienced staff as well as the living wage employees and we are WILLING TO FIGHT FOR IT.

We are again being asked by KiwiRail to allow contractors to come in and do thermit welding on the tracks as well as other tasks and we say NO to this because KiwiRail management lets it happen on a regular cycle.

Massive train schedules and old track causes the network to become depleted and tired. This work is a core job for KiwiRail staff and should be better planned for rather than relying on contractors at

huge expense.

It has been noticed by members around the upper North Island and Auckland that contracting companies have new plant, new vehicles and updated equipment at the expense of KiwiRail money. That money should be coming to KiwiRail ground staff, for pay rises, extra staff and plant, and to reduce our worked hours. Consultation with the RMTU is a real part of our collective not something to be paid a lip service to. There is much to think about for KiwiRail's senior leadership team heading into wage negotiations. 🇳🇿

KING COUNTRY RAIL

New branch show strength of RMTU

THE members of the King Country branch are proud to announce its reformation with a special meeting held on April 29 in Taumaranui. We would like to extend our thanks to Shane McNae for chairing the meeting and Dasha Van Silfhout for standing in as secretary. As chair I personally thank everyone for their attend-

ance and valuable input. The elected team look strong and diverse. This was confirmed when we held our meeting to discuss remits to be put forward.

Our new team stands as follows:

Chair: CJ McElroy

Vice chair: Vaughan O'Shannessey

Secretary: James Morgan

H&S reps: Vaughan O'Shannessey and Taua Vaka

Delegates: Nate Turner and Taua Vaka (structures); Barry Dodd (signals); Piri Harwood and Willie Wooldridge (traction); and James Morgan (track).

Thanks to all of you for standing up and doing what the team needs. 🇳🇿

BAY OF PLENTY RAIL

First women's network meeting for the region a success

TENA KOUTOU KATOA. BOP delegates have had a busy couple of months supporting members in investigative/fact finding and or disciplinary meetings. This is a reminder to all our members to think before they act and work safely.

Due to a proposed increase in Metro-Port service lift of approximately 75 to 90 trains per week, an LE meeting was held at the Mount depot, to discuss the implications of the changes needed to make these changes on the master roster. The members voted on a counter proposal to the roster changes put forward by KR.

Some of the other issues included: to lobby planning to get some decent couplings; fatigue leave MUST be used when genuinely fatigued; no relentless questions from management; reduce actual time of shift for critical shifts; and organise a monthly meeting so everyone has a chance to catch

up and discuss any issues that might be out there – especially now that negotiations are happening.

The very first womens network meeting for the BOP/Waikato region, providing a connecting base for all women within rail and was held at the Mount depot last month. Great to see so many enthusiastic members in attendance. The next meeting is scheduled for May 13.

The branch meeting held last month (April) was also well attended. Some of the issues discussed were:

- The members asked for clarification regarding the pay increases to the living wage and how the progression will be made moving forward. The short answer was that it will be negotiated as part of the wage round in the next discussions.

- A request to table an on-going issue with being asked by rosters to work into and RDO (rostered day off). Clarification on

the term 'rostered day off' – as per Clause 23/Hours of Work under clause 23.2 Definitions. Agreed definition/variation.

- An RDO is a whole day (00:01-23:59) when a worker is not commencing or ending a shift.

- Rosters remain a big issue brought up at every meeting. Failures to follow the master roster, covering shifts caused by unplanned leave which then highlights there are not enough staff. The issue then gets worse with intending retirements through the branch, and no new staff are hired or trained in time to replace those leaving. It's a never ending story. Members want reassurance their issues about the rosters are being heard and addressed and in a timely matter.

On that note we wish all those who have retired or intending to a well-deserved retirement, and we thank you all for the mahi over the years. Be safe out there guys. 🇳🇿

NAPIER RAIL

Maintenance work keeping the Bay teams busy

It is with sad regret that we say goodbye to Neil Titter after 49 years service to Railways, to Paul Cavanagh with 48 years in the bridge/structures gang and to Jason Harmer.

A bit of an update of what else is happening in Hawke's Bay region.

The Provincial Growth Fund support of Capital Projects Assets Development and New Futures for Trainees are all busy in the culvert, drainage, structures and track teams and it's good to see network services staffing numbers bolstered to building capacity. Lately many received permanent positions.

Track teams have been busy doing maintenance work in Wellington over the Easter period and all the teams have been alternating going up to Auckland working on the rail replacement project and other blocks of lines.

And all between running the heats with the warmer weather!

Now the weather is changing with autumn and winter on the way!



The old Pandora rail yard now a storage area for logs.

The signals team has been knuckling down supporting safer roads throughout the country with projects in the Waikato and larger projects in Wellington.

A large dust extraction unit is also underway by a local engineering team for our historical adzing plant which machines all our hardwood beams.

The culvert and drainage teams have been doing culvert replacements and drainage work north and south of Napier with assistance from Abernethy Projects.

