

JUNE 2011

THE Transport Worker

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



Parliament protest

UNION AND COMMUNITY RALLY
PARLIAMENT GROUNDS | 12.15-1 PM | THURSDAY

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Outgoing-national president Jim Kelly's contribution to the Union is recognised by colleagues.

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Cracks found in the engine mounts of the DFT locos.

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Will Port Lyttleton go the same way as other public enterprises under the National government?

COVER PHOTO

RMTU members at the protest demonstration in front of Parliament on Budget day.



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Wayne Butson
General secretary
RMTU

I feel like an extra in the movie 'Groundhog day'! This rubbish Government just has to be banished to the opposition benches as soon as possible. The budget and their raft of legislation passed under urgency all hark back to a bygone era of the early and mid 90s. Cuts to benefits and attacks on beneficiaries, slash and burn in the public sector, privatisation, ripping away workers' rights and so the list goes on.

These are all the failed policies of the past and demonstrate that the John Key-led Government is the same old National party with a different wrapper. There is not a Kiwi I know that doesn't accept that the policies of the National Government during the early to mid 90s failed this country and set us down a pathway which cost taxpayers a fortune to undo.

Remember, the only reason that the Labour-led Government had to buy back rail was that Ruth Richardson, as the Minister of Finance, at that time sold it for a pittance. Treasury published this in a privatisation experience paper shortly after its renationalisation.

What have we learnt?

- The rail system has reverted to Crown ownership and Crown funding.
- A view that rail freight could be commercially viable proved optimistic.
- Private rail companies will not readily invest in long-term commuter rail infrastructure on the basis of short-term funding contracts.
- The expectation that a TranzRail-owned commuter rail system would work was therefore optimistic.
- Ultimately the rail system reverted to government ownership and public funding because although TranzRail and Toll faced hard budget constraints, the public, including significant parts of the business community, did not find the consequences of the hard budget constraint acceptable.

We in rail know better than most that privatisation just doesn't work. It doesn't work for the workers involved and it doesn't work for taxpayers and citizens.

Smiling John's 'fire' sale

I despair at seeing four power companies and Air New Zealand on the sales block. Why would you sell assets which make a return to the taxpayer? Smiling John says that the shares will be targeted to mum and dad investors looking for somewhere to invest now that finance companies are considered unsafe. This is laughable and complete spin. The Government has no control over who these companies sell to. In a matter of months these iconic NZ-owned companies could be owned by faceless entities anywhere on the planet. Watch our current account problem get worse as even more profits leave New Zealand.

The attack on Kiwisaver is a disgrace. Twice in the space of three years this Government has screwed the scrum on this savings scheme. They cut the employer contribution rates shortly after parking their bums on the treasury benches and in this budget raised the employer rate, imposed a tax on the employer contribution and dealt to the tax credit. Aren't we always being told that

our problem is that we aren't saving?

We're also told that we are borrowing too much and our debt burden is too high. That's true but the spin is mischievous. Our public debt is actually very low. However, our private sector debt is too high. Private sector debt is mostly mortgages (a big contributor is farming) which are raised off-shore, and credit card debt and other lending from banks. No amount of Government slash and burn on Government spending is going to change the levels of private sector debt. All it is going to do is reduce services, lower growth in the economy and increase unemployment and benefit dependency at a time of attacks on benefits and beneficiaries.

And now ACC

As I write this I am listening to a news report on ACC Minister Nick Smith as he heralds KiwiRail as being a success story of the Accredited Employer Scheme owing to their 'massive reduction' in workplace injuries and claims "at the centre of which is management involvement". To say this has had a very detrimental effect on my blood pressure and mental well-being would be an understatement. In my view the turnaround in H&S and workplace injuries and claims is wholly attributable to the fact that in 2000 the then Minister of Labour, Margaret Wilson, initiated a Ministerial Inquiry into the H&S of Tranz Rail Employees. Following public hearings and the legions of workers and families giving their evidence a report was issued. That report set about a massive change in the Company's approach to H&S and to the implementation of worker or employee involvement. H&S action teams were formed and empowered throughout NZ. Dedicated H&S staff were appointed and empowered and a joint H&S executive was formed to take overview of the system. It was the implementation of that system with workers and managers together taking responsibility and the outlawing of some dodgy long-standing work practices which saw the statistics begin their tumble, Mr Smith. Further gains were made by the formation of Industrial Councils and their empowerment to make decisions.

2011 election & MMP

It is imperative that we ensure that all persons eligible to vote are on the electoral role so that they are able to exercise their democratic right to vote. At this election in November everyone will get three votes. An electorate vote, a party vote and a vote on MMP. We must retain MMP as it has ensured that we have a parliament which reflects our society. The current diversity is only there as a result of MMP. MMP is worth voting for! 

LE Recruitment

Dear Editor

I fully support the views of Bernie Henare and the correspondent as published in 'The Activist' regarding LE recruitment.

The current process is demonstrably incompetent and eminently suitable internal and external applicants are being routinely overlooked by the recruitment lackeys engaged by our current HR empire builders.

This is demoralising and insulting particularly for internal applicants and is perhaps indicative of a company move to "dumb down" the role.
Brian Armstrong.

Dear Editor

I read with interest Bernie's memo. In the middle of last year (2010) I was at a staff retirement function and had the opportunity to speak to Aaron Templeton (general manager - operations). I jumped at the chance to say that I felt that KiwiRail has got it wrong. They need to stop employing people off the streets for their locomotive jobs and look at training up own staff.

My reasoning for this is, you can turn the railway into a real career path for staff, starting off as a rail operator, then remote control operator (RCO) then a team leader (TL) or locomotive engineer (LE) if they so desire. By doing this, by the time the staff member has got to the position of LE or TL, they have a great knowledge of the workings of the railway and also often have a family and are settled in an area. This may stop the flow of our staff across the ditch to Australia. What's next for a young LE trained in New Zealand? Australia?

Since that talk I have taking the opportunity to apply for LE training and was turned down, which I found rather surprising considering I'm a RCO, and also hold CTC and drive on the mainline 14 kms to and from Port Chalmers, with rather large and heavy tonnage. But that is another matter.

Shame on you, KiwiRail, for recruiting overseas when you have plenty of willing, able and loyal workers locally. Didn't you learn any lessons when you went down this path with training of ex-drivers from South Africa?

Russell Storey
Dunedin.

Resignations

Dear Editor,

Please accept my notice of resignation as a locomotive engineer, Wellington, from the RMTU and LE Trust Fund. I want to thank the Union and Union delegates for the support given me over the 36.5 years I have been with the railways. In particular the improvements and better workplace conditions and wages the Union has won for all its members.

