

THE *TRANSPORT WORKER*

DEC 2020

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



PM at Hillside



5 COVID-19

Port members are reporting incidents of poor Covid-19 management.

15 CONFERENCE 2020

The young and the old combined in great camaraderie to celebrate 25 years of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union in Wellington in October and discuss the most pressing issues at hand. Here RMTU president Aubrey Wilkinson shares some stories with life member Ian Wilkie.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: In the lead up to the election, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made a visit to the Hillside Workshop. See page 6.

The Transport Worker is published by the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, P O Box 1103, Wellington, Aotearoa–New Zealand.

Design and production by Mike Regan.

Printed by Pivotal+Thames Publications Ltd, P O Box 11–025, Wellington.

WWW.RMTUNION.ORG.NZ

ISBN 1173–6488



**Wayne Butson,
General secretary
RMTU**

In fear of NZTA

WELCOME to the final issue of your magazine for 2020 and hope and trust you enjoy the read. 2020 is a year that I am keen to see the end of. Even though I have been doing union work for 30 years I have often times been outside my comfort zone and this year there have been far too many new experiences for comfort.

During COVID-19 we have seen the best and worst of employers. We will remember the good ones and will certainly take note of the mean spirited and petty as well. It has been a welcome relief that the doomsayers – who had the housing market, our economy and world markets collapsing – have all been proven to be wrong. In fact our housing market has gone nuts.

But 2020 will be especially memorable to me for three major factors. The first is the landslide election of a Labour-led Government, the second the stellar success of our 25th Anniversary Conference including the launch of the special edition of our Union history and the third is my pride in the dedication and calibre of our RMTU staff during this trying period. I am privileged to work with an army of highly trained, skilled, passionate and loyal delegates and Union leaders for YOU!

As you all know the RMTU has led the fight to improve rail safety in New Zealand since 1999. A ministerial inquiry into rail safety in 2000 saw the creation of the Railway Act (2005). A good account of the lead up to that inquiry and its aftermath is chronicled in Hazel Armstrong's book *Your life for the job* first released in 2008. Its second edition was released at our 25th Anniversary Conference and I urge you to get a copy from our National Office and read it. We have now gone 12 years without a fatality within rail which is a milestone in itself – but also it is not a coincidence. It is because your Union and rail employers have worked together to make a meaningful step change in H&S within the industry. The RMTU is one of the few unions in New Zealand to have a dedicated H&S organiser and is certainly the smallest in membership numbers. This is the Union putting its money where its principles are!

Since 2005 the NZTA (Waka Kotahi) has not enacted a single regulation nor undertaken a prosecution (until KiwiRail this year for a track worker amputation). The RMTU has questioned the rail regulation function within this agency since its inception. The rail regulatory unit has had a large number of reviews conducted upon it and I believe all have been highly critical of its culture, competency, capacity and capability.

Now, for whatever reason, NZTA has adopted a strict liability interpretation of the Railways Act and, in my opinion, are now undermining worker-driven H&S and workplace fairness gains made jointly by employers, workers and their unions to fill

◀ the past vacuum of regulatory failure.

The Union and rail employers use well-founded, understood and established investigation techniques and just fair culture practices on a day-to-day basis to deal with low level incidents or issues within the rail industry. NZTA's adoption of strict liability now sees them interviewing all workers and initiating all investigations under caution. Such a blanket approach is not a practice endorsed nor utilised by Worksafe NZ or, to my knowledge, any other transport regulator in New Zealand outside of the road industry and the Police.

We fear this approach of blanket caution will have a chilling effect on the reporting of near miss and other H&S incidents and hazards and is significantly increasing the stress upon key safety critical workers in the industry.

In my opinion such a blanket approach is silly and it is counter-productive, to say the least, to having a robust H&S culture in the workplace.

For example, the recent school bus fatality at Feilding saw a school bus run into the side of a train. The collision occurred behind the locomotive and out of view of the locomotive engineer. NZTA requested an interview with the loco engineer under caution. Why we ask? What possible liability could lie with the LE?

Another example is a signal passed at danger in the notorious Wellington 'throat' in November 2019. NZTA investigated and found systemic issues (amongst other things) in the signalling arrangement and released a report in April. Shortly thereafter they initiated an internal peer review of this report and then issued a letter to the employer, Transdev Wellington, which advised they were withdrawing the April report and substituting it with the internal peer review version and that they would have prosecuted the worker and the employer, but for the passage of time.

This is unprecedented behaviour and has caused horror within the industry.

The RMTU fears for the long term impact on the rail industry if this approach is permitted to continue. This could set us back 20 years in safety culture and approach. There must be no barriers to workers reporting incidents or issues which affect the safety of the workplace

Previously the RMTU has called for the H&S regulation of rail to be removed from NZTA and placed with Worksafe NZ. We remain of a view that it is inappropriate for NZTA to be a funder of rail, as envisaged under the National Land Transport Fund mode neutrality approach, and to be a regulator at the same time. We have urged the new Transport and Safety Minister (Michael Wood) to look at this agency's approach and function as a priority for this term of government.

On behalf of the Union president, NMC members and staff, I hope and trust that you and yours will all see out the Christmas/New Year holiday period safely and soundly. We are all told that the home and our work are dangerous places but I reckon New Zealand roads over the holiday season are as bad. So please make sure you stay safe at all times.

Wishing each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a happy and joyous 2021.

Be RMTU and I know that 2021 will be a prosperous year for us all!
Nga mihi nui. 🇳🇿

Correction

Our apologies to Stuart Lawson who was somehow moved to Otaki in the last issue when he actually lives in Pukekohe.

Commemoration appreciation

Dear Editor,

A thank you to the Otago membership from a family member for the Waipahi commemoration

This time of year is a timely 'kick in the pants' to remind me that a sincere thank you is a long time overdue for you all, your colleagues and KiwiRail in putting on the commemoration.

The effort that you went to was beyond expectation. From the beginning when you first contacted us to the end, stepping off the train back in Dunedin, you made it a smooth journey.

To be invited and included to take the trip on October 20, 2019 with so many others, to stand at the site at Waipahi with so many others around, to hear speeches and have the powerful cries of the kapahaka with the haka is an honour and gift which has been imprinted on our hearts and minds and leaves us with better memories in a place of loss.

We are sure Graham would have been very very proud of all involved.

You did a fantastic job of acknowledging all those involved in the aftermath of the accident which took Graham's life at Waipahi.

I hope all is well with you, your family, friends and work colleagues in this very changed year.

We are sorry we did not catch up with you in person to thank you for all that you put into the Waipahi commemorations so again we say a very big and grateful 'thank you' for the memories you have given us.

Judith and Vivienne Kerr

Conference kudos

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on a well run 25th Anniversary function.

Bev and I thank you all at RMTU for the first class evening.

We enjoyed meeting many of the Conference delegates. I was impressed by the level of their representation.

Our Union clearly has a guarantee of a very strong future.

Best regards to you all

Bev and Peter Harris
(Life Member).

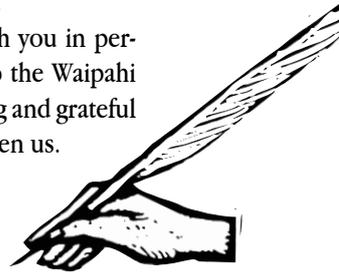
Retirements

Dear Editor

Having retired in April this year after 48 years service in the locomotive branch I wish to tender my resignation from the RMTU.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the rail industry and I would like to thank you the RMTU and my work mates for the support given over the years.

Wishing you all the best for the future. ▶



Farewell

A group of RMTU delegates from Otago rail branch and former Hillside branch gathered recently to surprise outgoing Dunedin South Labour MP Clare Curran with a big thank you for all the work and support given since her first day in the role in 2008.

Clare never let up in her staunch support to save Hillside Workshops from closure and for rail in the region – and keeping the issues alive with senior parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the house.

We have Clare to thank in large part for securing the workshop's future, and we must be vigilant to get the best result possible. Clare has now passed the baton on to Ingrid Leary our new Taieri



Electorate Labour MP, and we are already working together on rail and community issues. So as Clare's card reads: Thanks for fighting with us 2008 - 2020! 🇳🇿

LETTERS [CONT]

Gordon Winchcombe
Palmerston North

Dear Editor

This was my decision because of my illness and KiwiRail has been very helpful with the process in ensuring my rights under the contract are fully complied with.

So because of this I am forwarding to you, with sadness, my resignation from the RMTU after almost 49 years.

Thank you for your assistance and advice over the years, on the times I've needed it and although I have over the years thought that on a couple of occasions the assistance from the RMTU head office didn't match my expectations, I will always see the necessity for a strong union and the RMTU is that. Without any doubt, the conditions we have in our contract would be nowhere near what they are now without the RMTU.

You can clearly see that if you look around other work places in New Zealand that don't have the representation we have and see the conditions they work under. So thank you RMTU.

Also to all members and reps: strive, question and never accept a decision you believe is wrong because even if you lose that discussion, people will notice and you could be heard next time, and if you're called a stirrer or worse, you're doing something right because the only time someone tries to insult you is when they are getting short of valid arguments.

So finally, in unity, goodbye.

Cheers
Neale Titter

Dear Editor,

After 41 years working for the Port of Tauranga I am now retiring.

In this time I have seen four presidents in the RMTU and many changes.

My last day at work will be October 8, 2020. I wish to offer my resignation from the RMTU and than you for the years of service and support while I have been employed, Kevin Merrie

Dear Editor,

I wish to retire from the RMTU as of 24/11/2020 as I am retiring from Toll Holdings.

I have been a member for around 25 years and wish to thank the Union for the help and support you have offered me during this time.

At the start I worked for Rail Freight then progressed through many take overs to be working for Toll Holdings Ltd.

I wish everyone all the best in the future.

Once again, many thanks.

Neil Wick.

Compassion & support

Dear Editor

Thank you, Rail Maritime Transport Union, for the exceptional work you've done for me by supporting me through my redundancy and personal grievance process.

It wasn't an easy time for me, but the support I received from the RMTU helped me to cope knowing that I was part of a bigger group of people which cared for me and my future.

The understanding, compassion and guidance I received as a member helped me to obtain a very positive outcome – and is a great example of the continuing importance of unions in New Zealand.

Special thanks to Ben Thompson from Armstrong Thompson Law, for his patience and hard work and being honest and transparent at every step of the way.