It's pleasing to see the log trains are running on the Napier to Wairoa line. Saturday and Sunday at this stage but looking

at increased frequency in the near future. Our old railway yard at Pandora is now a log yard (see photo) and has been leased to ISO group associated with Port of Napier.

The structures team have been replacing piles on the Wairoa line and south of Napier with the support of the Palmerston North structures team.

A lot of refresher courses and training have taken place over last few months for existing and new staff.

With remit claims ensure you have your say and put them forward at your branch meetings.

As always, be safe. 🇳🇿

NAPIER PORT

Port suffering from massive dumping of empty containers

WELL, I guess as far as ports go throughout Aotearoa, we have all had a bit of a hiding to date, putting it mildly. In 2021, we are dealing with the aftermath of Covid, which has created a dilemma in terms of container positioning globally. More so with empty boxes in our part of the world. Crazy shipping schedules and massive dumping of empty containers is common place: feast then famine. Ultimately this is causing congestion at several New Zealand ports.

Infrastructure and resources are being tested around the clock.

Interestingly, some technology to assist in the refrigerated aspects of the business has been purchased by Napier Port. It's a slightly bigger than hand-size remote magnetic device which goes on the end of full reefer containers stacked at the 3rd and 4th height. There are not enough reefer towers to cope with the full reefer container volume. These gadgets provide information to the provider of the device

to ensure the container is working as it should. In essence, the ability to go higher without towers provides for many more reefer spaces.

With the new six berth development in progress we are working under a smaller footprint overall. The area once used for full dry container stacking, is now unusable. The work is expected to take another year or two to complete. Consequently, full container handling within the port has increased causing frustrations for logistics staff and heavy plant operators.

We trust this huge effort is recognised by the board and senior management in terms of our negotiations this year when the general collective and mobile harbour crane agreements are up for renewal. Recognition toward payment of the incentive scheme this time round will also come under the microscope. Last year it was removed to placate the shareholders, the board and the CEO even though profits were up. It must be honoured this year. It did not sit

well with our members that it was removed when most targets were met. Ironically there is/was an H&S component to the scheme, though in this scribe's view, money should never be put against H&S, it drives H&S underground and ultimately creates a falsification when forming or gathering true data and statistics around incidents.

Sadly, in some instances, people have indicated the injury happened off site, doing this in order not to affect the company incentive payout and potentially succumb to the scrutiny of their colleagues. This is so wrong. However, it is a consequence of money getting in the way of the right reasons.

True reporting is essential, irrespective of the company's incentive balance sheet.

As we head into Port's Forum next month (June 22) I look forward to catching up with port representatives and comrades and combining our efforts for a secure, safe, future for all our RMTU port members.

I kotahitanga. 🇳🇿

HUTT WORKSHOPS

Looking forward to gaining lost ground at next MECA ratifications

THIS period's branch notes comes hot on the heels of our remit meeting where we approved most of the submitted remits for the next MECA's negotiating team to mull over. The MECA ratification result back in early April was most pleasing and now the next fight begins with the build-up to MECA 2021+. The general secretary threw down the gauntlet on behalf of us all in initiating bargaining back in early May, and we look forward to re-gaining the ground – not lost, but put into a form of abeyance, last time with no general wage increases across the board. With the commitments made in the last MECA negotiations, we will be absolutely focused on getting the wage increases we desperately deserve.

Vacant positions referred to in the last branch minutes including team leaders, have been filled so now we must push

on with embedding the desired changes discussed in the 2020 decision document. It is fair to say this has not been without problems as newcomers have hit a steep uphill gradient producing considerable stress and upset within the context of a dynamic environment that is trying to be all things to all people when the wheels are threatening to fall off.

In recent times the turnover of staff has become a significant issue with departees (verbally) citing poor career outlook, sub-par wages and poor leadership as their reasons for leaving for pastures new.

Sadly, few have stated this in their letters of resignation and they have not participated in the exit interview process to ensure management hear this directly. Perhaps the union may have to offer to sit in on the interview to will encourage participation. It has been somewhat difficult to influence these

people to hang on given that a number of pay scale parity reviews are in the pipeline with some already started and others getting into the starting blocks. Observers have noticed the difficulty the Administration Industrial Council has had in addressing the members of pay scale 1 who have been screwed over by non-adherence to their pay & progression criteria as well as other matters under the AIC's umbrella. Additionally the Mechanical Industrial Council has been working on many staff issues however they are big projects in themselves which do take some time.

General production at the workshops has been good with the Hamilton to Auckland (H2A) [aka Te Huia] project being prominent in the news. We continue to be at the mercy of our internal customers where despite much effort being expended on scheduling, the interrupted supply of

Sickness, accident and 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.

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

◀ locomotives for overhaul is impacting our targets. That said, we are still providing on-site support to our depot cousins whenever they put out the call. At the time of writing we were sending staff to Auckland and Wellington. Another positive change being implemented, but at great risk, is the desire to not commence a major project until the scope, plans etc, have been finalised or formally approved in principle such that we can commence the project work without having it knee-capped in some manner down the track thus blowing our budgets and timeframes.