I wish the RMTU all the best for the times ahead.

My letter of resignation takes effect on 7/4/2011.

Wayne Ramanui.

Dear Editor

I wish to tender my resignation from the RMTU with my last day of duty at KiwiRail being April 7, 2011.

I thank you and your organisation for your continued support during my tenure with KiwiRail.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Wayne Olsen 12220
Locomotive engineer
Wellington.

The case for Clifford Bay

ONCE again, shifting the South Island ferry terminal from Picton to Clifford Bay is on the agenda – only this time the talk is more urgent and compelling.

The rationale for the move can be summed up as showing:

- increases in rail volumes by 70% over 25 years;
- the retirement of Arahura and needing to be replaced with a larger rail capable vessel;
- making the 180m Kaitaki (or equivalently sized vessel) rail capable
- insufficient marshalling capacity in Picton to accommodate projected volumes;
- significant rail berth modifications at Picton to accommodate larger vessels;
- even with these changes, the turnaround times required for these larger vessels restricts Picton turnarounds;
- the shorter transit time to Clifford Bay allows three returns per day.

Best choice

In short, Clifford Bay came out as the best choice for a variety of compelling reasons including:

- The land was owned by NZRC at a cost of \$200m;
- It provides more direct routes avoiding the Marlborough Sounds speed restrictions.
- Direct savings in fuel and maintenance costs.
- Rail route bypasses the steep elevations out of Picton and in the Dashwoods.
- When the ferry fleet needs replacing, current Marlborough Sounds' restrictions will no longer apply.

The port facility at Clifford Bay involves the con-



struction of a 2.2km breakwater and a reclamation of land to provide for a rail linkspan, road ramps, vehicle/rail lanes and a CV marshalling area. It will be designed to accommodate significantly larger vessels.

Additionally the new route is 9 nautical miles shorter on the water and 55 km shorter on the road allowing for more return sailings giving major productivity gains and fuel and other cost savings to both the

ferry/rail operator and to customers.

It is projected that the sea route will reduce sailing time by 30 minutes while road transport will save 50 minutes and rail 80 minutes.

Other options were investigated including Lyttelton and Clarence River but none beat Clifford Bay when such things as time, distance, greenhouse gas emissions, air quality and more were added up. 🌐



New Zealand port statistics

NZ export statistics

(12 months to Dec 2010 in tonnes)

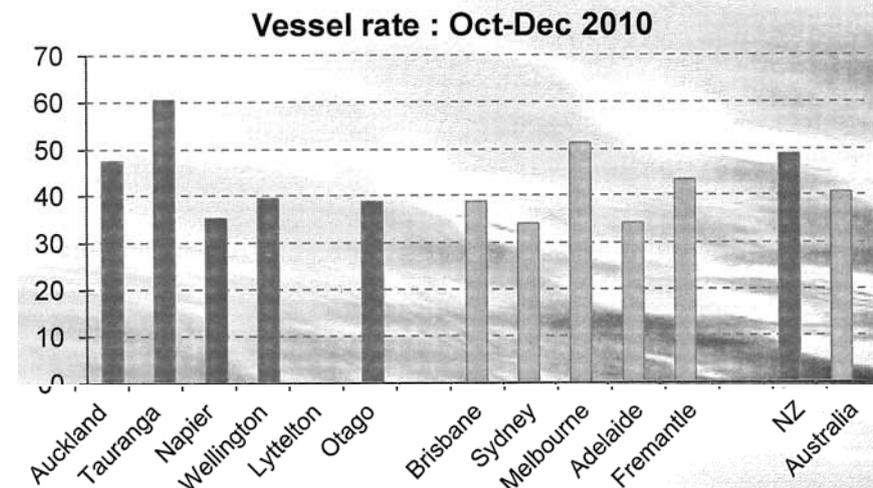
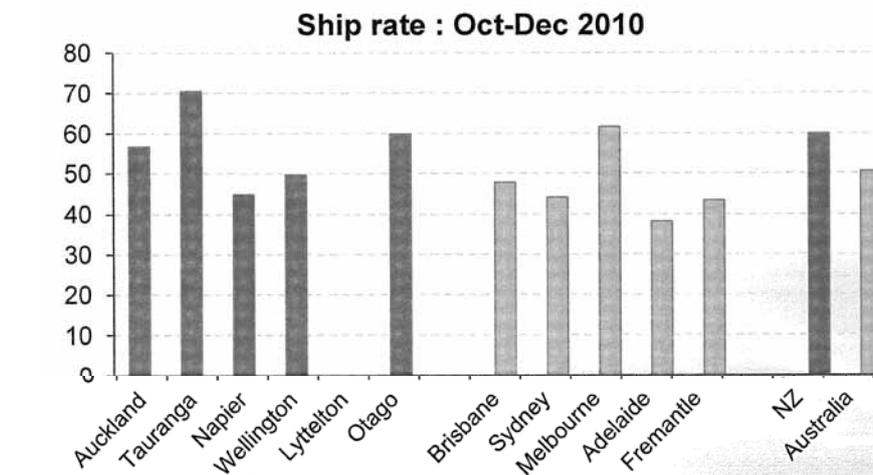
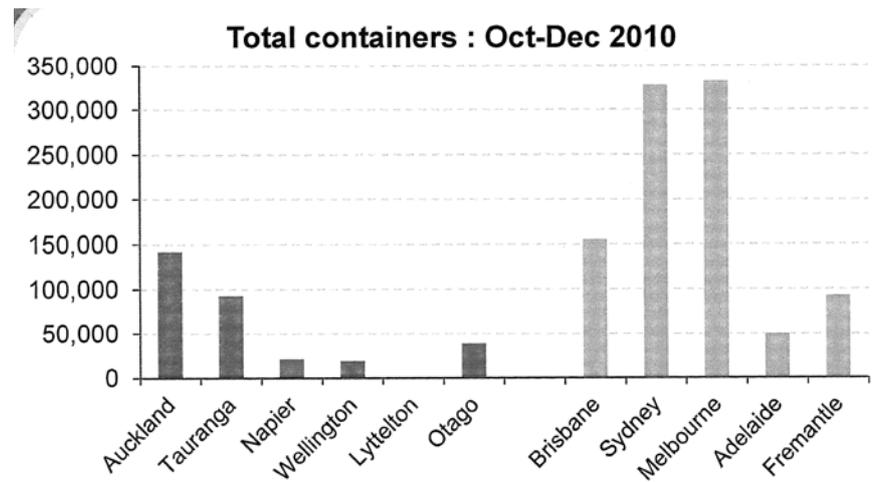
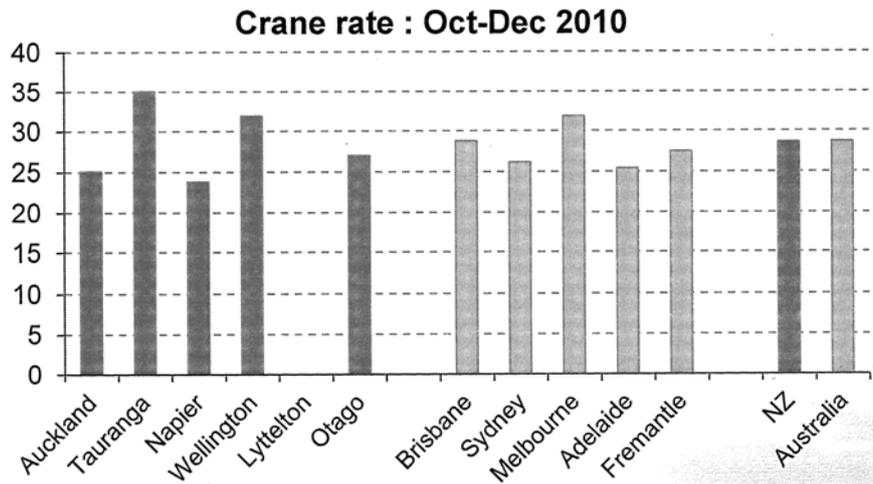
■ Tauranga	8.1 million
■ New Plymouth	3.38 m
■ Auckland	2.67m
■ Napier	2.44m
■ Whangarei	1.942m
■ Gisborne	1.348m
■ Wellington	1.075m