Also to Rudd Hughes, thank you for being there in the beginning supporting me while I was still working.

Thanks to you all – I am grateful that the matter was resolved due to your effort and support.

Mildred Veldman

Dear Editor,

Hi there all, I would like to say a big thank you to the Rail and Maritime Transport Union and all my fellow members as some of the weekly fees we all pay were used to pay for the help I had from Armstrong Thompson Lawyers in my ACC appeal struggle.

I was declined cover for an injury I suffered as the result of a work place accident with C3 BOP.

Thanks to the support from our Union in engaging Armstrong Thompson.

I have finally had a good result and my operation has happened. I am a happy man. Goff Leov.



Port workers & Covid-19

Slack border protection worries workers

RMTU port delegates have blown the whistle on slack border protection when it comes to COVID-19 testing.

The Ministry of Health's testing order requires port workers, who meet the criteria, to have routine COVID-19 testing every two weeks. If they do not comply workers are liable for fines of up to \$1,000.

The RMTU has told the Government agencies responsible for border protection that the current system is fraught with issues.

Testing

The ability for workers to get tested at work is limited. If a worker's roster doesn't correspond to the time the testers are at work they either have to come in and get tested on their day off, or seek out a test independently.

Port Nelson branch chair and stevedore Allan Addison-Saipe said the process for testing staff should be better. He said the onus for testing has been put on the individual worker. The port companies aren't required to manage the process. There are also no reminders to get tested and people aren't rostered to work on the days they're due to be tested. That means workers who live 45-minutes drive away are expected to use their time off to come into work to get tested.

Delegates describe the testing process as "hellishly" uncomfortable and painful. They say it depends on the tester, some are reasonably gentle whilst others are heavy handed sometimes resulting in nose



(above) A Port Nelson worker being tested.

(l) A German poster indicating risk factors.

(below) Tom Curtis, a Port Nelson worker, getting tested.



bleeds. Since routine testing began some staff are up to their sixth Covid test and are becoming increasingly dissatisfied and are beginning to dread being tested.

Checking compliance

The RMTU is calling for Government to work with the sector to rethink how the COVID testing process is managed at the ports. Delegates describe compliance as "loose". Additionally, the Port companies



don't see it as their responsibility to monitor whether staff have been tested. As a result people are slipping through the net.

Keeping the virus out

Delegates are also calling for ship crew to be tested and cleared before entering New Zealand. Ships should be required to show evidence of their COVID 19 free status in advance of arriving in New Zealand. Keeping the virus out must be our first line of defence. 🇳🇿

PM's pledge to Hillside



ON 24 November Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern visited Hillside Railway Workshops and stated that it should return to assembly work.

The \$19.97m from the provincial growth fund was seen as the start of the revival of Hillside. On this visit Jacinda was an instant hit with members at the site. They

all know their employment is the direct result of a Labour victory in 2017 and the RMTU's fight to have the reopening of the Workshop as part of Labour Party policy. As such it was inserted into their manifesto.

The visit was also a great opportunity to introduce Ingrid Leary the new MP for the new electorate seat of Taieri who is a proud

RMTU member. It was also an opportunity to bid farewell to longtime Hillside battler Clare Curran on her departure as Dunedin South MP.

The struggle continues to have Hillside flourish as a centre of engineering excellence and trades training in the deep south. 🌐

PORTS RETIREMENT PLAN ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The Ports Retirement Plan is open to all port workers.

The plan has an external administrator and contributions are invested with four fund managers.



Ports Retirement Plan

Download a copy of the Product Disclosure Statement from our website:

www.portsretirement.org.nz

Issuer: Ports Retirement Trustee Limited

Phosphate protest continues

Port Tauranga joins the protest to stop import of 'stolen' material

In keeping with our previous support for the Council of Trade Union's resolution calling for the New Zealand Government to back the cessation of the import of 'blood phosphate' from Moroccan occupied Western Sahara, the RMTU Port of Tauranga branch delivered a letter of protest to the Captain of the IVS Windsor while berthed at the port on 7 November.

Because of COVID19 protocols the delivery of the letter was via a bucket lowered over the side of the vessel.

The ship was carrying phosphate destined for processing by Ballance Agri-Nutrients, one of two New Zealand companies which imports the substance from Western Sahara.

Of course, in registering our protest in this manner, the RMTU is being very pragmatic as under international law our members have the right to refuse to work any ship carrying illegal cargo. Given the 'blood phosphate' is stolen from the occupied territory it is, therefore, illegal cargo.



Up to now we have not exercised our right to strike under international law. The irony is that under New Zealand's draconian anti-strike legislation any refusal to work such ships would be illegal. This has to change.

At the time this cargo arrived, a case had just been heard in the Auckland High Court calling for a judicial review of the NZ Superannuation Fund's investment in fertiliser companies which import from Western Sahara. That case is continuing but if the court rules that the Fund's investment violates its 'ethical investment' policies it could well be game over for these compa-

nies as the attendant publicity would be disastrous.

Just after the RMTU registered its protest, and as *The Transport Worker* went to press, Morocco violated the 30 year old UN brokered ceasefire with the Polisario Front, the armed wing of the pro-independence representatives of the Western Saharan people. According to *Aljazeera* news, Morocco launched an 'operation' to remove a Polisario blockade on a road from the occupied territory to Mauritania.

This escalation means that New Zealand companies are now, arguably, directly funding a war in Western Sahara. It's a safe bet that the military offensive by Morocco will create more refugees and lead to increased civilian suffering in the disputed territory.

Protest groups here immediately reacted and staged demonstrations at Ballance Agri-Nutrients depot in Taieri and in Mount Maunganui.

It is clear that this issue is not going away. 🇳🇿

Delegate training - Christchurch



YET another cohort of passionate RMTU delegates being trained in the tradecraft of unionism, advocacy and activism at Christchurch.

They are pondering the fact that you need unity and action to succeed and win but success is always dependent upon the preparation, planning and strategy work done beforehand. Well done class of 2020! 🇳🇿



RSAS West Coast Lyall Adamson takes a break while doing a bogie swap in Greymouth.



PGF funded fixed term trainee RPO Tash Challinor and Midland Line maintenance ganger Mike Owers.

ROUNDUP



Sam Marsh and Josh North Johansen in the crowd at the Unions Canterbury 'Meet the candidates' event.



(l) New Whangarei Labour MP Emily Henderson looking over PM Jacinda Ardern's left shoulder and Labour deputy leader and MP Kelvin Davis.

(below) Lyttelton Port Company members ponder the settlement before ratifying their CEA.



Middleton RSAS and H&S rep Gary Froggat with Wigram MP Megan Woods.





Rail crane

Operating allowance disputed for Hutt

UNDER KiwiRail's managed decline of some of the network, the shipments of new rail was not predicted to be that frequent. Now with rail growth, we can expect more shipments.

The overhead rail cranes at Hutt Workshops were initially operated by contractors until KiwiRail wanted the stores team to operate them.

Members raised concerns that this was additional skill which should be recognised. Initially, this was not accepted so the issue escalated to the current wage round where we expect an appropriate allowance will be approved and paid.

Now all we need to do is get the rail weld work brought back in house. 🇳🇿

(inset) Luke Skipper showing his skills operating the rail cranes.

- Auckland
- Christchurch
- Dunedin
- Gisborne
- Greytown
- Hanmer
- Kaikoura
- Mount Maunganui
- Napier
- Nelson
- New Plymouth
- Ohope
- Orewa
- Paihia
- Picton
- Queenstown
- Rotorua
- Taupo
- Wellington
- Westport
- Whitianga



HOLIDAYS



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All current RMTU members are eligible to join after paying a Welfare Trust membership fee. Contact us to find out how.

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E-mail: info@nzwelfare.co.nz

Website: nzwelfare.co.nz

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Awards



(r) Lyttelton branch secretary, Heiner Benecke, presenting a loyalty certificate to long-serving RMTU member and marine delegate, Bruce Baldwin, for his 36 years continuous membership upon his retirement. (above) Current marine delegate, Kieran McHardy, presenting Kathy Kerr with a collage of the vessels she has worked on as a launch master.



\$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).



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Allife.com



RMTU WOMEN

The RMTU fully supports equal opportunities for women and men

Makarita Hall

Auckland rail delegate

How long have you been a member of the RMTU?

I am the women's delegate for Auckland rail branch and have been a member of the RMTU for seven years and three months.

What does your current job involve?

I'm a train manager for Transdev Auckland and my job involves making sure customers arrive safely at their destinations including making sure they get on and off the train safely.

What do you think are the top health and safety concerns facing workers in your workplace?

When Covid hit we were very worried and anxious about the health of ourselves and our families. We were classed as essen-

tial workers and we kept working without gloves or masks or hand sanitizer. People are unpredictable in Auckland and we deal with a lot of funny people. It would be nice to have the Maori wardens with us all day.

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

It's awesome to see more women join the rail industry every year. I was previously a Maori warden and then came across to work as train manager and I help train other train managers.

What would you say to a bunch of women school leavers about working in the rail industry?

Working on the rail is an awesome opportunity which can lead you to work almost anywhere in the world. I wish I had started earlier. Every day is different and you meet cool people of all ages working



in rail. It is both challenging and rewarding at the same time. 🌐

Roll of honour



<p>Giles, Donald Henry 24 May 1941 Age 25</p> <p>Service number 33931 Private, 19 Infantry Battalion</p> <p>Sula Bay War Cemetery, Crete, Greece</p> <p>Son of Herbert Henry and Sarah Ann Giles, New Plymouth</p> <p>Porter, Marton</p>	<p>Goff, Raymond John 17 January 1944 Age 19</p> <p>Service number NZ4210468 Leading Aircraftman, Royal New Zealand Air Force, 12 Squadron Missing presumed killed on Active Service</p> <p>Bourail Memorial, Bourail New Zealand War Cemetery, New Caledonia</p> <p>Son of Eugene Stanley and Jessie Blanche Evelyn Goff, Paparotocoe, Auckland</p> <p>Apprentice Fitter, Otahuhu Workshops</p>	<p>Gosden, Walter Lionel 4 February 1941 Age 24</p> <p>Service number NZ39859 Sergeant, Royal New Zealand Air Force, 18 Operational Training Unit. Accidental killed while on a training exercise after aircraft ran into the air defences for the Rolls Royce aero engine factory.</p> <p>Nuneston (Daiton Road) Cemetery, Warwickshire, England</p> <p>Son of Alfred and Lily Agnes Gosden, Torbay, Auckland</p> <p>Porter, Motaro</p>
<p>Godfrey, Herbert Edward 20 July 1942 Age 23</p> <p>Service Number 405482 Sergeant (Air Gunner) Royal New Zealand Air Force, 158 (RAF) Squadron Killed on air operations</p> <p>Florence War Cemetery, Italy</p> <p>Sage War Cemetery, Oldenburg, Niedersachsen, Germany</p> <p>Son of Herbert Edward and Ewina Maria Godfrey, Auckland</p>	<p>Gordon, James Pryde 24 July 1944 Age 23</p> <p>Service number 231054 Second Lieutenant, 23 Infantry Battalion Killed in Action</p> <p>Son of John and Janet Bryson Gordon, Invercargill</p>	<p>Gray, James Alexander 20 May 1941 Age 27</p> <p>Service number 2534 Private, 21 Infantry Battalion Killed in Action, Crete, Greece</p> <p>Athens Memorial, Phaleron War Cemetery, Athens, Greece</p> <p>Son of George Scott and Isabella Gray, Paekakariki</p> <p>Platoplayer, Wellington</p>

A plaque recognising 391 rail workers who perished in World War Two was unveiled at Wellington Railway Station by then Minister of Defence, Hon Ron Mark on October 5, 2020.