Back in March, one of our contractor partners fell through the very high roof of one of our buildings and suffered very significant injuries. Whilst we have not been privy to the exact details of how this tragedy occurred and why, it goes without saying that a normal day can rapidly go belly-up when a group of negative elements line up and allow a failure of some sort to occur resulting in an incident. The sterling first aid efforts of our people, who were in close proximity at the time, avoided a fatality with

the casualty now recuperating at a rate far exceeding expectations.

Diversity and inclusion training is proving a challenge with many participants coming away from the three-part sessions with more questions than answers! It seems the discussions are not relatable to the real world so either the facilitator will have to change the approach or abandon this altogether. It is rumoured a separate survey will be conducted to evaluate the value of this initiative. Another training initiative has been a review of how and where we train apprentices. HPHE facilitator Mat Cordell-Bain and (union) apprentice liaison Isimeli Volavola have done a lot of work in this area to tidy-up and standardise the training.

We finally got around to fulfilling the requirements of Rule 38 (casual vacancies) where the membership confirmed the appointment of Slade Pilcher into the role of acting vice-chairman until the branch elections at this year's AGM. Slade has provided sterling support to the branch executive and committee and has been actively involved with getting some more consistency into the

rehabilitation plan processes (that is to say getting people to obey the HWIMP) and addressing gnarly little staff issues which have been festering away for a disproportionate amount of time and undermining morale.

Consistent with the above, HPHE facilitator Adele Liliva has apparently rounded off her follow-up communications (and other aspects) project that was driven by last year's staff survey results, noting that a common theme (complaint) appears to be 'too many meetings' but 'not enough communication!' We eagerly await her final report and recommendations.

Another output from the survey was upskilling, so just to keep everyone busy, around 12 of our team leaders and senior staff have been belatedly put onto a year-long front line management (Level 4) course. It is important we keep preparing our people for the future and supporting their personal and professional growth. Richard Branson once said "Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to".

Until next time – stay safe out there. 🌍

WELLINGTON RAIL

Wellington news returns

AFTER an absence from these pages for far too long, we are back in business – at least the Transdev, Wellington part of the Wellington branch is. This humble scribe is hopeful it will inspire our brothers and sisters who make up the second largest branch of the RMTU to put pen to paper too.

Firstly, and most important, the branch is alive and well. A number of delegates have been busy doing what is needed to keep things fair and just and keeping the proverbial playing field even. Our colleagues at Hyundai-Rotem have been great supporters of the branch all the way through.

The transition from KiwiRail to Transdev Wellington (TDW) was a bumpy ride. It seemed the initial new managers thought they were going to roll the RMTU. That spectacularly didn't work. A strike was followed by a change in management. It appears the Greater Wellington Regional Council pulls the strings and Transdev and Hyundai-Rotem jump. The meat in that sandwich are the staff. There is a constant jostling between

cost cutting and battling to maintain what is needed and staff entitlements.

The long-term effects of PTOM have affected the bus industry severely and would have rail had it not been for the determination of members to keep and improve conditions and the advocacy of our leadership. Why large corporates and foreign companies have become able to hoover profit and returns on publicly funded assets is something historians are likely to wonder at.

The branch has had some good wins. A three year MECA for TDW/Hyundai-Rotem which included pay increases of 3% per year, faster pay progression for LEs, a new RoM for LEs, one ready for on-board staff ratification, and one for support staff actively being worked on.

These are major improvements to working conditions and have been achieved by hard work from delegates working with management.

Privilege travel entitlements have been a long-standing rub with our new owners.

Due to diligent work by our reps, we have finally got an agreed package and process in place. Uniforms have been a concern since TDW took over. They were introduced without consultation under the guise of GWRC contractual requirements. There are several items staff considered unfit for purpose. There has been a long and winding road in attempting to remedy this unsatisfactory situation. Passive resistance has been management response to date - It's all about the money!

During the past five years there has been a great churn of people. Many old hands have retired, others, particularly LEs have moved over to KiwiRail or Australia. One or two have come back from both. The same can be said of train mangers and passenger operators, who now are part-time causing, as predicted, a shortage of TMs. Other areas of the business – TXOs, RCOs, supervisors, sales and comms staff – all have seen new faces.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the current operating model is that major ▶

◀ changes to our jobs are notified through the media.

Recent news items have told us that electronic ticketing is to be trialled on the Johnsonville line, another saying cash fares are to be done away with.

Both of those have potential major impact on the future of on-board and sales

staff – about 300 people in total. Despite direct representation to our employer and to GWRC, we have been kept in the dark. We can only guess that is how transport planning operates.

We warmly welcome the new members who bring a rich diversity of backgrounds and experience to the work place.

Shortly we will have our branch AGM. It would be good to see representation from all of the branch sectors this year.

We need active delegates who are prepared to help our fellow members and to help build on our past gains.