(Excluding oil and transhipments)

■ Tauranga	7.8m
■ Napier	2.44m
■ Whangarei	1.9m
■ Auckland	1.6m
■ Gisborne	1.34m
■ New Plymouth	1.08m
■ Wellington	1.07m

Where the %##*# are you?

- Did you get that important notice from the Union last month? Last year? Any time? If you haven't had any mail from RMTU head office then you had better tell us where you've moved to. Check your address by:
- talking to your branch chair who has a list of local members and their details;
- going to the Union website and updating your details – <http://bit.ly/exmEYL>
- phoning 04-499-2066;
- faxing 04-471-0896 ;
- giving us your e-mail to save on postage.



A plea from Hutt Workshops to KiwiRail to build New Zealand locomotives In New Zealand

DL Chinese or DL Hutt?

By Kasia Kurene,
Hutt branch chair

On behalf of our branch
members

"One of the casualties of the corporatisation and privatisation of rail in the 1980s and early 1990s was the network of railway workshops throughout the country."

THE future of railway workshops in New Zealand has been further eroded by the purchase of the new DL locomotives from overseas.

Last year's Business & Economic Research Ltd (BERL) report (commissioned by the RMTU and the Dunedin City Council) highlighted the benefits to NZ Inc of manufacturing locomotives, wagons and passenger cars in New Zealand citing economic and educational benefits and the security of employment for rail workers and the retention of our core trade skills in New Zealand.

In my view, it will not be long before New Zealand becomes the Third World Country that China outsources its work to. Workers in Asian countries are waking up and realising that they can be paid more than a bowl of rice for their labour and are fighting back for better wages and conditions.

Transport Minister Steven Joyce's decision to not intervene and prevent KiwiRail's Board from purchasing the new locomotives from China has affected the security of our jobs at the Hutt Workshops and for our external suppliers around Wellington and other parts of New Zealand – together with the jobs of our brothers and sisters at Hillside Engineering in Dunedin.

We at Hutt have tradespeople with the skills and knowledge to build new locomotives, wagons and passenger carriages. We have designed, built, manufactured and maintained rail vehicles since the 1930s.

The purchase of the new DLs has created uncertainty for on-going employment and job security at the shops. Currently, at Hutt we are overhauling the DFTs, refurbishing the DHs, repairing rust in the DCs

and installing Tait radios on all classes of locomotive when we should be building the new locomotives.

Why aren't we building them we ask? We have done so before and we can do so again if only this National Government believed in New Zealand's people and the future of manufacturing within New Zealand.

Can we build locomotives in New Zealand? Easy answer this one: Yes we can. We have the skill base and knowledge of 80 years of designing, manufacturing and building and have refurbished ADKs, ADLs, completed the prototype for the Ganz Mavag refurbishment and overhauled and rebuilt all classes of locomotives including the DX, DFT, DXR, DBR, DC, DSJ, DSG, DA and EO. A proven track record of performance and high quality work.

Since the decision to build overseas we have lost 20 fully qualified tradespeople to Australia and I am sure we will continue to lose more and more. They cannot see a future here in NZ for themselves or their families. NZ's loss is Australia's gain yet again.

The outsourcing of the new locomotives is draining morale. We know that we can refurbish, overhaul and maintain old stock but aren't considered good enough to build the new by our bosses and the other fat cats on the KiwiRail Board. Our work at Hutt is dependent on the Mechanical Group budget and the workload fluctuates as more and more rolling stock is outsourced and/or purchased from overseas.

Each new locomotive or component purchased from overseas takes away another job from us. Admittedly, some parts cannot be manufactured here, but a very large percentage can. I am sure that they don't manufacture everything in China either and import some of their components. This means China has a local content requirement whereas we don't.

Hutt Workshops was built specifically to build, overhaul and maintain locomotives and rolling stock. We have a stable workforce with a wide range of individual skills and a vast wealth of knowledge and expertise. All of these skills may now be lost.

Along with Hillside, Hutt Workshops

could face closure if the government continues to outsource its heavy engineering contracts.

We need to ensure the retention of future projects within New Zealand and retain New Zealand work for New Zealand workers.

We need to continue to push our Union's 'Build New Zealand' campaign.

We must continue to highlight the skill base and strength of our trades' workforce.

New Zealand tradespeople are held in high esteem and are in great demand in countries overseas but according to the Minister of Transport, not here in New Zealand.

If we built the new locomotives at Hutt Workshops, rail would continue to be a major employer and educator of future tradespeople, providing apprenticeships and support to local institutions of higher learning.

Outsourcing is not:

- a temporary shortage of jobs, it is a loss of careers;
- creating growth in rail but causing the dumbing down of the trades
- good for morale;
- creating certainty for our tradespeople and the contractors;
- a way to create jobs and provide a future for New Zealanders;
- creating growth and sustainability; or
- investing in the future of New Zealand or its people.