On the day a special display focussing on some those who died was posted on the walls surrounding the plaque.

The plaque can be found through the front east doors. 🌐

Hutt



Lyttelton



Lyttelton Port members with successful Labour Candidate Tracey McLellan.

Marlborough



Port Napier



BRANCH AGMs

Port Nelson



A NNUAL general meetings are held throughout the Country by RMTU branches each year in August. However, in this bizarre year meetings called have been held over to other months owing to gathering restrictions related to Covid 19.

What never changes though is the fact that this is a time each year for members to thank those who have been acting as their branch officers and delegates for the work they have done and to elect (often the same people) to undertake the leadership of the branch for the next 12 months.

The AGM's also approve the annual

account, confer special recognition on others and, occasionally, have retired life members drop in to maintain their linkage to the Union and the branch. 🌐

Palmerston North



Otago



Life members Jim Kelly (l) and Tim Spence at Otago rail AGM.



Loyalty awards for long-serving members (l) Robertus Trompetter and James McElvie.

INVERCARGILL



Social distancing exemplified.

SOLIDARITY WITH OTHER UNIONS



A key task for all unionists is inter union solidarity and support. The RMTU is a firm believer in union solidarity and is proud of the fact that we will support the struggle

for others unionists as and when the need arises. Here we are supporting the struggle of our health care comrades in their fight for wages justice. 🌐

Obituary

Christine Fiona Johnson (nee Brown)

05/12/1961 - 12/09/2020

FROM Taumarunui her family moved to Woburn, Lower Hutt, where she attended Hutt Valley Memorial Technical College. Christine came from a railway family including her grandfather and her father as well as two brothers. It was a natural choice of employment when Christine left school. She joined NZ Railways aged 16 in 1977 working in the chief civil engineer's office in Wellington. And true to form, two years later she married fellow railway worker, David Johnson.

After being made redundant in March 1989, she started work at the Locomotives Engineers Union and later for the Combined Union of Railway Employees until again she was made redundant in September 1994.

This did not stop her interest in railways. From 1994 until her recent death Christine has been a celebrated name among rail people throughout Aotearoa New Zealand with her continued promotion of rail heritage programmes and encouragement in rail travel through articles and books – widely known and celebrated among the railway whanau.

She spent 30 plus years volunteering at Steam Incorporated at Paekakariki, working on locomotives, running the souvenir shop, as well as being secretary and organising excursions.

She also spent 20 plus years on the original Station Museum Trust, which included saving and restoring Paekakariki Station and opening the museum there. Today it plays such an important part in Paekakariki's identity. In 2008 she was instrumental in



raising money and the eventual return of one of the original signal boxes to the south end of the Paekakariki Station platform.

Also in 2008 Christine assisted Ontrack Railways Corporation celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the North Island Main Trunk including co-authoring a book for the occasion.

In 2003 she organised the running of a special train to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Tangiwai Rail Disaster. This included arrangements for the Governor General to travel on the train plus meetings in Whanganui, Kariori Timber Mill and Ohakune marae.

Among her recent achievements were:

- Assisted Ontrack and the opening of the Hapuawhenua Viaduct walkway, now a

major tourist attraction.

- Assisted the Department of Conservation with information for the Ohakune Rail Trail walkway.
- In 2010 received Rail the Heritage Restoration Award for the Paekakariki signal box.
- In 2015 she was instrumental in the creation of Betty Perkins Railway Crossing for the safety of young people going to school.

Recognising her love of Paekakariki she was one of the first people elected to the first Paekakariki Community Trust.

Her works include photographs published in many magazines, journals and calendars, and assisting with information for a television documentary about the Tangiwai Disaster. Her main publications are:

- *Learning the hard way*: A case study of selected railway accidents in New Zealand since the 1920s (New Zealand railway history series) 1991.
- *Main trunk: Portrait of a railway*: A Celebration of 100 Years of North Island Railway History with Ruth Larsen and Kevin Ramshaw 2008.
- *Thunder in the Mountains*: about the railway between Paekakariki and Puke-rua Bay which has just been published by PSPT 2020. (Completed from her hospital bed two weeks before passing away).

Christine was also working on a book about the Gisborne Line and one about the history of New Zealand railway refreshment rooms. 🌐

- **Michael O'Leary, Paekakariki.**

Union calls for Dunedin foundry rethink

THE RMTU says the closure of a Bradken Foundry in Dunedin could be turned around by strategic leadership from industry and Government. Bradken is closing its foundry operations at the KiwiRail-owned Hillside site at the end of 2020.

RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson says it would be possible for KiwiRail to step

in and set up an in-house production unit. He says the Union has raised the issue with them and Government.

"Taking back control of the foundry and maintaining employment of highly skilled workers is a shovel ready project that should be a focus of the Government."

The closure has been hinted at for months, but was only confirmed by Bradken

in mid October.

"The foundry still produces castings for locally manufactured rolling stock not yet replaced by imported freight wagons, so we don't know where KiwiRail would source these in near future," he said.

The foundry also produces consumable castings for Tiwai Point aluminium smelter. 🌐

Celebrating our past, organising our future

RMTU celebrates 25 years at biennial conference

THE fourth biennial National Conference, and the 22nd delegates' conference, marked the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union from the amalgamation of rail and port unions in 1995. Its theme, Celebrating Our Past, Organising Our Future, was perhaps best summed up by a comment of one of the partners of an RMTU life member who attended the Conference dinner when she said what a diverse group we had become since she had last been at such a gathering.

The number of women, ethnicities and younger members was visible testimony to this and bodes well for our future as one generation passes the baton to the next.

Conference was held against the background of the worst public health crisis for a century and the most prolonged election campaign in living memory.

We met in the week before polling day and this was inevitably a pre-occupation for many.

Book launch

The celebration of our past was marked by the launch of a book chronicling the history of the RMTU, written by our good friend Peter Franks. This is a thoroughly good read and all members are encouraged to get their hands on a copy and read it.

Philosophers often take a bleak view of the past, telling us that if we do not remember it we are doomed to repeat it, or that history repeats: first as tragedy and then as farce.

When we look at the history of our Union however, there is much for which we can be proud. The plain truth is we have maintained good wages and conditions and improved safety in our industries in the face of the most sustained and relentless attack on organised labour since the industrial

revolution created the working class as we know it.

The RMTU was born, in part, out of the crisis which engulfed the union movement in New Zealand from the 1980s and culminated in the deregulation of the labour market in 1991. For us this was compounded by neo-liberal policies such as corporatisation of the ports sector and privatisation of rail.

Throughout this we have not only survived but achieved real and meaningful wins, such as the re-nationalisation of rail, and have acquired a reputation as a union that campaigns, fights and wins.

Campaigning

The breadth of our campaigning approach was demonstrated in the workshops that preceded the Conference proper. Our women's Workshop took up the challenge laid down by the British rail union women's representative Deborah Reay and had a blueprint for the codification of the representation of women in our union rules. This was duly passed in Conference.



Karen Fletcher.

The women's workshop included a session with Labour Party president Claire Szabo who spoke about the new systems their party has introduced following the Labour Party's summer camp sexual harass-

ment incident. Maryan Street from KiwiRail spoke about their progress on improving diversity and inclusion and showed us the new 'diversity banner' that's used in the annual pride parades. Karen Fletcher (H&S organiser) and Rebecca Hauck (National Management Committee womens' rep)



Hon Chris Hipkins

spoke about the successful World Toilet Day campaign and the huge interest from NZ media and the international solidarity we received to improve access to toilets and wash facilities for our members. Since then there has been a concerted effort by KiwiRail to improve amenities for staff. However, there is more to do and members are encouraged to speak up if they still don't have decent access to toilet and wash facilities. Lastly, Rebecca unveiled the latest of RMTU branded womens' clothing of purple T-shirts and hoodies which are now available.

The Ports Workshop had a full programme that followed up from the 2018 Conference and last year's Ports Forum and focussed on the progress we have made fighting fatigue and our efforts at community organising. It's fair to say progress on fatigue has been patchy, but this has not been for want of persistence and there are examples where we have moved employers who had been resistant to actively engaging with us. Lyttelton is a case in point – a com-



bination of determined advocacy by our Union and a change in governance and management has begun to yield results.

The key message came from our Nelson Port delegation: Never give up, keep banging away about fatigue at every opportunity you get they said.

Our community organising efforts have been varied with a campaign to resist the privatisation of Napier Port that achieved partial success and a great example of helping the community with food parcels in Port Chalmers. The stand out example however, was the success we had in getting the importing of stolen blood phosphate from occupied Western Sahara by New Zealand fertiliser companies in the news by our threats to refuse to berth or work the ships. This put the very restricted right to strike in New Zealand on the political agenda and with our pragmatic use of protest letters instead of industrial action we have kept the issue in the media for over a year.

Covid-19

The workshop concluded with a very illuminating panel discussion featuring our then Minister of Health Chris Hipkins as well as representatives from Maritime NZ and Napier Port on the maritime border and COVID19, a



Hon Andrew Little.

topic which has been in all our minds this year.