Onward and upwards in unity! 🌐

WELLINGTON PORT

Still rebuilding infrastructure damaged in the last major earthquake



The combined unions, ETU, MUNZ and RTMU members, at CentrePort celebrating a win following the CA report back and ratification meeting in April – Stronger Together!

OUR collective employment agreement was settled by a combined union membership vote on 22 April. The union negotiation process had ETU, MUNZ and RTMU presenting common claims plus specific sectional claims. We started negotiations in October but progress slowed after the combined union membership voted to hold a secret ballot to endorse strike action if necessary.

In addition to wage movements our receiving and delivery controllers were included in the CA and the income gap has been reduced for the empty depot being those workers moving, storing, cleaning and repairing empty containers.

CentrePort continues to rebuild after

the devastation of the earthquake. Remedial works and replacement infrastructure is returning our workplace to the way we like it. Our rail connection into the container terminal has been repaired which brings to an end the need for using trucks to bridge the gap. The extension development to the container berth continues and should be completed by the end of the year. All good for servicing shipping.

As a result of the earthquake damage to the ground the port was unable to use the straddle container movers. This required the use of reach stackers to move containers and now, with financial support from the Government, CentrePort has purchased seven APM 75T HE electric port tractors

to replace combustion engine trucks. This move will help decarbonise the horizontal transport of containers in the port. These machines are designed to reduce maintenance costs, reduce energy use, help the port to address zero emissions and noise pollution goals, while increasing productivity, driving comfort and safety.

Covid-19 has its challenges. Cargo handlers and security staff have a two-weekly testing regime, PPE gear is available and distancing regimes are enforced. However, those not wanting 'the jab' have been transferred to alternate work and mingling in transport by different gangs has raised questions of a broader vaccination regime.



NELSON PORT

Feeling the pressure with erratic supply issues and bouyant forestry

AFTER a rather tumultuous year the Nelson branch sees itself involved in two negotiations to renew CEAs between Port Nelson and C3 which will make the next couple of months

rather busy.

We are seeing different approaches from the employers as our industry sector faces pressure like we have never seen before.

The forestry sector seems to be buoy-

ant post Covid whilst containers have been erratic with supply issues dogging the industry. It would seem that PNL is no longer competitive in the stevedoring market losing a number of log contracts over ▶

◀ the last year, going from the only provider of stevedoring services in Picton a year ago to losing over half of the volume from that port and only having one contract in Nelson. PNL stevedoring has become something of a labour hire business for C3 in Nelson, supplying stevedores on their vessels. C3 has been struggling to hold staff due to poor conditions and pay. Given that those people who are likely to work for lower pay can earn \$20 per hour in a supermarket they are unlikely to go for \$21 per hour doing log scaling and wharf work.

With C3 willing to pay more there is a likelihood they will be able attract stevedores away from PNL making it increasingly difficult for PNL to retain staff. Along with ISO trying to get a foothold in the region also offering good wages the pressure is mounting for PNL. PNL's members have seen the benefits over the years of continuous union representation but the options are starting to open up for our members.

In the meantime, some members, especially in Picton, have seen a stark drop in income due to less work being available. The fear is these workers will drift away to other employment through necessity further eroding PNL's ability to provide a stevedoring service in Picton. The overall fear is soon stevedoring will become non-viable for PNL and workers will feel the brunt rather than the managers who are responsible for getting work for us.

Container volume has a number of challenges too. A major hailstorm on boxing day wiped out about 60% of the apple harvest which is a huge part of our business for the first half of the year. A shortage of empty containers has created problems for our exporters getting their product packed and to

market. Container vessel visits have become sporadic creating uncertainty around when work will happen, often seeing no vessels for extended periods and then having them all come at once. Vessels often omitting Nelson in order to maintain their schedules create problems leaving cargo in front of the cargo we need to load for the next vessel. When ships do come we have taken to stacking empty discharge containers in road ways impacting the flow of traffic around the port.

On top of this McConnell Dowell is still working to complete our new main wharf upgrade which was going to be finished last Christmas but it appears it will be done by July as they work all hours to try and fill in the last 20 metres of wharf. This creates all sorts of problems by taking up valuable space and creating extra traffic and difficulties tying up vessels through a work site culminating, recently, in our workers having to access the vessel through the work site whilst traversing two snap back zones. We are all on a short tether.

It is worth noting that freight charges for containers are at a high. The more cynical among us might look at the fact that pre-Covid many shipping companies were struggling but are now reaping the reward of high demand and low capacity forcing prices up. Even though in a lot of ways the service has become less reliable. Draw your own conclusions.

The big success story for us has been continuing strong wine volumes with QuayPack processing empty bottles, flexi tanks and packing containers with boxed wine. Worldwide lock downs do seem to have increased the demand for our wine and we put thousands of tons of wine on to container vessels every week. The lining

of Flexi Tanks and hand stacking cases of wine into containers is literally back breaking work and we continue to see a lot of injuries to workers.