Outsourcing causes:

- the loss of rail-specific training, experience and knowledge;
- the loss of tradespeople resigning due to the uncertainty. Many of whom move to other employment or migrate; and
- the further erosion of the New Zealand economy while improving the economy of the countries who get our work. 🇳🇿

We want to build new locomotives in New Zealand.

We have the skills.

We have our tradesmen.

We have the will.

We want a FUTURE FOR RAIL.



Hobbit dispute not forgotten

- or an orchestrated beat-up of unions and collective bargaining

THE CTU recently published its side of the dispute between Actors Equity (AKA the Hobbit's cast) and Warner Brothers (AKA Peter Jackson and Wingnut Films) on Scoop [scoop.co.nz] in an effort to bring some clarity to the central issues and to wipe some of the mud continuing to be thrown at the CTU.

Readers will recall Warner Brothers' muscle-men flying into Wellington for a special meeting with John Key and some of his ministers and, not long afterwards, Key caved in and the Warner heavies walked away with some generous concessions courtesy of New Zealand tax payers.

Between the demands of screen actors for better money and conditions and the final "hurrah" from the heavies, a series of public, and not so public, events took place – many long before the Hobbit debacle began.

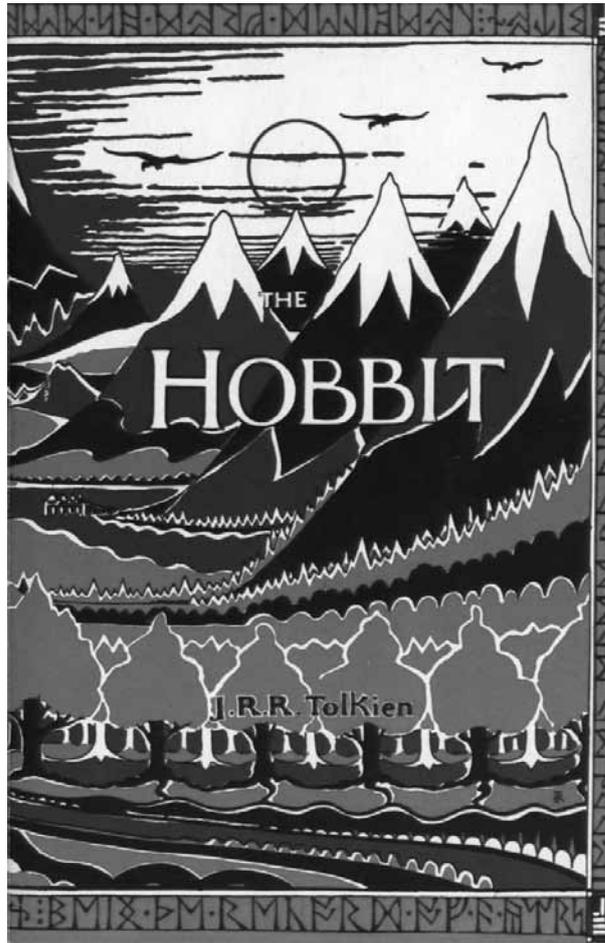
Well before Peter Jackson's initial outburst, both sides – actors and producers – were discussing the issues, albeit with little success.

With the dust now somewhat settled on the dispute and the movies being made, CTU president Helen Kelly has posted the union's side of the story (see link below for her full statement).

She says she has posted the story to give the union perspective. Her more than 10,000 word story is thorough, well-documented and comprehensive, includes e-mail exchanges and refers to documents independently sighted by the media.

However, no sooner was her article published than South Pacific Pictures owner John Barnett castigated Kelly's account as biased and relying on "inaccurate" newspaper articles.

He said that while it may reflect the union side of the story, it was not the "clear set of facts" which he hoped would be forthcoming. However, he fails to add anything new or revealing which may lead to those "clear set of facts".



"The response to the Hobbit dispute underlies a fundamental problem with the "jobs" narrative that is being driven up by the right wing in this country and used to hammer any worker who might want to have a voice in the economy or world of work."

Kelly begins by pointing out that fundamentally the dispute was "simply a situation where a group of workers sought to have a say on the setting of their terms and conditions".

Actors Equity, the union to which over 600 NZ performers belong, had tried on a number of occasions prior to the Hobbit dispute to get a binding form of agreement for its members in the NZ screen industry. It

had also co-operated with the Screen Production and Development Association (SPADA) to revise guidelines for conditions for performers in the industry (in a document called The Pink Book) – most recently in 2005.

SPADA, in a statement issued after the CTU article was published on Scoop says it is genuinely committed to working with all the parties to resolve matters around conditions for the engagement of performers in New Zealand (ie: The Pink Book) but has promised not to talk to media while it works towards a resolution.

The Pink Book offers guidelines for actors and producers to determine pay and conditions. Since its inception numerous cases have been highlighted by actors showing producers largely ignoring its recommendations.

Since 2009 Actors Equity has been campaigning for a standard contract for the engagement of performers in the screen industry. Many producers, including South Pacific Pictures, Great Southern Film & Television and GRST reacted by either threatening to cancel production or fire the current cast and hire anew.

Equity realised, if it were to make progress, it would need support from international performers.

And so began the Hobbit dispute for the New Zealand public.

It began in May 2010 when a contract for the engagement of performers on The Hobbit was sent to Equity and to agents. The contract omitted a number of key conditions outlined in the Pink Book and no residual payments were included for performers.

Kelly's article then describes how the Federation of International Actors (FIA) discussed the NZ situation and agreed that unless Equity could make progress on bargaining it would call on performers to show international solidarity and advise

Continued on the next page

Keep SOEs in public hands

THE RMTU condemns the plans released by the National Party-led Government to sell off four state owned enterprises (SOEs) and we commit to fighting to keep them in public ownership. The vast majority of the RMTU's membership works within KiwiRail group which is, itself, a reborn crown entity created out of the smouldering ashes of a previously privatised SOE – NZ Railways. We know first-hand the rapacious zeal with which the new owners set about unlocking and ripping out the cash and assets and replacing them with debt. The private owners of NZ Railways left a shell of an organisation barely able to function.

Also, we should not forget the cuts in wages, lowering of work conditions, redundancies and maintenance cut backs.

So it is with sure and certain knowledge that we say 'experience shows that private corporate ownership leads to a



sure and certain deterioration of Kiwi workers' pay and conditions.