The rail workshop was facilitated by Todd Valster and Rudd Hughes and started with a session that included introductions and a series of briefings on what was happening in the various patches. These included report backs by those involved in the various industrial councils and local engagement councils. The key issues coming out of these discussions were the vexed issue of contracting out the core work of our members and, of course, the various companies' responses to Covid-19.

In the case of the former, there was a general concern about the lack of transparency and an unwillingness to consult, particularly from KiwiRail members.

Regarding the latter, it was acknowledged most of the companies had dealt with the pandemic far better than the wider business community, however, there was room for improvement, particularly in terms of the recognition of the sacrifices our workers had to make as essential workers.

Unsurprisingly, the outlier to this was Toll, who used Covid as an excuse to cut jobs, and CAF, whose adherence to good



David Kearns.

faith in the employment relationship is minimal.

This was followed by a session on HPHE (high performance high engagement) which looked at what was and wasn't working. Again, the focus was on KiwiRail where this process of HPHE projects could comfortably be called a mixed bag and where there were a number of them that had been rebooted. To be fair, those reboots, for example around lockout and isolation, were proving to be successful although it was pointed out that this had come about due to pressure from the membership.

There was also a short report on the ongoing negotiations with KiwiRail. The second part involved group work regarding areas where we should put pressure on both the Government and the rail companies. Key areas of focus for rail employees were explored, particularly about building locally and again, the spectre of contracting



out was explored. Wider employment issues were also discussed like the right to strike over political issues outside of bargaining. This was a very positive and optimistic workshop. Although it took place before the 2020 election, reps were very buoyant and confident we would get the government we needed to continue the reinvestment in rail.

Speakers

Conference proper started with addresses from our most senior elected officials, the national president and general secretary, which laid out the theme of our work and set the tone for the next two days. Andrew Little, one of the ministers who was shortly to win a second term of office, and who, as an ex-union general secretary, knew his audience, gave a focussed and entertaining address. The reception to his speech was positive particularly against the background news of opinion polls pointing to a Labour victory in the forthcoming election.

We then examined the impact of COVID19 in an interactive session designed to get delegates sharing information in a structured way and to identify opportunities for organising members around our



Life members Edgar Spark and Ian Swift.

response.

Whilst it is axiomatic that COVID19 has dominated our thinking this year this has often been reactive so this was an opportunity to consider a more active response where members could seize the initiative. This included a range of tactics from concentrating on improving conditions in collective bargaining to an uncompromising focus on safety protocols and PPE in our worksites.

The RMTU has made safety its top priority since its formation so it was appropriate that our good friend and KiwiRail Board member, lawyer Hazel Armstrong, launched the second edition of her book *Your Life for the Job* – an account of the impact of privatisation on health and safety in the rail industry. The address and question and answer session which followed exemplified the commitment and passion of our officials and delegates around this most important of topics.

Dispute reviews

As a campaigning union it was befitting that Conference took the opportunity to review three prolonged disputes we have engaged in since our last conference in 2018. These were:

- The fight in Auckland to maintain safe staffing on our trains, a struggle that started in 2017 and continued well into 2019, with action on the industrial, political and legal fronts. Our elected officials



Jas Giri

and delegates working in Transdev Auckland spoke about their experiences and provided a vivid picture of a hard fought and successful battle.

■ A more sobering story was that of the debacle at Dunedin Railways, where at the time of writing we still don't know if there is a buyer who may take on the running of this iconic operation. Nevertheless, the narrative was an object lesson in how to organise a tightly run campaign by rank and file officials and delegates under the restrictions of COVID lockdown. There are few unions in New Zealand that can fight as hard as the RMTU for our members' jobs, and even when we aren't entirely successful, it's a lesson for any employer who considers taking us on.

■ We looked at the high-energy fight waged with Basque owned multi-national CAF to win a decent rate of pay for our mechanical engineers who maintain the rolling stock for Auckland Transport. This was an inspiring tale of relatively inexperienced members gaining confidence by fighting and winning with the backing of the whole RMTU.



Holly Fuller (Bay of Plenty) and Rudd Hughes.

Day two of Conference included the final in-house session aimed at highlighting issues we are organising around and was led by our national health and safety organiser, Karen Fletcher. This examined our Union's approach to educating members on bullying and harassment in the workplace in 2020. There are a number of workplaces in which we organise where this is a priority. For example, Lyttelton Port has currently three reviews underway into alleged bullying and harassment and the overall culture of the company. As the discussion unfolded it was clear that branches are at different points in their understanding of the issue



Michael Naylor.

but there was a consensus that we have to tackle it head on. This will require sustained education and leadership as much of the challenge lies in the fact that unwelcome behaviour is often member on member. With an increasingly diverse workforce and membership, we owe it to ourselves to ensure that everyone is welcomed as a valued member of the RMTU family and that bullying and harassment not be tolerated. The session concluded with a brief follow up on the work we have done since 2018 on fatigue. This was invaluable, particularly as it enabled representatives from the port and rail sectors to compare notes.

Day two was also a highlight for two very good addresses by guest speakers:

Michael Naylor the executive officer of Union Aid, who gave an inspiring account of the work this international development agency does helping to alleviate poverty and achieving justice by supporting the development of unions, worker led cooperatives and education opportunities for workers and their families. Their focus is in Asia, and the RMTU is a big supporter, in keeping with our internationalist tradition.

Council of Trade Unions' president Richard Wagstaff, who outlined the priorities of our peak union body for the next few years. Once again this was a speech given a few days before the election and clearly the ability of unions to progress our aims of Fair Pay Agreements across industries, improved legal minimum entitlements such as ten days sick leave, not to mention a just transition for workers as we de-carbonise our economy does hinge on who occupies the Treasury Benches. Nevertheless Richard gave a clear and succinct account of the vital work the CTU does drawing together the affiliated unions and advocating on our behalf.

Proud history

The RMTU has a proud history of participation in the international union movement. This has always been a focus for the port unions in New Zealand, who by the very nature of our work, look outwards.

Our union has also been very active in working alongside other rail unions, sharing information and giving one another support as we deal with the challenges technology and neo-liberalism presents to members.

With global travel curtailed we heard from our comrades in the British Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen (ASLEF), the Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU), the Asian focused International Centre for Labour Solidarity (ICLS) and the world peak union body for transport workers, the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) via recorded video messages.

Whilst this format precluded an interactive question and answer session it did represent a workable compromise in the context of the impact of COVID19.

Conference is not just about guest speakers and organising sessions, it is also the parliament of our Union, our supreme governing body, and delegates had important duties to discharge in overseeing the work of our elected officials and considering and voting on remits put up by the wider membership.

This year was no exception, and our Union rules were amended to allow for Maori representation on the National Management Committee and the codification of women's representation via a women's council.

Awards

A number of members were also awarded the honour of life membership. Congratulations to John Lydiate, Merv Read, Michael Williams, Phil Spanswick and Dan Manu.

Whilst the above indicates the breadth



Andy Kelly and Dave Marden.

of work our Union does on behalf of members – from campaigning for secure jobs, safe workplaces and decent wages and conditions, to punching above our weight in support of the wider union movement nationally and internationally – Conference also provides an opportunity for delegates and observers to socialise and build relationships which can be used to organise around issues.

The Conference dinner, celebrating our 25th anniversary, was a special occasion in this regard and cemented relationships between the representatives of branches across the port and rail sectors in New Zealand.

We work hard as a union to develop our active members and Conference plays a key part in that. The challenge to everyone who had the privilege of attending is clear – go back to your branches and organise! 🇳🇿



Life member Bill (Bung) Williams and his long-suffering wife Adelaide.

Life member (r) Phil Bosworth and his partner Sue.



Pink Shirt day success

PINK cupcakes, pink donuts, pink shirts at work – we had fun. We wore pink shirts on the trains and we embraced it. Workers were looking great in pink!

In the months prior to pink shirt day we contacted Transdev management to raise the issue of bullying and harassment in our workplace and recommended staff do the Creating Safer Workplaces course held by WorkSafe Reps.

We had a good mix of delegates, managers and team leaders attend. After the course we were inspired to work together to create change in our workplace, including training our H&S reps and team leaders dealing with workplace



behaviours, making a stronger informal structure and, in turn, supporting upstanders, not bystanders.

We talked with staff about what they felt were above the line (acceptable) or below the line (unacceptable) behaviours and we had some fantastic feedback.

We are now at the stage of processing this information with our H&S reps, creating posters, and seeing how we present it to our workers in the staffroom. This gives us the opportunity to plan our next steps in creating a safer workplace. 🇳🇿

Campbell Leggett

Newbies at Conference

First time national conference attendees pass judgement on the experience.



Hamish Searle Wellington: "It's been great for teaching me about the Union. Everyone has been great and there's a great atmosphere."



Annette Telfer, Christchurch: "Enjoying the political aspect of the discussions, especially with the election looming up."



Brendon Drabble Mount Maunganui: "It's been a total buzz meeting fellow members from different branches and places of work."



Brooke Loper Hillside: "Great meeting everyone and there's been some really interesting discussions and debates."



Clay O'Rourke: "Informative especially the work covered on rosters and fatigue."



Christie Yule Mount Maunganui: "This has been a great learning experience, especially in the group discussions."



Daniel Burton: "First timer and I hope I'll be coming back again. It's been awesome meeting people from outside our own areas."



Shane King: "The best thing for me was that it's the first time in 20 years I had met such a diverse group of people and learnt about their perspectives and how we are all fighting the same battles."



Rita Hill: "It's been a great conference and I have learned a lot about other parts of the union outside of TDAK."



Sarah Angus: "I've really enjoyed the sessions and meeting other members, especially the interactive ones."



Makere Pobe: "I've just been elected as the branch chair of Northland and this has been great for looking at how everything in the Union fits together."

AUCKLAND RAIL

Years of understaffing coming to the fore in desperate times

THE big drama at KiwiRail is the Auckland metro network needs a massive amount of work done to bring it up to scratch. KiwiRail are feverishly trying to find enough staff and contractors to fulfil the requirements of getting the work finished by February. This has been a major cause of friction between the RMTU and KR regarding contracting out, lack of consultation and the secondment of workers from other areas. A summit meeting between the Union and KR appears to have had the desired result but, suffice to say, the current situation comes about following years of understaffing despite consistently being told by the RMTU that there was a need to maintain staffing levels.