An issue resonating throughout the country is Covid testing fatigue. Our members as well as many border workers, are really sick of the continued invasive testing regime. While most are happy to do their bit to see the country safe it can't end too soon. On top of this we have had a lot of friction with some customs officers in our port. They have often been overly pedantic and officious resisting attempts to befriend them and make them part of our team. They have little understanding of what we do and the challenges we face, often holding us accountable for what crew do. The sooner we see the back of this type of behaviour the better we will all be.

Those of our work force who wish to be vaccinated have been reporting a number of minor side effects but largely with out incident. A few have declined the vaccine as is their right to do so. The branch has been busy supporting those who want to get the vaccine to do so and those who don't not to get it.

The issue has been largely sensationalised by the media certainly surrounding those not getting vaccinated, especially not making the distinction between those working in MIQ who are around Covid cases all the time as opposed to those who probably are not.

We are looking forward to life getting back to as close as normal in the near future and to getting a great deal for our members this year.

Kia kaha to all branches around the country. 🇳🇿

MARLBOROUGH PORT



With the last short term CA about to expire in June, our Port Marlborough RMTU members held a claims meeting late April. We look forward to productive negotiations which kick off early June.

CANTERBURY RAIL

Members unified behind call for substantial wage increase

As *The Transport Worker* went to press this branch started organising around the forthcoming KiwiRail wage round. A very well attended remit meeting of the branch on April 23 saw the words of national office well heeded with the adoption of a single remit unifying our members behind a call for a substantial wage increase. The attendees duly went forth and multiplied the signatures on the remit. We look forward to the wage talks taking on a different complexion to the 2020 wage round, which of course was conducted in highly unusual circumstances given the impact of COVID19.

Our members in Scenic Journeys are relieved that KiwiRail appears committed to the continuation of the TranzAlpine and Coastal Pacific services. Post COVID19 and the effect this had on throttling overseas tourist visits, we were very concerned that KiwiRail would go down the same path as Dunedin Railways and cease operations of these iconic services. While there is debate over the value of the so-called 'Miller class' or 'Premium Plus' initiative it is clear that there is a place for world class train journeys in the future New Zealand tourist industry. There have been a couple of significant hic-

cups however, and the RMTU is advocating strongly on behalf of staff who have raised health and safety concerns around alleged management behaviour and potential exposure to carbon monoxide. Further evidence, if any were needed, that it's vital to have your union behind you.

Speaking of long distance passenger travel, our stalwart veteran delegate Duncan Browne is finally ending his career in rail after too many years to count. Duncan finished on a high note by being part of the team seconded to the commissioning of the Te Huia service between Hamilton and Auckland, although he remained on the books at Christchurch station. A thoroughly decent bloke and one who was never afraid to stand up for his workmates. You will be missed comrade, we wish you a long, healthy and happy retirement.

On the subject of veterans one of our former apprentices from Addington Workshops completed 40 years in rail in March: step up Richard Rahm. It was great to see Richard at the event to mark the occasion and to hear him speak with his customary dry sense of humour. Here's to the next 40 years, whatever they bring.

Good to hear that the RMTU-Toll

bargaining was finally settled in March. Our outstanding delegate at the Toll shed, Malcolm Ross, was on the bargaining team, in very challenging circumstances, as Toll were not in good shape before the onset of COVID19 and as your scribe writes this, are going through a sale process as Japan Post finally lost patience with the losses they were having to bear. The ratification ballot is underway as we write.

The branch had a good turnout on Workers' Memorial Day at our now traditional joint meeting with the Lyttelton Port branch at the Memorial Gardens on the site of the former Christchurch railway station. It was good to see former NZNO organiser Tracey McLellan, now Labour MP for Banks Peninsula, at the occasion, and to hear from former Canterbury Rail branch secretary and chair Buzz Terry, who spoke of three life changing incidents he'd been involved in that featured the loss of workers' lives. A very sobering but fitting message for those of us charged with fighting for the living while not forgetting to mourn the dead.

As we go into winter, remember to keep warm and stay safe. 🌍

LYTTELTON PORT

Continued cooperation augers well for better more trusting relationship

MANAGEMENT continues to forge ahead with their expressed desire for change at Lyttelton and we are engaging with them in multiple working groups using an interest-based approach. This is a very different way of doing business than under the old regime and requires a degree of trust between the parties. The relationship between the RMTU and LPC management has markedly improved over the past year or so and we are working at this new way of dealing with one another.

All four unions active at LPC were invited to meet the board recently. This was illuminating for all concerned. Readers will remember during the 2018 industrial dispute we made headlines by leafletting

the neighbourhoods of board members, partly out of frustration at the lack of dialogue between us. Since then a largely new board has been appointed and it was good to be able to discuss our respective priorities. The fact we agreed on almost everything (eg: the need for a safe workplace, sustainability, and a diverse workforce) was encouraging. Of course there will always be points of difference. It's how we manage these that matters.