Retaining public ownership of key SOEs is in the best interest of NZ Inc because it means that WE retain control over the operation and get the payback for our investment in returns to the crown: ie - taxpayers and stakeholders.

Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past! 

Hobbit dispute continued

members to hold off signing.

Warners were unwilling to negotiate and the dispute escalated with Warners complaining that the Equity "boycott" was actioned without attempting to talk to the studio first. The facts, of course, show otherwise and Kelly meticulously describes how, carefully documenting the correspondence between Warners the actors' unions and Jackson through to Jackson's "emotional" outburst which brought the dispute to the media who quickly cottoned on to his intimations that Wellington might lose the Hobbits.

It is worth noting that Jackson is not the employer/producer in this dispute and did not need to become involved in the way he chose.

Within a couple of days of Jackson's attack the Government waded in with its legal opinion - not to try to facilitate a settlement of the dispute but to support Warners in their refusal to meet and negotiate. And all without consulting a single union.

Finally, the CTU became involved.

"We realised that all the powers of this huge US company, Peter Jackson's star quality and the Government's anti union programme could be used to damage both

Equity and the union movement generally. Some have questioned why the CTU got involved. Equity is a CTU-affiliated union. But in any case, it is our fundamental belief in the rights of workers to bargain that meant we had an absolute obligation to provide any support we could against this unfair attack. When we stop believing in that, for our own reputation and relief, we will fail in our function as the summit and leader of the union movement in New Zealand."

In great detail, Kelly then describes subsequent events quoting large tracts from emails and transcripts, all carefully showing a government uninterested in talking to unions, a major film-producing company eyeing its profits and actors desperately trying to negotiate a fair and honest contract.

"It was outrageous," wrote Kelly of the solution negotiated by Warners and Government, "that the Government removed worker rights as it did. It suited the Government's anti-worker rhetoric, but it, and Warners, knew that the dispute had been settled." But, she added, for all their hurrahs about a solution they didn't actually settle the original and ongoing industrial dispute: the actors' demands for better wages and conditions.

Hopefully, Barnett's wish for someone to publish the producers' side of the story will come. In the meanwhile, the union account is out there to be read.

"It is important to have a union record on this dispute but also because this dispute has become the subject of a number of academic publications," says Kelly. "Having a clear set of facts on which these can be based is rather important.

"But the response to the Hobbit dispute underlies a fundamental problem with the "jobs" narrative that is being driven up by the right wing in this country and used to hammer any worker who might want to have a voice in the economy or world of work. The narrative is largely unchallenged and is holding us back in many areas and is part of the growing corporate dominance over of our society and community.

"The union was demonised and a change to employment law, at the request of Warners, was New Zealand's way of apologising for some of our citizens' bad behaviour." 

■ For the full article plus some relevant links:

<http://bit.ly/hLgv5t>

Rail engineering future bleak

HILLSIDE'S future looked bleak before the Budget and nothing revealed there looked to change that picture.

Pre-Budget, KiwiRail's CEO Jim Quinn spoke with a forked tongue, according to RMTU general secretary, Wayne Butson. On the one hand he says the company is looking for a partner to invest in modernising the rail passenger fleet – knowing all along that that partner would almost certainly be found overseas and probably in Asia – and on the other hand saying he had confidence in Hillside's capacity and capability.

"He can't have it both ways," said Butson. "If he's so damned certain about Hillside's future why won't he allow the works to bid to build the company's rolling stock?"

Butson's criticism is also focussed on job losses in New Zealand, losing valuable trade skills to Australia and putting families at risk from redundancies.

"The benefits of keeping jobs here far outweighs the short-term cost-benefits of cheaper work off-shore," he said.

Last year KiwiRail deliberately denied Hillside the right to bid for contracts which went instead, to Korea to build the new Matangi units for Wellington and to China to build the new DX locos. Both with the National government's support and encouragement.

Outgoing-RMTU president Jim Kelly, who is employed at Hillside, told D-Scene that the Works are an important part of Dunedin's manufacturing landscape. He fears for Hillside's future.

"We provide work for firms here and around New Zealand," he said. "The guys have families here, they shop around here, there is a huge ripple effect. It's not just the 170 people who work here, you're talking about thousands."

He is also critical of Quinn and the government's decision to bypass Hillside in favour of overseas companies.

Hutt Workshops are in

a similar quandary with workers at both sites wondering if KiwiRail has any commitment or interest in keeping a large engineering capacity in New Zealand.

"The Chinese workshop is government-owned, so we were behind the eight ball right from the beginning," Kelly told D-Scene. Right now he says Hillside has work for the next year, but when that work runs out he wonders how many of the 170 staff will be retained.

"I'm not convinced that everybody is going to be here in a year's time."

Dunedin South MP, Labour's Clare Curran, agrees with Kelly saying there is a question mark over Hillside's future.

She told D-Scene that "we must do everything we can to keep it (Hillside) here because these are skilled jobs that should

have a future." She added that it wasn't a "romantic dream" but that the Works were simply not being given the "opportunity" required. 🇳🇿



Gerbard Steenkamp at work on one of the new Tranz Scenic AK class cars. (below) Sam Mataafai cuts up the scrap ready for the foundry.



Russell Gibson and Chris Maxwell caught working.



(l) Les Patrick steering a bogie frame and (inset) Barry Humphrey concentrating on the hole.



(above) New AK Class carriage for Tranz Scenic.

New national president

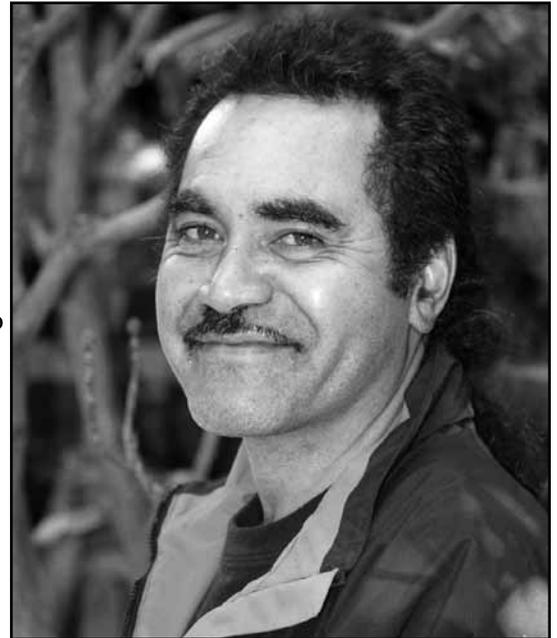
LAST month Aubrey Wilkinson was elected unopposed as RMTU national president. He replaces Jim Kelly who had the position since 1995. He did not seek re-election. Jim has been a very strong, popular and successful national president with a steady hand on the tiller. Jim's work will be recognised at June NMC meeting and the National Conference later this year.