Elsewhere in KR there are roster re-writes in Stanley Street and Westfield that are looking to save money. We are currently in an HPHE project about one and in mediation around the other. It will be surprising if this is the end of such processes and we will continue to make sure these follow a fair

process and are not just a way of increasing workloads for existing staff.

The long running HPHE project regarding pay scale 8 for the CT sites continues and should close off quite soon with two further meetings. At the end we hope to see an increase in pay for many of the members and a clear pathway for progression.

Meanwhile TDAK is relatively quiet on the TDAK front although, after a long period of abeyance, TDAK and Auckland Transport are looking at restarting discussions around DDO (Driver Door Operation). We left these at a situation where we were going to start exploring the safety case for DDO. Covid hit and we were left in limbo. The RMTU TDAK HPHE team will be reassembled and we will engage with the company around this ongoing concern.

The Company has been very disorganised around the BOL close downs and doesn't seem to have a coherent plan when it comes to the frequency at weekends. Many members, especially train managers

and platform staff are left not knowing whether or not they should be coming into work or not. We are up to the third of these and there still doesn't seem to be clear messaging from the company. There will be a major close-down of the line over Christmas as KiwiRail work on the Auckland metro network.

Bargaining continues at Toll who are in the process of a major shake-up as the parent company, Japan Post, look to divest themselves of their investment. The offer is still 0% on the wages although the Company have looked at a two-year deal with CPI on the second year. Other unions dealing with Toll are also coming up against this low-ball offer.

The only good point is that the claw-backs initially thrown at our members have been pulled off the table.

After two Covid postponements to get the AGM off the ground we will finally meet on 30 November. 🌐



WAIKATO RAIL

LE pay parity with Auckland colleagues hot topic of discussion

WHAT a year this has been. Covid has presented all sorts of issues and challenges and continues to do so. We are so proud to be part of our team of five million which shows the world what we can do and achieve by working together. Thank you.

Shout out to James Manhood who did an exceptional job during lockdown ensuring we all had access to plenty of PPE, organising forensic cleaning of depot and locos and providing support to all of us on the front line.

June bought a changing of the guard. Phil Spanswick, our union organiser retired. Phil with his sense of humour, cunning strategies and amazing knowledge was our go to guy when things got tough. Thank you Phil for your patience with my endless questions, your unfailing support and dedication, we wish you well in your retirement.

Our new RMTU organiser Dasha Van Silfhout has been welcomed into the fold with little chance to catch her breath as

we inundated her with issues, information requests and meetings, which have been handled admirably and have shown how lucky we are to have her on our side.

With MECA up for renegotiation for the first time in a long time we started discussions nationwide. Pay parity with our Auckland brothers and sister LEs amongst one of the hottest topics. This resulted in the submission of remits endorsed by multiple branches. For too long KR has divided and conquered, we needed to unite – and we have.

Ongoing discussions between depots is showing that what effects one effects all.

We are in the process of setting up a monthly hui between depots as we are so much stronger together. Together we have the power to make change.

Wins for the year include:

- Yard staff finally have a workable master roster after nearly 2 1/2 years thanks to Steve Peacock our branch chair for his tireless efforts in getting this sorted.
- We've had a few ongoing issues with ra-

dio comms south of Te Rapa. A test train was organised and Soren Low accompanied us to identify areas of concern. As a result new repeaters will be installed at Hamilton Station and north of Kopaki, once the correct spot has been identified. A further repeater will be installed somewhere in the Kakahi-Raurimu area hopefully operational by end of January.

- We successfully got the 2.3 DLs removed from the coalie due to their adhesion issues.
- Te Huia, the new commuter service between Hamilton and Auckland is steaming ahead. The new maintenance building for this service is completed, training is going well and is ahead of schedule.

Willy Dashwood, our servicing delegate, left us to pursue far more exciting adventures. We wish him all the best.

As the silly season approaches please keep safe. We wish each and every one of you a very merry Xmas and a safe and happy New Year. 🌐

BAY OF PLENTY RAIL

Welcome visit from new RMTU organiser

WE have had very little in the way of first hand experience of Covid 19 and the new normal behaviour of social distancing etc, and its consequences. Thank you 'the team of five million' for that.

Special mention and thanks to Phil Spanswick for all his hard work and wish him well in his retirement.

We held our first hui for the year in September which was our AGM, and, with the change of the guards. We are endeavouring to step up to the plate in our roles as delegates.

Our new RMTU organiser Dasha Van Silfhout recently visited us where she met with members from the yard, RSAS (rolling stock and assets services) and networks in Kawerau before moving on to where the

heart beats – Murupara – and meeting with those members too.

Each group welcomed her and added their concerns to her growing list of issues members all over the motu (island) would like resolved, including, but not limited to, rostering, this year's wage round and leave applications.

Those members have had on-going issues with both their master and mini rosters and management. It was advised that a united front is the best course of action and to hold a meeting of members and agree on a resolution rather than individual stand offs.

Networks queried the flexi worker rates, how they work and who is eligible. Dasha gave a quick explanation to the guys, and offered assistance to anyone who wanted to take things further.

RSAS were quite happy in their depot, and were glad they were able to get more staff as the work load increased due to not working through the Covid lockdown.

One team member asked about all the acronyms used within the Union and KiwiRail networks (LIC, KIC etc). He said when position nominees use these acronyms without explanation it puts him off voting for that person. We were able to explain but could not tell him where he could find these in written form.

We appreciate the effort Dashsa made to come and meet with the us. Arohamai (sorry) I was too slow and didn't get the camera out. We look forward to regular visits from her.

Heoi ano koutou, let's end the year on a high. Have a happy and safe holiday. 🌍

NAPIER PORT

NPC 'hopefully' seeking a variation to reduce percentage increases

BY the time this is published, the RMTU 2020 Biennial Conference will have come to pass. Although a 25 years milestone for our Union, Covid unfortunately had an impact in numbers allowed to attend. Being part of NMC, it was very difficult to apply rules around attendance numbers. We were still at level 2 and Auckland at 3.5, which obviously forced some difficult decision making. Yet another unwanted consequence of this dreaded disease!

Both Napier Port and KiwiRail branch members held their respective local AGMs on the 11/10/20. Our general secretary and national president were in attendance with our new organiser, Dasha Van Silfhout.

Napier Port had previously postponed the AGM due to Covid. Subsequently, level 2 social distancing requirement caused some logistical problems. Ultimately, we moved to a larger shed which presented itself with some irony, yep, it had to rain – and bloody hard! The metal roof, temporarily blotting out the ability to speak. The twist, we called everyone in a tad closer, thus, somewhat defeating the purpose of appropriate distancing WTF. Anyway, we had around 93

members present, a good turnout.

There was one key issue for us which needed to be voted on. The NPC was seeking a variation to reduce the already agreed CEA percentage increase. There was a counter offer proposed by the company for a 12 months period, however the vote was overwhelmingly unanimous to retain the status quo.

From this scribe's perspective, the proposed variation by the NPC was a consequence mainly due to the 45% sell down of Napier Port last year, in essence, privatisation. Who gets looked after first from a fiscal perspective and who are the potential winners from improved returns?

With the company seeking to postpone the agreed CEA percentage increase, would provide greater returns to the shareholders, 55% of ownership still being held by the Hawkes Bay Regional Council. The variation ultimately coming at the expense of employees – understandable, but immoral. The timing of the variation request, at a period when membership has encountered short staffing through Covid, working around the clock being essential workers, the removal of the incentive scheme (non contractual),

coupled with little acknowledgement for the huge effort put in by those who did the hard yards on the coal face through a busy season, all compounded toward forming a strong voting outcome.

There is no disrespect intended toward those who, for no fault of their own, were unable to work. Health, immunity, well-being are all significant concerns. Whanau first.

It is deeply concerning, that in the current environment, some profit-making companies hide behind Covid 19 as an excuse to either lay off staff or impose pay cuts/wage freezes, to enhance returns to shareholders, or to line their own pockets.

By the same token, respectfully acknowledging there are many companies/businesses which will struggle or have already paid the price of Covid, an outcome of their honesty in the support of employees.

On the brighter side, may 2021 see the back end of this global viral enemy and let's hope we can return to the old "normal" and take the learnings!

Lastly, wishing you and yours a safe and merry Christmas, all the best for 2021.

I kotahitanga, hauora, kia ora. 🌍

HUTT WORKSHOPS

Looking for transport investment from new government

THE Election 2020 result was a fantastic outcome for all New Zealanders and the resulting agreement with the Greens allowed the co-operative spirit between the two parties to continue without impinging upon Labour's ability to carry out and honour its election promises. You could say they've put themselves on notice as they no longer have a hand-brake, or millstone around their necks, that was NZ First. Indeed, they have full control over their deliverables, and the union movement along with the general populace will hold them to that. Such a landslide victory for the political left should lead to continued investment towards an integrated-transport infrastructure.

Another issue that has progressed is a consultation document entitled 'Rolling stock project delivery' which delineated some responsibilities between the Capital Projects and Asset Development (CPAD) team and RSAS. This was essentially a "good news" document albeit containing some errors and areas of concern (that's why it's good to consult so the implied problems can be aired and addressed). It outlined and pointed towards the level of investment and much needed growth we've been pursuing for some years. Old hands will know just how much of a political football Hutt and the greater KiwiRail team have been over the years with restructure after restructure! At Hutt we are seeing an implied return to having 'planners' back on the team. These guys were the only ones who truly knew what was going on across all facets of the operation so much so, I'm surprised they

weren't recruited by the SIS as intelligence officers!

Early September saw the issue of packs of hand-sanitiser and masks. This was a bit of a double-up on existing company expenditure in the area of PPE however I'm sure that we're well-prepared should a real need arise. The timing was brilliant – right in the middle of the MECA re-negotiations when we all knew there would be references to financially tough times!

Also, in September was the staff engagement survey with some Covid-related questions about how well the Company

Transport Union" by Peter Franks. This is a fantastic 60-page book full of interesting facts and figures providing insight into our proud union history and industrial evolution since colonisation in the 19th century.

As I try to coordinate contributions in chronological order, the advertising of site vacancies began in early November. With my cynics' hat on, I am a little bewildered by the process when the initial jobs advertised either didn't include a PD (position description), or a long enough advertising period to cater for staff on leave, or didn't stay posted during the advertising period.



Dulux overhaul on EF 30226.

looked after its people. I proudly admit that KiwiRail continually stood by its core company value of 'care and protect'.