Another event on our calendar was Workers' Memorial Day on 28 April which we once again organised with our comrades in the RMTU Canterbury Rail branch and Unions Canterbury. Our branch secretary was master of ceremonies and did a sterling

job which received many positive comments. There is talk of looking at a ceremony at Lyttelton next year, and working with the other unions and management on this.

With the increased volume of containers moving through Lyttelton since the introduction of the new Maersk service, Sirrius Star, we can only expect the impetus for ongoing change to continue as our port rapidly heads towards 500,000 TEU per annum. This poses very real challenges for us all and may involve us changing the way we do things, and, let's be honest, no one really likes change, especially when it is driven from above and imposed on us. That is why it is really important our members are part of the conversation and

◀ that we actively engage with management in the various working groups currently underway. These include:

■ **High Performance High Engagement (HPHE):** this has reached the point of getting all the unions and management in a room and is working at developing an agreed charter between us. The RMTU has extensive experience of HPHE, which is a form of limited industrial democracy, with KiwiRail and Transdev Auckland. Apparently we have experienced mixed results. From our perspective the key point is that there has to be something in it for our members. Settled industrial relations and increased productivity is all well and good, but if members can't see tangible gains for them we will lose support.

■ **Fatigue Management:** this is moving along at an incremental pace but once again we have been successful in getting all the key players in one room. This is no mean feat at LPC when we are dealing with

three other unions across three sites as well as management. Progress thus far is that company-wide guidelines on fatigue management are almost completed. Working groups in each work area (the container terminal, marine, plant maintenance) will soon be formed to implement the guidelines and work specific fatigue-related issues.

■ **Maintenance Engineering:** This is primarily focussed on the relocation of the maintenance workshop and the fit out of the new one. One challenge in this area is communications between the parties. To be blunt, it sometimes feels like we are speaking different languages. Corporate jargon can get in the way of achieving meaningful dialogue on occasions. Our members are generally plain speaking, and bosses would do well to heed this fact.

■ **PPE Review:** This is an engagement initiated by the new head of procurement with the stated purpose of identifying the

most suitable PPE in each work area. Given PPE is something we quite literally wear on our backs (as well as elsewhere) it is a topic that generates a great deal of interest. The fact that the buyer is talking to the users is a good thing.

Finally LPC have appointed a head of culture and transformation.

It appears this person will be charged with implementing the recommendations of the Maria Dew Report on the 'culture' at LPC. It's difficult to take issue with this, given it promotes diversity, respect, challenging bullying and harassment and so forth.

Where such initiatives hit the buffers however is when it comes to the issue of democratisation of the workplace.

Power and 'culture' are inextricably linked and a real cultural shift in any workplace will only come with true democratisation which we don't see coming anytime soon. 🌐

WEST COAST RAIL

Great turnout to unveiling of new memorial.

THE big event in our branch in the last few weeks was the unveiling of our new Workers' Memorial located at the Greymouth depot on Workers' Memorial Day, 28 April. (see photo front cover) This marked the culmination of a lot of work by the branch and local management which was a model of cooperation. Readers may recall we had aimed to have this new memorial in place in 2020 but the onset of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown resulted in it being delayed for 12 months.

On the day we had a great turnout. A big thanks to Joe Mason for the blessing and karakia and to the men and women from Te Ara Tiara Otepoti who performed a spine-tingling haka that set a very appropriate tone for what followed. General secretary Wayne Butson, gave a very moving speech which pulled no punches in reflecting on past tragedies and the reasons why health and safety should be paramount in every workplace.

We also received some very positive media coverage from the local press and can be justly proud of the work we have done.

Of course, the challenge now is to

remain vigilant and remind ourselves, every time we pass the memorial on our way in and out of the depot, to fight for the living while we mourn the dead.

The bad news is our network services teams have been decimated by staff away on ACC leave, doing light duties and/or unwell. Over the last three months there has been a real problem with absences and with a couple of our gangers and a senior member being on the injured list.

It shows the lack of depth and experience we have on the Coast and has contributed to track faults being at an all-time high. The answer is obvious, from our perspective: we need more staff with better training or we will pay the price with forced line closures.

It's that simple.

Good to hear from RMTU national office that our industrial council is working with KiwiRail on a long overdue workforce planning initiative which should assist in building our capacity – that's boots on the ground to you and me.

One bright note is that four of our structures workers who were employed on fixed term agreements have all been given

permanent positions. Great to have you in the family and part of our Union.

After our memorial unveiling we had a well-attended Union meeting to discuss remits for the forthcoming wage round. It was unanimously agreed to back the Canterbury branch calling for a single remit focussing on a substantial general pay rise rather than having a large number of sector based remits.

There was also a call, supported by the branch, to look at the way in which the Otira isolation allowance is paid. This is something unique to the Coast and we trust the RMTU negotiation team will consider it favourably when it sits down to finalise our log of claims.