Aubrey is employed by Port Tauranga as a container crane operator at Sulphur Point. His election elicited the following letters:

Dear Editor,
I would be grateful if you would pass on the RTBU's congratulations and best wishes to Aubrey.
I look forward to working with you both in protecting the rights of workers in our industries across the Tasman.

Bob Nanva
General secretary
RTBU

Dear Editor,
Can you pass on my congratulations to comrade Aubrey.
Joe Fleetwood
General secretary



Retirements



Barry Nicol who is retiring after 48 years meritorious service to the rail industry. Unfortunately Barry is leaving on medical grounds but is not unhappy with his treatment by KiwiRail. He is looking forward to getting a new hip and enjoying life.

Service recognised



Jim Kelly's 22 years of service to the RMTU, and its predecessor unions, as its national president was recognised last month by his colleagues who have labelled the staff room as the Kelly Room and have created a special plaque to mark the occasion. Jim is pictured here with Jim Kearns.



Henry Wong (l) retired after a long and industrious career spanning 51 years in the Railways and the RMTU. He is pictured here with a pair of mounted clippers as a reminder of his days in rail.



One Of Tranz Scenic's stalwarts retired last month. Neville Meek worked as a luggage man on the Christchurch platform although he first started out as a loco engineer in the South Island. His farewell was held at Addington Station. He is pictured (left) inside the luggage van with assistant Kelvin Graham.

New SI organiser tours workplace

WHILE there is a lot of union experience behind recently-appointed South Island RMTU organiser, John Kerr, he's definitely looking to the troops on the ground to build his knowledge of rail.



"I've got a lot to learn about New Zealand railway culture," he said adding that he is depending on delegates and members to help

him along the way.

John developed his union 'heart' in teachers' unions in the UK as a shop steward. Since arriving in New Zealand he has honed his union skills with the EPMU. As an RMTU organiser, John sees his role principally as one of support and assistance to help his colleagues on the 'front line' – especially union delegates and representatives.

"These are smart and dedicated people," he said. "My job is to boost their confidence and skills. They're the muscle and sinew of the union movement, I'm just the hired help."

He has four priorities:

- getting out and visiting people on the job regularly and frequently, raising union matters and pre-empting problems;
- delegate training and educating;
- encouraging and supporting collective bargaining; and
- attending to personal grievances and disputes.

"Actually, if the first three are done well, the last one almost fades away," he said.

John lives in Christchurch with his wife, Eileen.



John Kerr, the newly-appointed SI organiser was introduced to RMTU staff around the country: (above) He met with Sam Murray at Hillside, (right) with RCO Aaron McIntosh at Edendale.



John meets 100 years of service at Hillside. Allan and Alex McDowell have seen it all and their father also worked at Hillside for around 30 years.

(below) John walks the walk at Hutt Workshops with Terry Duffy.



Wayne Butson, general secretary, RMTU
Mt Maunganui

DECADES of struggle by workers and unions has resulted in significant improvements to working conditions. Despite this workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths remain enormous. Worldwide, each year, thousands of workers are killed and millions injured or diseased at their work.

This year's memorial day is especially poignant as it includes in our thoughts and prayers the 29 Pike River miners, the 172 victims of the Christchurch earthquake and the unimaginable suffering in Japan. The RMTU has very strong ties to the Japanese Railway Unions and we feel their suffering keenly.

Following pressure from the RMTU and other like-minded transport unions the International Transport Workers Federation now mark this day as their international day of action.

April 28 is recognised as World Day for Safety and Health at Work by the ILO and the World Health Organisation. The ILO estimates that more than two million lives are claimed annually through work place accidents and illnesses. In other words, a staggering 5000 workers a day are killed.

In NZ in 2009/10 56 workers went to work and never came home. In 2008/09 it was 53. The upward trend continues.

RMTU members all work in dangerous industries and also work in areas where asbestos use – and abuse – is and was high. Many of our members bravely battle its cancer of mesothelioma before dying a despicable and pain-ridden death. We have battled to get them lump-sum payments from ACC and have been successful. We have also fought with ACC to get entitlements for post traumatic stress disorders and with employers to provide death and disability lump-sum payments in our Collective Agreements, again, we have been successful.

Since 1994 27 RMTU rail and port members have been killed at work. All preventable accidents. And for every workplace death there are dozens left to suffer.

Management and managers alone can't make our workplaces safe. Nor unions and workers.

It can only be achieved by all of us working together. We must all learn to find it acceptable to challenge – and to be challenged – if we see or do something unsafe. 🌐

Memorial Day



A wheel of despair displaying the names of the 29 miners killed.



Pike River Memorial stone.

BLACKBALL

Blackball was the main focus of the union movement's WMD day ceremonies in recognition of the tragedy at Pike River and the loss of 29 workers.

Hazel Armstrong
Hutt Workshops

WE fight for the living and remember those who have died at work.

Hidden are those who die when they have left the workplace, from diseases caused by their occupations. Clean workplace air would prevent many diseases and one would think that this would be a simple matter. However, over 1,000 workers have contracted diseases such as mesothelioma, lung cancer, asbestosis and pleural abnormalities from dirty air at work. These are workers from plants that made asbestos products in the 1960s in Auckland and Christchurch, and plumbers, fitters, laggers, carpenters and builders.

Fighting for their living means that we need to be aware of the hazards at work, and be aware that inhaling dirty workplace air can be harmful. Unfortu-

nately, over the last 20 years NZ has not achieved the same level of workplace improvements in health and safety as other developed countries such as the US, Sweden and Germany.

Fighting for their living means that workers' rights must be recognised.

In 1992 the Government took away the right for workers in coal mines to elect their own check inspectors. In 2006 there was a review of health and safety in underground mining and the unions called for their reinstatement. There is now a Royal Commission looking into the tragedy and unions will once again call for their restoration.

In 2002, union pressure succeeded in having the HSE Act amended to introduce elected health and safety representatives. In 2010 after relentless pressure, the Department of Labour has issued a practice note to its inspectors to involve H&S reps during any workplace visit. 🌐

THE ITF and its member unions marked Workers' Memorial Day and all over the world, workers and their representatives conducted events, demonstrations, vigils and other activities.