This year's national conference in Wellington saw us looking at our past and organising for our future, given that we have clocked-up a 25-year milestone. Conference 2020 was also the forum for launching a commissioned book entitled *'Stronger together: A history of the Rail and Maritime*

This of course leaves the company at risk of claims of "unjustifiable disadvantage" should a person or persons feel they've missed out. Another issue was a deficiency in the KiwiRail careers page 'function' on their website which doesn't allow you to email advertised jobs to a friend. In all fairness, though the jobs were advertised internal only, however, we would expect the system to give you an error message

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



◀ when attempting to do so (this was confirmed when the '147' IT faults team were engaged to look into the issue – they too identified anomalies).

There was a recent monthly meeting where the 'stigma with ORA' (the upgraded incident management system) was meant to have been discussed. This was apparently borne out of concerns and problems of how the former IRIS system was used and the (broken) promises used to sell ORA to the masses. The upshot? Any issues (new or old) associated with it should be reported in writing via the trustier email system.

The US elections in early November provided much international mirth given the childish reactions of the second-place getter. Whilst he said he doesn't like losing, he failed to accept the fact of the election outcome and continues to make a right dork of himself.

The staff survey results were finally out with both Hutt's participation rate (92%) and overall score (+59) exceeding both the company and industry averages. This is a direct reflection of the amount of hard work which has gone into HPHE as well as addressing concerns raised in a timely manner in past surveys, and here at a local level through the plethora of communications channels and forums. Another attempt at producing a site newsletter is underway with the first edition published in early

November. It is hoped that we can sustain a monthly periodical however with the current and projected workload, this may prove a challenge.

The BeSafe4 trial is underway to see if a home grown version of another safety culture initiative that involved an expensive Australian firm prior to Covid-19, has got a chance of flying. The facilitator was very good and I hope all the feedback garnered is taken on-board by senior management. Whilst attending the course, one of the attendees got to trial the virtual reality tools that the learning and development teams at the Woburn Training Centre were working on. It appears to be a very worthwhile tool which will enhance staff training within a safe environment whilst standing still and moving your body-parts around!

Two other training initiatives underway are the three part diversity and inclusion training modules, and the two day HPHE introduction (or refresher for some) training. It is great to see the company continuing to invest in its people although I am a little concerned that so much is being added to the mix so close to the Christmas shut-down where we're trying to meet our deliverables and close-off some work before the final day (Wed 23 Dec).

Another initiative underway is a follow-up to the 2020 staff survey where (surprise, surprise) communication was

flagged as an area for improvement. For us it involved cycling the work groups through an informal discussion session to garner further insight and to drill down to the more specific area(s) needing attention. The initial outcome of these was a pointer towards 'process'. This will likely form the basis for an HPHE project that will take-off early in the New Year.

As these notes close-off (or rather in response to the rev-up from the general secretary and the *TTW*'s editor to meet the publishing deadline) we have finally completed the resource planning project whereby the EGM, our site leader and his production managers confirmed the staff configuration for the next few years. One very good output from the deliberations was the immediate approval of some ATRs (Authority To Recruit) to fill some immediate vacancies and permanently recruit a small team from our pool of fixed term temps. We are hopeful more will be approved in due course as the implied outcomes of the RS project delivery document previously mentioned comes to fruition.

As this is the final contribution for the year, thank you readers for your support, your feedback and most of all, your solidarity. Take care over Christmas and we will all get back together in 2021. Christmas greetings from the Hutt Workshops. Kia kaha. 🌍



CANTEBURY RAIL

Air New Zealand's loss is KiwiRail's gain

HERE in Canterbury we are pleased at the return of not just a Labour led government but an overall Labour majority in parliament. At the time of writing the new government's ministerial portfolios have just been announced and we see that Michael Wood, a good friend of the RMTU, has been appointed both Minister of Transport and Workplace relations. We have high expectations of the new administration and it's good to see such a positive appointment in these key ministries.

The prolonged election campaign saw several politicians visit our work sites. Then Transport Minister Phil Twyford and Christchurch Central MP Duncan Webb looked in at Waltham Depot, which is slated for a big chunk of spending – part of the

biggest investment in rail since the place was built in 1938 under Michael Savage's Labour Government. Our delegate Matt Leech welcomed them and was snapped in the accompanying photo. Megan Woods, who at one point seemed to be the 'Minister for Everything', visited Middleton Yard, and took the opportunity to meet plenty of members, amongst them Bobby Boulton, one of our younger brethren and a very talented photographer who helped us on the Dunedin Railway campaign (see photo opposite).

Our RSAS members at Middleton now have a new amenities block which is far more spacious and better appointed than the old one. Proper facilities for female members are particularly welcome. When

Minister Woods visited, morale was high and most members had taken advantage of early voting. Even the pressure on loco availability and the issue of cracked bogies didn't cause too much hassle, although at one point management touted an ill advised ban on leave over Christmas. Thankfully someone saw sense after the RMTU kicked up a fuss and a call for 'expressions of interest' to work over the traditional holiday period seems to have filled the gaps.

Over in network services we got wind of the latest KiwiRail employee survey. Preliminary results apparently show a negative response towards management amongst track staff. Could this be because leadership is perceived to be top down? When you're at the bottom it doesn't look like things

are changing when the workload increases and the number of track workers are still far too low. Our local bosses are generally well thought of but the level of frustration when they are being stopped from filling vacancies by those at the top only increases. We did manage to get people put into 14 unfilled vacancies in the upper South Island by making a noise through the RMTU but this is a poor substitute for rational workforce planning.

We are still working with three man gangs when we know that four is the optimum to provide coverage to cope with unplanned – and planned – absences.

Without the capacity to cover for absences gangs can quickly become almost useless. It causes no end of angst when senior managers fail to fill vacancies. This also has implications for safety. The discrepancy between the size of de-stress gangs in Auckland (eight) and down here (five) also takes its toll. Yes the work may get done but the impact on bodies is inevitable. Resentment also manifests itself when KiwiRail refuses to look at extending on the job training (OJT) allowances to network services staff. Once again members in this part of the business feel like the poor cousins.

Members at Toll are quietly working away despite that company, by all accounts, being in dire straits. There is a fair bit of evidence that Japan Post is looking to sell their flagship acquisition. All this seems very far removed from our members in the large shed at Middleton who are ably represented by our delegate Malcolm Ross. Malcolm is also on our RMTU national bargaining team and attended the RMTU's biennial conference. He is a very active delegate who maintains good relations with management while being a strong and effective advocate for members.

Our new branch chair Annette Telfer, also attended Conference as did Holly Egger as the branch women's rep. Having such a strong women's presence has generated interest in the new RMTU women's council and we are looking forward to nominations to go on this body at the time of writing.

Over in operations at Middleton the health and safety action team has had a bit of reinvigoration with young and enthusiastic H&S reps like Matto Croton and Rory Keane stepping up to fill the big shoes of the late Lyndsay Gough. There was a bit of drama over the handbrake issue when a sector meeting of the branch passed a resolution refusing to comply with KiwiRail's rules but this was soon ironed out with some sensible and pragmatic discussion.

Our depot manager has been seconded from Timaru. He came to us with a reputation for looking after his staff and so far this has been borne out. Together with some very experienced delegates he's managed to resolve matters at the coal face.

The TranzAlpine and Coastal Pacific passenger services continue to run. Long may we stay in level 1! There has been some publicity about the very capable summer staff we now have on board, many of them former flight crew with Air NZ, Qantas and Virgin. This was picked up by our British comrades in the RMT union, who compared the New Zealand approach to passenger transport in COVID with the shambles in the UK. Welcome to all the summer crews. We hope you enjoy the view from the carriage windows and are inspired to seek a permanent career in rail.

As we go into the holiday season, stay safe and healthy and make time for those closest to you. 🇳🇿



(l to r) Phil Twyford, then Minister of Transport, Matt Leech, RMTU delegate Waltham and Duncan Webb, Christchurch Central MP Labour.



(l to r) Nigel Clithaine, Tansem Fletcher and Grant Wright.



(l to r) Andre Jelly, Megan Woods, Wigram MP Labour and Bob Boulton.

WEST COAST RAIL

Much needed cash injection making a difference

PHEW! What an uplifting last month or so with the Labour Party's landslide victory and the much needed injection of cash through the PGF fund of nearly \$30m in the South Island for drainage works of which the Coast received a major chunk enabling the employment of six new staff in network services: four are trainee structures workers and two are trainee rail protection officers (RPOs), all on 10 month fixed term agreements. Of course our sincere hope is that we can staff up permanently as our track teams are still struggling to keep on top of maintenance issues due to low staffing levels and rapidly ageing infrastructure. This was vividly illustrated by a recent breach of our MECA hours of work clauses which is still being investigated at the time of writing. It is alleged a 15 hr day was done by a gang raising the question that when a planned job turns

to custard does it become emergency work? WE THINK NOT.

On a brighter note the plans for our new memorial to railway workers is nearly finalised and work should be starting in the near future. There has been a fair amount of thought and debate about this in our branch and we are confident we will have something we can all be proud of as the focal point of our commemorations on Workers' Memorial Day next year.

Our Woman's Rep Dodie Joseph and branch secretary Ron Nijssen recently attended the 25th anniversary of the RMTU at National Conference in Kilbirnie, Wellington where the theme was 'Celebrating Our Past, Organising Our Future'. With the number of talented young delegates and observers attending the future really does look bright. The organisation of the three day conference was exemplary as usu-

al: a big shout out to Deb and Chelsea, pic of our administration and support geniuses, and our national management committee for a job well done. There was a good mix of active participation, interesting guest speakers and opportunities to socialise and network with comrades across our union and the wider move-



(above) Dodie Joseph and Ron Nijssen.



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.

You could be next to miss out!
For as little as \$219 a year your future – or those of your next of kin – could be better assured.

Contact:

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 debby.green@rmtunion.org.nz

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

ment. It was particularly helpful to hear about and understand the breadth of work the RMTU does from lobbying politicians and campaigning for more investment in rail and our ports to fearlessly advocating on behalf of members, whether it be individuals or as part of the wider collective.

Some of our members have also attended RMTU delegate training – well done to Don Hibbs and Michael Back for doing the course over in Christchurch. We look forward to using your new found expertise to further organise our branch.