Our LE delegate Don Hibbs and our RMTU South Island organiser John Kerr attended a meeting on May Day in Blackball that had been convened by Unions West Coast and the Council of Trade Unions. The topic was to discuss a Just Transition for working people and our community as New Zealand moves towards decarbonising our economy.

Readers will remember our branch called on the RMTU to develop a policy ▶

around a Just Transition as well as advocating for the retention of jobs in extractive industries like coal until (and if) a substitute is found.

The failure of our local MP, Damien O'Connor, to attend was very disappointing although Labour did send Angela Roberts, the list MP based in Taranaki, an area which

recently had to face up to the decision to end offshore oil and gas exploitation. Suffice to say the issue in question is very controversial here on the Coast and there are really no easy answers.

Don's words are perhaps the ones to keep in mind as we navigate through this: "We can't just cross our fingers and hope."

There will be debate and disagreement over our future but if we remain united we stand more chance of coming out of what is happening with a prosperous and secure future than if we don't.

With winter setting in let's all be safe out there and if it isn't safe say NO. 🌐

TIMARU PORT

Contemplating a multi-employer collective agreement

OUR members at Timaru Port are keeping busy as we go into winter. It was good to get together with our comrades from the local RMTU rail branch on Workers' Memorial Day at the newly established memorial stone across the road from the port offices. Bert Cole, one of our members employed by QM, was very enthusiastic about observing the day and provided the inspiration and motivation for us to get organised. Thanks to the branch officials for their speeches and to management of Prime Port, QM and KiwiRail for supporting what is the most important day in our union's calendar.

The COVID19 vaccine rollout has not been without some hiccups, and management and the RMTU have been working together to get clarity from the various responsible agencies on just who is eligible and when.

We suppose these issues are to be expected when we are attempting the biggest

vaccination programme in our country's history and what has been good has been the dialogue between local RMTU reps, our National Office staff and Prime Port and QM management.

On the subject of QM management we experienced the sudden and unexpected resignation of our new manager who, after not even being two months into the job, resigned effective immediately. There's always a story behind events like this and we're sure our readers will draw their own conclusions.

Our branch members will be renegotiating collective agreements with Prime Port and QM this year and, at the time of writing, we are weighing up whether or not to initiate bargaining for a multi-employer collective agreement. The fortunes of both these employers are tied together and Port of Tauranga has full ownership of one and part ownership of the other so it makes sense to consider this approach. By

the time you are reading this the members will have considered the matter and voted accordingly.

We read of the government's announced pay freeze for public sector workers with dismay. What a way to say thank you to many of the essential workers who got us through the pandemic thus far. The likelihood of a rising tide of militancy amongst essential workers is only increased by moves like this. The subsequent announcement that Fair Pay Agreement legislation will be passed in 2022 looked like a reaction to the backlash the government received in the media.

We were saddened to hear of the sudden and unexpected death of local Etu organiser John Gardener who has been a stalwart of the union movement in Timaru for decades. A real loss for working people in our town.

Until the spring, stay warm and stay safe. 🌐

OTAGO RAIL

Positive reception for Government's plan for rail

OUR branch is very happy to see the government's announcement under the 10 year plan that Rail infrastructure will now be funded from the NZ Land Transport Fund. The RMTU has been calling for this for many years and it will go some way to addressing the imbalance in funding between the road and rail transport modes. Predictably the opposition transport spokesperson and the head of the road transport forum have started squealing already, horrified that rail should be seen as a legitimate part of NZ's transport infrastructure. They will ignore the fact that the trucking industry has paid only a tiny proportion of damage done

to our roading system through road user charges, as we know the damage goes up exponentially as truck axle weight increases. If there is any backlash it will surely hit the drivers hardest. Our advice to them: JOIN YOUR UNION!

There has been more anti-coal protest action recently directed at KiwiRail, and now the police are moving in to deal with it by attending and trespassing the protestors. This should give our members some peace of mind especially when the departing train is approaching the protestors' favoured site in darkness.

Members at freight ops are unhappy at being hounded to fill in new daily chock/

handbrake audit sheets which is just a double up as the requirements already exist in the rules. Frustrating to see another knee jerk reaction instead of addressing the issue of local conditions which has been requested for some time.

We noted the recent updates from the Networks Industrial Council (KNIC) on workforce planning with interest. There have been a few new additions to the networks team in the form of structure workers who have joined our bridge gang which is a real positive. Also while some of our track gangs are still understaffed there is talk of increasing their numbers to fully man the gangs up to their establishment again. That

◀ KiwiRail seem to not know what the establishment strength is is perplexing – to be fair the ambiguity seems to exist outside of our region as the South Island management are doing a pretty good job advocating for more boots on the ground and seem to have got their information sorted out to back their arguments. For example signals numbers are also being increased to allow for succession planning. The ageing work force in signals is not a new problem but it is good to see local and regional managers are being allowed to employ more staff to try and help solve this.

KiwiRail upper management have been aware of this problem for a number of years and are only now scrambling to find a solution. We get it that the funding model kept rail on an annual drip feed which didn't

help, but the reality is people do get older and do eventually retire. Now our funding is on a more secure basis hopefully we will see this addressed.