ITF president Paddy Crumlin said: "Men and women continue to be killed on the job - more die because of work than in wars. It remains one of the

greatest global tragedies that many of these deaths are preventable. The job of unions across the globe will never be done whilst there are still preventable deaths and injuries at work."

"International Workers' Memorial Day commemorates those workers who tragically never came home. Today we remember them as we continue the fight to raise safety standards for all workers."

– in words and pictures



HUTT

(l) Some of the Workshop's members and (r) NZCTU secretary Peter Conway presents his address, watched by other dignitaries.



CHRISTCHURCH



(above l to r) Canterbury Rail branch chair Buzz Terry, secretary Phil Kearns, Dave Thorpe (MUNZ) and Steve Thompson (MUNZ). (l) Labour's Darien Fenton. The Christchurch ceremony was especially poignant given the 166 confirmed dead in the February earthquake.



MT MAUNGANUI



RMTU organiser Phil Spanswick opens the memorial service.

PALMERSTON NORTH

Branch secretary Ken Jenkins lays the branch wreath on the memorial site on behalf of members.



Helen Kelly, president, NZCTU Blackball

THIS has been a bad year for New Zealand workplace deaths and accidents. But every year is a bad year actually. More than 200,000 workers are seriously harmed in New Zealand workplaces each year. And this is not just bad luck, in many cases it is bad management.

It is not bad luck that very year 149 of every 1000 workers in the construction industry suffer serious harm injuries or that this industry has three times the level of fatalities of any other sector.

It is not bad luck that although fishing, forestry and agriculture employ only 7% of the workforce they have 15% of the accidents.

And it is not bad luck that only one year into its operation, the Pike River Mine exploded killing 29 decent working men.

Our job is to change the story of work in this country and demand safety and accountability. We have been sold a story that has made us complacent and scared of being angry about workplace accidents.

Those least able to take responsibility are the workers who are consistently told they are lucky to have a job and should not bite the hand that feeds them.

The narrative is that employers are benefactors. There is a high trust model for them and a low trust model for workers. Pike River is an

example. It was portrayed as providing a great service to the coast, providing jobs where jobs were needed. A good deed, a charity of sorts. The workers were portrayed as bravely taking risks in a dangerous industry to get the coal out.

The real story of Pike River is that a group of shareholders from around the world – including some very big multinational companies – recognized the huge value of the coal there and decided to invest in mining it. That's fine. Whether they did this on the cheap and spent insufficient money on safety is a question on everyone's lips and a matter for the inquiry. What we do know however, is that those shareholders, regardless of what the findings are of the inquiry, will have already walked away scot free leaving debts, death and accountability behind them. This is not a charitable model.

Employer/employee relationships are an exchange of labour for wages. A fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

Until the true relationships of work are acknowledged things will not improve in health and safety. Until it becomes unacceptable that industries like mining, agriculture, and forestry continue to operate dangerously accidents will continue to be tolerated and deaths will continue.

Workers who make a fuss are depicted as ungrateful and unions are even more unwelcome. We need workplaces where the those who fight for the living are heroes. 

PORTS' FORUM

Wellington,

Forum newbies



Tania Haraki,
*KiwiRail Te
Kupenga Mabi rep:*
I enjoyed the present-
ations, especially the
Interislander one!



Chris Lydiate, *Otago
Port observer:* Good
discussion throughout
the forum which has
highlighted again the
importance of the NZ
Work for NZ workers
campaign for the
future of our country.



Jeremy Thompson,
*Bay of Plenty Port
observer:*
I thoroughly enjoyed
PF, very informative, I
learnt a lot about the
movement and our
shared struggles.



Joshua Meyer,
*Timaru Port
delegate:* Full of info,
interesting to hear
political issues. I
enjoyed the present-
ations and speakers.



Pauline Evans,
*Otago Port
delegate:* I learned
lots of info. The guest
speakers were really
good.

May 18/19



Kristin Bunn (l) and Hazel Armstrong, from Hazel Armstrong Law, updated the Forum on the latest attacks on New Zealand's world-famous ACC scheme.



Jeremy Diskin, Nelson Port delegate: Excellent forum, very informative, great to catch up with members from other ports, great colourful speakers.

Darryl Hunt, Bay of Plenty Port observer: Very insightful, I am looking forward to using new tools when I return to Port.

Aubrey Wilkinson (National president designate): Labour and the Greens were quite clear: NO to asset sales and let's build and invest in our ports, coastal shipping and rail.

John Kerr, South Island organiser: I was deeply impressed by this Forum and the quality of the guest speakers. Our delegates are hard working, opinionated and well informed.



Forum focusses on current issues

THE RMTU's 11th Ports' Forum was well attended with delegates from all over New Zealand gathering for the busy two day conference. Discussion and debate ranged from the forthcoming general election to our Union's policy on drug and alcohol testing. There was also plenty of time spent listening, learning and sharing ideas about the challenges members face in the industry – here and overseas.

A number of guest speakers gave us the benefit of their ideas and expertise ranging from Labour and Green MPs, our legal advisors from McBride, Davenport and James and Hazel Armstrong Law, to the CEO of the Port of Napier and the general manager of The Interislander and Joe Fleetwood of MUNZ.

A highlight of the conference was Anna Moughan's presentation on the potential impact of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) on the ownership and management of Lyttelton Port. Members in Lyttelton are currently bargaining for a new collective agreement and delegates were left under no illusions about the need for us to win over the Canterbury public if we are to beat the risk that CERA poses.

Mark Davis, of the NZ Merchant Services Guild, gave a sobering talk focusing on the difficulties faced by our Indian brothers and sisters in organising workers in private (and privatised) ports in their country. His tales of union organisers suffering beatings at the hands of company thugs grabbed our attention. He also reminded us of the need to organise on the job and not fall into the trap of merely servicing members.

Labour MPs, Darien Fenton, Trevor Mallard and Shane Jones and Green MP Gareth Jones gave their take on industrial relations, the election campaign and the future of the port industry and on transport policy. One key point was that the election is winnable and the return of a Labour-led government in November can be achieved. On key issues such as assets sales, jobs and skills, children and the cost of living a Labour-led opposition has the support of the public. Now it's our job to get the vote and get the message across.

The presentations had all taken a great deal of time and trouble to prepare and the speakers responded to questions and engaged with delegates with enthusiasm. Our delegates knew what they were talking about and this was reflected in the questions that were asked. Ruth Blakely and Aubrey Wilkinson were very capable in the chair and Jim Kelly was peerless in his advocacy for work for New Zealand workers. 🇳🇿



Te Kupenga Mabi KiwiRail network members (l to r) Tania Haraki (Picton), Percy Williams (Wellington) and Ray Brown (Hamilton).