Over on the operations side of our depot we have also welcomed new staff to supplant the Otira workforce, and a new trainee LE. Welcome to KC, Gerrard, Robert, Brodie, and Bailey and to Sam our

new trainee LE. It's been very refreshing for everyone to have an injection of new blood in the team (and the Union). Such is the number that we were struggling to find enough trainers for the trainees. Some of this was the result of a delay in taking on people because of the impact of COVID however. In any event some of our older hands are enjoying a new lease of life from having new people to work with.

Rostering remains our biggest bugbear. The roster is apparently computer generated and pushes the limit of what is permissible under the MECA. In our view there are too many single rostered days off (RDOs). This is simply not good enough given that the science tells us two nights are required to reset one's body clock if you are doing

shift work, not to mention the impact on work life balance. The worst job is a 0200 start tying down a coal train for a few hours.

The chronic shortage of locomotives is noticeable and is having a real impact over here. We hear on the grapevine there is a proposal to hire a couple of the locos from Dunedin Railways to alleviate the short term pressure. On a positive note we are busy and we have plenty of staff and when one looks at the public health and economic impact of COVID19 overseas and the loss of jobs here in tourism, retail and aviation we are feeling very fortunate to be in this industry.

The silly season is fast approaching so let's all look after each other out there and if it's not safe JUST SAY NO. 

LYTTELTON PORT

RMTU and MUNZ putting past differences behind them

AS readers of *The Activist* will be aware the major news since the previous edition of *The Transport Worker* has been the negotiation and ratification of our main waterfront collective agreement that covers the majority of the branch membership.

This expired on 7 September and was renegotiated and ratified with unprecedented speed, such that the new agreement has been signed and the backpay is already in members' bank accounts. This marks a welcome departure from the usual pattern of industrial relations at LPC, whereby we would spend months in increasingly acrimonious talks before breaking down into a dispute with strike and lock out notices being served by the parties. Instead, we have been putting our time and effort into constructive discussions around fatigue management, HPHE (high performance high engagement), and (an initiative of the new CEO) a joint LPC-combined unions delegates' day to recognise the role they play and to provide an opportunity for dialogue between the four unions in LPC and the employer. To further this end the RMTU branch and the MUNZ local have agreed to a facilitated 'truth and reconciliation' meeting in mid November to seek to put past differences behind us and to lay a path for a joint cooperative working relationship with LPC

in the future.

The above represents a big change in industrial relations at our port and a real opportunity for the RMTU branch to promote its interests – namely, a safe workplace, security of employment and the best possible wages and terms and conditions for members.

On the fatigue management front we have been engaging with LPC in a parallel process with the other waterfront unions and the consensus is that we should now do this together with everyone in the same room. This is a complex issue affecting all parts of the port's operation and there is no quick or easy fix. To date however, there has been steady, if incremental, progress in our discussions and a real willingness on the part of the employer to meaningfully engage.

Part of the terms of settlement of our collective agreement was an agreement by the branch to participate in a HPHE initiative after the manner that the RMTU has been involved in with KiwiRail over these past few years. We have already started preliminary discussions and the plant maintenance workshop been identified as the 'first cab off the rank'. We are aware this will take open minds and an adaptation to a different way of working by not just our members and delegates but also by middle

management. We are assured that senior management is right behind this initiative so remain hopeful that this will manifest in a positive approach from operational managers nearer the coalface.

Drug and alcohol testing has yielded a spike in positive results across the port in recent weeks. This is a concern as there is nothing new in the employer's approach. More people are being caught out for THC, the active ingredient in cannabis. Anecdotal reports of a culture of cannabis use in the local community suggest this may be a post-lockdown phenomenon and/or may be related to the debate around legalisation. Whatever the reason, members are strongly encouraged to think carefully before indulging: that smoke or cookie could cost you your job and there is very little your Union representatives can do to stop that.

On a more positive note we have had a fresh cohort of delegates through RMTU training along with their peers from KiwiRail and other port employers around the South Island. Our branch has also actively participated in Unions Canterbury elections events as well as a panel discussion on unionism hosted by the local Canterbury Socialist Society. All of this work builds relationships with the wider RMTU family and the labour movement, which has stood us in good stead in the past and will doubtless



do so in the future.

As usual we sent a strong delegation to the RMTU's National Conference, the highlight of which was a panel discussion on the first day which focused on COVID and the maritime border. Maritime NZ and the then Minister of Health participated. This has continued to be a hot topic since Conference as the health authorities and the port industry seeks to tighten up the border and maintain our excellent record

in managing COVID. To an extent everyone is improvising but we should not lose sight of the remarkable success that New Zealand has enjoyed compared to what is happening overseas.

It's inevitable there will be debates about things like the frequency and invasiveness of testing for example – no-one likes having something stuck up their nose or down their throat – but we have to keep in mind that we've done a good job protect-

ing our community and keeping the goods flowing across the waterfront to date and there is no reason for that to change if we continue to work together.

A big thank you to our national health and safety organiser, Karen Fletcher, for her support.

Until the next edition, stay safe and enjoy the festive season with those dearest to you. 🌐

TIMARU RAIL

Rosters remain the biggest issue

HERE in Timaru Rail we are quietly getting on with moving goods and maintaining the railway.

Our branch AGM was, as usual, a smoothly run affair and well attended and catered. A big thank you to Brad Eason, our branch secretary, for organising that.

New branch delegates have always accessed RMTU training in the past and it was no exception this time around with Dan Charteris attending RMTU delegate training in Christchurch in September. He met his peers from rail and port branches across the South Island. We look forward to Dan putting his new found knowledge into practice.

Our branch chair Doug Blakie attended the RMTU Biennial Conference in Wellington in October. This marked the 25th anniversary of the formation of our Union

and the Timaru Branch is proud to have played its part over that time in being an active component of the RMTU. A big thank you to everyone who made Conference such a memorable affair.

As far as local matters go the biggest topic of conversation in operations – apart from the election – has been rosters. These seldom follow the master roster and it appears the motivation to cut costs, we keep reading, is the culprit. There is often a failure to cover gaps caused by unplanned leave which can cause us grief in the long term. All for a short term fix. On a positive note we are training up rail operators to do an early shift at Ashburton to assist with the operation of the container transfer site there. This is good for our RCO in Ashburton and good for the customers as well.

The DSG ergonomic issue isn't going

away although we are aware that our South Island yard rep on KIC is working hard on this – well done Rebecca, don't give up, you have our backing.

Over in network services the lads are quietly working away at keeping the track and infrastructure up to scratch. We hear that there is finally a project to do some rational long term workforce planning and that our Union has been pivotal in supporting this. Good on our KNIC reps for maintain the pressure on this. The fact is we have been understaffed for years in network services and with rail poised to grow over the next decade we need to prepare now by getting the right people in place.

As we approach peak and the holiday season our branch wishes everyone a very safe summer. Keep safe and if in doubt, just say no! 🌐

TIMARU PORT

Stretching out to find new members

TENA koutou katoa, ke te pehea koe? Greetings from the Timaru Ports branch! My name is Josh Ruwhiu and I am the new branch secretary and this is my first set of notes for this magazine.

Man what an experience it was being given the opportunity to attend the 25th anniversary conference. It was truly a pleasure to be thrown in the deep end, when our branch president, Naylor, was unable to attend. I absolutely reveled in being able to network with other active members and officials. A big thank you to everyone who made our conference such a stimulating and interesting experience.

So what's been happening here in Timaru? Well lots of buzz and excitement around the place at the moment starting with members employed by Prime Port. Bill Hunter, the delegate for Prime Port members, is elated to report that they have undergone a company review and at the time of writing the word is the company are looking at hiring two new full time staff. Guaranteed hours have increased from 24 to 32 hours a week for all, and they are looking at early re-negotiation and a full re-write of there current collective. This is good news as at the beginning of the year, we ended up losing half a dozen members in a restructure

where we warned management this was unnecessary. While some will say it's too little to late the fact is management have realised they made a mistake, and look to be working positively to rectify the situation. Homai te paki paki for our comrades at Prime Port.

As for our members employed by Quality Marshalling (QM), we are undergoing some major changes of our own. From 2 November, QM took control of the gatehouse. We are now responsible for vessel planning, receivables and deliverables and over all supervision of the whole container operation. This brings with it new opportunities for career progression, and being rewarded

for such progression. It is a positive move, which provides a little bit of security for the next few years.

Over in C3 I am pleased to report we have a couple of new members joining our Union. This is a positive step, as we would really like to work with them in achieving some sort of certainty in the form of a col-

lective agreement. Unfortunately a lot of those guys and girls are a part of another union. But we shall keep putting the feelers out to see if we can make some progress.

Well that's about it from us here. I would really welcome the opportunity to attend next year's Ports Forum, and I look forward to being able to work with you on

all our health and safety issues.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini! – Success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many working together!

In unity from the team at Timaru Port branch 🇳🇿

PORT CHALMERS

Lessons on how to alienate a frontline workforce

GREETINGS from Port Otago where ourselves and the MUNZ local remain embroiled in what seems like an industrial guerrilla war with a management regime which appears bent on setting itself up as a case study in how to alienate its frontline workforce.

First we had a debacle of a restructure around port security that culminated in the RMTU's legal counsel weighing in to protect our members' rights. This resulted in a U-turn and an offer of redeployment being made to a very happy member. Far from an ideal way to do business however, and testimony to the immature state of the employment relationship between the unions and management at our port. We now have port protection officers who still haven't been trained for the security aspect of their role. Petty vindictiveness is the order of the day with the removal of the dart board and pool table from the amenities room being the worst example of this. Can't have work-

ers relaxing during their down time.

On the plus side the operations manager has resigned, much to the pleasure of the cargo handlers.

Our illustrious CEO has seen fit to exercise his prerogative and not pay out the profit share bonus to the frontline workers who generate the profit. How to win friends and influence people . . .

There are constant cries of how strapped we are for money but in a spectacular example of tokenism (or is it 'greenwashing?') the company has spent \$475,000 on electric vehicles. We can only assume these will feature in photographs in glossy board reports and public relations propaganda to be distributed to the local community.

The so-called fatigue initiative seems set to arrive at a pre-determined conclusion. Our delegation to the RMTU Conference was intrigued at just how different the approach is in some other ports where management and the RMTU seem to be

having a genuine dialogue.

On the subject of Conference our branch was delighted that long serving RMTU members and active branch officials Merv Read and John Lydiate were awarded our Union's greatest honour in being made life members.