On another front the move to a brand new building at Hillside by networks is creating quite a bit of interest amongst the networks staff. While most do not oppose a shift, all are keen to get it right the first time as once they are in there it will be hard to change any problems with the facilities after the fact. As our work force is growing there needs to be a certain amount of future proofing done. The building also needs to be fit for purpose. There is some hard work going on to try and get this right. We've had to make a bit of noise on occasion to ensure we are listened to but things appear to be improving on this front.

Whilst some of the above issues can be seen as problematic, we should bear in mind that the problems of growth and expansion are far preferable to those of contraction and shrinkage. We all remember the dark days of the so called 'cost reduction' programme when skilled and experienced people were lost to railway, not to mention the debacle of the threatened closure of Hillside.

The Hillside project seems to be ticking along with the project team engaging well with the members. We hear that the increased funding for rail in years to come will result in yet more jobs at Hillside and those of us who were veterans of the battle to keep the place open under the National led governments of Key and English are doubtless very gratified. 🌍

SOUTHLAND RAIL

Poetic prose from the deep south

HERE in the peaceful deep south while slowly heading off for hibernation with the pleasures of summer having slowly drained away, darker shorter still yet to be decided winter days are fast approaching. The yellow round thing in the blue sky did make many fine appearances. Quite the opposite this time around compared to last year's January pre Covid which is now long drowned out when the bottom half of our fine country endured the Tasman Sea dropped back upon the great south with a vast amount of our prime lower landscape at the time under a new temporary ocean.

This event saw our MSL drowned and in places the rocks and rails off for a swim. Luckily, our finest horses and carts braved the conditions and stayed put until they drained the pool and got them back to what they were best at doing – work trains at that stage if recalled correctly.

Our esteemed colleagues who keep the gear on the ground going, swung into action and the route was back up and running in no time considering the damage thrown our way.

Not too many months after this, and during the extreme of the pandemic, our fine networks teams of Otago and Southland also eliminated all the TSRs south of Balclutha.

There was still the odd bang here and there making quite a ride for those while mounted upon their horses. But thanks to the other fine team on the operational side persistently reporting back to the outperforming networks team - rumour does not just have it - but the experiences do vouch for it, the track on the MSL is now in great condition.

There is a hive of activity on the branch line up to Wairio. The bosses took a step in a positive direction and hired the souls required to keep it going and fit for purpose for another five years under the watchful eyes of the gangers, like the experienced Emma.

The water is starting to drain better under the roadbed, and the splinters are being replaced with sleepers which will help ensure the gear has a better chance of staying on the rails.

The nuts and bolts that hold us together are being brought up to scratch.

The season must be starting to wind down now as the frequency of coal trains is reducing. It has been a busy season for Bathurst's Ohai coal, with very few days when a scheduled service did not run. Those hugging the rails further up the line in repetitive attempts to stop the coal may possibly be able to take a break. It is an activity we would not promote down here

and reading about incidents while taking an outside view leaves us shocked that neither the authorities nor the company have taken any action. Let us hope this does not end in tears and unnecessary pain and grief.

We held a remit meeting. It was mentioned this was likely the first time for our grand Southland branch. We had an excellent turn out. Mark tabled some important documents to consider. We all agreed with him. It is a safety critical role looking after LXs, signals, and interlocking equipment. Anyone working on the tracks is working a safety critical role in our minds, and we all back our boys and girls at KiwiRail networks down here.

Bring on the OJT allowance for the supervision of trainees.

While on the topic bring on the "call out" allowance for those at home all weekend waiting for a phone call to go out and put it all back together. Recognition needs to be acknowledged in this department. One's freedoms being shelved for the weekend to be at the beck and call of the employer. I am sure they would agree, fair's fair, and they like to do as they please in their own spare time as well. We felt the push for a substantial increase in wages, but agreed to a more realistic and responsible proposal. 🌍

WOMEN



Dave Kearns.



Jeanette Aspin and Ann Wells, Port Nelson.

Learning to challenge

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY (IWD) (March 8, 2021) came with some ups and downs due to COVID levels, lockdowns, cancelled trains, postponed events or put on a webinar.

This year's global theme was 'Choose to challenge'. In a world of uncertainty and unknowns, challenging each other in a civil and diplomatic way can be quite useful and a great way to learn. Understanding and communicating with people, workmates, your community or having a more common ground around what's going on in the world today can give us all a bit of ease – and the self assurance that everything is OK. By working with each other we can all get through this thing called life together.

Thanks to you all who took the time and effort to celebrate this great occasion. 🌐

Rebecca Hauck

NMC RMTU women's rep.



Rebecca Hauck and Doug Tamatea.



Michael Beaufort, Rebecca, Brooke Loper, Gary Dalzell – Hillside past and present.



(l) Toni Blair, Port Taranaki and

(below) Brian McKay, Dunedin.



Tranz Scenic members.