We found the session on the maritime border and COVID19 at the port workshop which preceded Conference proper, to be enlightening. Clearly there has been a great deal of successful improvisation in our response to COVID and this success will only continue if we maintain our vigilance and work with RMTU National Office and the authorities to ensure the safety of our members and the wider community.

On that note we wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and let's hope 2021 is less challenging than 2020. At least the New Zealand parliamentary and US presidential elections delivered positive results. 🇳🇿



OTAGO RAIL

Locomotive issues looming large

THE latest high season is now upon the Dunedin team with milk products being moved at full capacity. There was no slowdown in dairy or export meat production due to COVID19 so things have been busy for the Dunedin operations team over the low season. One night train north and its opposing train was cancelled for two weeks before being reinstated after tonnage levels did not drop. Dunedin LEs also took over the running of the day shift Edendale trains because there were fewer staff at work over the lockdown period as day shift trains to Invercargill were can-

celled.

The branch extends a big thank you to Invercargill LEs and RMTU stalwarts Stacy Chandler and Danny Kent for attempting to assist the Dunedin team in moving the crossing forward of train 920 to Clinton up one crossing station from the normal Waipahi crossing. When the current train plan was introduced this crossing was time-tabled for a Clinton crossing and because of that a crossing with 920 and 919 at Mosgiel could then be achieved. After a short time the crossing was rescheduled to Waipahi and this knocked the next crossing back

to Milton, in turn stopping 920 getting in to Dunedin until the Taieri shunt had then run out on to the Taieri branch at Wingatui. The new crossing often extends the foot plate time of train 920 to 90 minutes plus on an at risk shift. Because this is an A shift our thinking behind the change is to assist in the management of fatigue. Our request was because Invercargill has just had a new LE signed off so we did hope 920 could be moved up one crossing station but at this time it is not to be. The branch gives a very big thank you to the three train controllers who regularly make the crossing of trains

◀ 927 and 920 at Clinton. You guys know who you are and we thank you. The crossing works at Clinton without interrupting customer service and it gives the Dunedin team one shift of better hours in amongst shifts on the Dunedin roster that are high in foot plate hours.

The current Dunedin roster was introduced to accommodate a new master train plan and at the time the then Dunedin KiwiRail manager made the branch a promise that when Invercargill got their next new LE the Dunedin roster could have a couple of small positive changes to assist fatigue management. Since then the Invercargill team have had two new LEs but there has been no support by management to implement those promised changes. We also want to question why it seems to be a requirement to have 80 hours per fortnight on each link on the Dunedin LEs roster when it is very clear that other depots can run with fewer hours on some links to assist the staff in managing their fatigue levels on at risk shifts.

Trains north of Dunedin in particular, involve high foot plate hours with shifts of nine, 10 and 20 hours being normal and, of course, late running on top of that. It is hoped that a review of north train running can look at a few issues to assist the Dunedin team. Roster delegate Graham Fahey has identified a few options that could utilise Timaru as they are staffed with four LEs and only run two trains. We believe this would not affect the hours of the Timaru crews.

It is also worth noting that with the return to work of an LE from long term sickness it was decided to make the 15 LEs working the Dunedin loco roster work a double up of the link they were working at the time. This was done without consultation. No thought was given to the plans

made by the LE team for their the next fortnight when they were off duty. This has to be questioned because in the past, when a new LE is required to work the roster, the whole depot has never been required to re-work the previous link they were working.

Locomotive issues loom large down here. Availability of locomotives is problematical and we are seeing Dxs being used on our main line shunt jobs. Anyone in the know will understand the DX is not the best shunt locomotive. The odd DC still runs up and down the Main South Line while it is noted four DCs have been sold to Martinus Rail in Australia for use on rail construction trains. This at a time when the South Island is having major issues with locomotives and availability. This could be viewed as a short sighted. At the time of writing time no new locomotives have been ordered for the South Island and when they are they will be some years away from service. It has also been noted that DXR locomotives have been running between Christchurch and Invercargill because of the shortage but on trail only basis because they are not fitted with a front drop out window for evacuation in the Category 1 Mihiwaka tunnel north of Dunedin.

A number of locomotive failures of late in the Otago and Southland region has seen the affected locomotives towed dead to Christchurch so they can be fixed.

At the time of writing KiwiRail has approached Dunedin Railways to hire a couple of their locos to be employed on the Fonterra shunt to free up other locos for the mainline. Speaking of Dunedin Railways, still no word on a prospective buyer. Our members are keeping a close eye on developments.

The debacle with ergonomics on shunt

locos continues. Our South Island yard rep on KIC, Rebecca Hauck, is advocating strongly on this and coordinating with the members across the South Island depots.

Over in network services there have been a rather robust discussions between the RMTU branch officials and our managers on how to interpret clause 29 of the MECA regarding contracting out. The results of these discussions has resulted in a better understanding between both groups. On the basis of these talks, a monthly forum has been set up to discuss when contractors may be required to be used and why. This is in line with clause 29 which among other things talks about proper consultation.

The first meeting was a success and there were quite a few other issues, topics, and general business discussed. To give credit where credit is due, part of what made this a success was the buy in from the managers who were present.

This bodes well for the future and full credit to them for fronting up and making it a worthwhile discussion.

On that note we welcome to our new field production manager for the lower South Island, at this stage a for six month secondment, Doug Tamatea Snr. Many members think the management team have finally made a correct decision as Doug is well known and respected. Of course now he is in the lofty heights of management we will be keeping an eye on him to ensure he plays nicely.

Thoughts are turning to Christmas and now is the time to be more aware of what we are here to do and take care that we are not distracted by impending holidays. On that note we wish everyone in our KiwiRail and RMTU family the very best for Christmas and the holidays. 🌐



SOUTHLAND RAIL

Absurd closure threatened

READERS of *The Activist* and *The Transport Worker* will recall the vigorous lobbying done by our Union when it was mooted back in August that KiwiRail had confirmed they were planning for the closure of the Ohai to Invercargill branch line, commonly referred to as the Wairio Branch. The absurdity of threatening the closure of a line in which

a great deal of investment has been sunk in recent years seemed self-evident to us and National Office took up the fight. We understand that the cost of road bridging the coal for Fonterra in the event of the line closing was vastly more expensive than the price sought by KiwiRail. Nothing official has been said but coal trains have run regularly and there has even been a sixth service

on a Saturday. So hopefully that particular threat has been averted.

In operations, Rata Shearer has completed on the job training (OJT) as a locomotive engineer and has been signed off. Raera Tuau-Templeton is 200 hours into her OJT on the way to becoming Southland's first female LE. It's great to see new people coming through as the old hands pass on

the baton to the new generation.

Our LE delegate Danny Kent was successful with a proposed LE roster including a new link which has gone final and will have begun by the time you are reading this. Danny successfully organised and held a meeting where nearly all LEs attended and this resulted in unanimous support for his proposal. It was fantastic to see such support and great to see our branch taking the initiative.

There are plenty of locomotive issues that we are sure readers will be aware of. One was identified in our very own depot during radio and VD testing – a locomotive penalty brake failures during a so-called successful brake test. This had alarm bells ringing as it is clearly a deemed a very high risk problem needs solving. A team was put together which has risk assessed the situation. We are looking forward to Adam Williams, general manager for rolling

stock and asset services, visiting our depot in the next few weeks to update us face-to-face on progress with new locomotive procurement.

Fonterra Edendale milk peaked earlier last week for the season, trains have been running with "fair" tonnage.

Like many in our industry we look at tourism, retail and aviation and are thankful we are employed transporting the commodities still being produced and exported in the midst of a global pandemic and recession.

Many of us have friends and family who are doing it tough and have lost jobs from the impact of COVID.

Over in the yard, the RCO/RO team are still not having much



Southern Rail's Raera Tuau-Templeton (l), 200 hours into her on the job training to becoming Southland's first female LE photographed here with colleagues Danny Kent (LE) and Rata Shearer (trainee LE).

success around the seating issues within the DSG shunt locos. A big thank you to our South Island yard rep on KIC, Rebecca Hauck, for her advocacy on this. Don't give up the fight – this is a deeply and widely felt issue not just in our branch.

Over in network services there has been plenty of track work going on: sleeper renewals and ballast discharges have been much in evidence, so not all the work is going on up in Auckland.

Our track and signals members really are the unsung heroes in the company. Those of us who keep abreast of the news in *The Activist* can see that network services has been chronically understaffed for years and this has had a big impact on our capacity to shift from the bad old days of 'managed decline' as we were barely kept on life support with inadequate funding to the period of growth we have at long last entered with sustained government investment in rail.

Finally, seasons greeting to everyone. Stay safe, don't assume anything is always 100% and apply good safe working practices like STAR – Stop Think Act Review. Return home from work safely, happy, and in good working order – our top priority. 🇳🇿

Rail & Maritime Transport Union Inc
Statement of Financial Position
As At 30/06/2020

	Note	2020	2019
CURRENT ASSETS			
Current Bank Accounts	5	691,152	401,995
Accounts Receivable	3	86,174	87,471
Interest Accrued	4	39,875	42,220
Investments	7	3,646,101	2,119,300
Total Current Assets		4,463,301	2,650,986
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Fixed Assets	6	151,237	136,438
Investments	7	1,587,570	2,797,826
Total Non Current Assets		1,738,808	2,934,264
Total Assets		6,202,109	5,585,251
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accounts Payable	8	76,053	138,411
GST Payable		28,361	23,773
Konemi Provision		6,452	6,452
Income Tax Payable		(6,283)	(11,407)
Provision for Leave		132,128	114,889
Veteran's Reunion Fund		6,850	6,850
Total Current Liabilities		243,581	278,969
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Non Current Liabilities		-	-
Total Non Current Liabilities		-	-
NET ASSETS		\$ 5,958,527	\$ 5,306,282
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
		\$ 5,958,527	\$ 5,306,282

Represented by:

MEMBERS' FUNDS

Signed on behalf of the National Management Committee

General Secretary

National President

Date

Date



Rebecca Hauck and Josh Baker.



Allan Addison-Saipu.



Doug Blakie



John Millward



Bill Hunter

PINK SHIRT DAY

Delegates at Conference 2020 gave their wholehearted support to Pink Shirt Day. See story page 19.



Christine Fisiiboi



Ann Wells



Dave Kearns and Lisa Davidson.

Leighton Mosese.



Roz Muir