Interislander GM Thomas Davis who briefed members on Clifford Bay.



Labour MP and spokesperson on Labour Darien Fenton.



Labour MP Trevor Mallard.



NZCTU secretary Peter Conway who presented an excellent round of current issues facing workers in NZ..



Hazel Armstrong from Hazel Armstrong Law, in our view NZ's pre-eminent ACC law practice.



Labour Transport spokesperson Shane Jones who enthralled members with his forthright manner and firm grasp of the situation confronting NZ workers in the maritime industry.





Anna Moughan (Hazel Armstrong Law) advised members of the unbridled powers given to Minister Gerry Brownlee by the CERA legislation and its possible implications for Port Lyttelton workers.



Port of Napier CEO Garth Cowie was as provocative as ever.



Labour Party general secretary Chris Flatt.



Organiser Scott Wilson leads a session on drugs and alcohol policies.



Green Party transport spokesperson Gareth Hughes.



ITF assistant regional secretary (Asia Pacific) Mark Davis.



McBride Davenport James partner Geoff Davenport who briefed members on the draconian law changes made by National to the Employment Relations Act commencing 1 April 2011.



General secretary Wayne Butson.



Joe Fleetwood (MUNZ), Aubrey Wilkinson and Jim Kelly (RMTU)

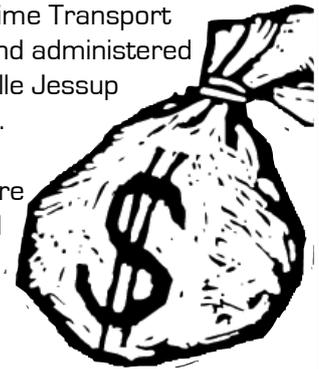
Retirement savings made easy

A Kiwisaver scheme for ALL RMTU members

RAIL workers can now piggy-back aboard the benefits port workers have enjoyed with the NZ Harbours Superannuation Plan by opening a KiwiSaver account with them or transferring to it from the one they have.

The Plan is sponsored by the Rail & Maritime Transport Union and administered by Melville Jessup Weaver.

Contributions are invested between three fund managers:-



- AMP Capital Investors (NZ) Ltd;
- TOWER Asset Management; and
- Tyndall Investment Management New Zealand Limited.

All top-rated schemes.

The NZ Harbours KiwiSaver Scheme operates in similar fashion to all others; you get the most out of it if you and your employer make regular contributions at a minimum rate of 2% of your taxable earnings.

Download a copy of the investment statement and application form at:

www.harbourssuper.org.nz

DFT frame cracks



EVER since the DF's went to being DFT's they have had a primal vibration in higher power notches (or settings). When this occurs, in addition to excessive cab vibration for the LEs, the engine mounts and locomotive frames cracked, were repaired and then cracked again. In the pictures this DFT is at Hutt Workshops for an overall. The cracks in both the engine block and

underframe are evident along with the rusty bedplate. While these cracks are being repaired when these locos go to the workshops, we have to hope that the DFTs in service are being regularly checked for cracks. A locomotive engine disappearing out the side of a DFT would cause a disaster! 🌐



Ganz Mavag refurbishment

Pictured (l to r) Howard Phillips, mechanical rep, Barry Fryer, engineer, Christine Sharma, Ganz refurb trainer, Hayden Smith, LE rep and Harvey Paterson, TM rep in Upper Hutt during trials of the prototype.

Napier/Gisborne damage



THE Napier-Gisborne line suffered a series of weather-related interruptions lately including:

- a medium-sized slip at the north end of Tunnel 26 which should be routine to clear.
 - multiple small slips onto the track from Beach Loop to Kopuawhara – all relatively easy to clear.
 - three noteworthy drop-outs from Beach Loop to Kopuawhara – two occurring at previous locations where the river is undermining the ground supporting the track. Retaining walls may be required at these locations. Another drop out has occurred adjacent to a farmers paddock. Again it may need a wall or some form of buttressing.
- Numerous tunnel portals had high wa-

ter flows down and around them, evident by fresh sediment discharge on the tracks.

On the positive side the area around Beach Loop withstood the damage well where previous weather proofing has put us in a good place. There are only minor rockfalls onto the line.

The 'biggy' was a slip at approximately the 346.7km point where the track makes a tight LH curve around a large bluff. The bluff essentially collapsed falling onto the railway and into the river. The length of track affected was about 300m with about 200m looking like it a simple case of clearing debris.

However, about 100m of track was partially on an embankment which had failed under the weight of the slip material and needed rebuilding. A length of track had been dragged down into the river by the slip.

Including contingency, the cost to repair the damage was around \$400k.

We should keep in mind that the Company continues to threaten to close or mothball the line due to lack of traffic. 🌐



MMP is fairer

THIS year we will vote on whether or not to keep MMP at a referendum alongside the general election.

MMP is a proportional system. The seats a political party gets in Parliament matches the votes they win at the election. A party that gets a quarter of votes, gets a quarter of seats.

Under systems like First Past the Post and Supplementary Member, a party can get fewer votes than its competitor yet still win an election.

If you want to change parts of MMP that you don't like, then the best way to improve the system is to vote to keep it. If most voters pick MMP it will automatically trigger an independent review of the system.

This means voters can have confidence that a vote for MMP is a vote to make MMP better.

If you would like to help ensure MMP is kept there are three things you can do:

1. Tell your family, friends and networks about MMP and why it's fairer.
2. Sign up to receive updates and campaigning ideas by e-mail or by post.
3. If you have a special skill, time or money to help then contact the Campaign for MMP at:

www.campaignformmp.org.nz/

Have you enrolled?

You need to enroll to vote?

Do it today!

ANZAC DAY - PETONE



Workers line up at Petone Station as the flag is hoisted up the historic flagpole.



The Petone flagstaff

THE railway through Petone opened in 1874 following the line of current SH2. In 1905/6 it was deviated to its current route, with the main railway workshops in the southern North Island between the new line and the hills. In 1915, at the suggestion of a member of his staff, the chief commissioner of NSW Railways wrote to the general manager of NZ Railways suggesting an exchange of flags. This prompted the

erection of flagstaffs at Petone and Hornsby. The first ceremony was held on 25 April 1916, attended by many dignitaries while a parallel Hornsby ceremony took place on the same day. Railwaymen of each country were represented at each ceremony. That was the one and only ANZAC ceremony at Hornsby. A search of Australian picture archives has failed to find any photographs. The Hornsby pole was removed, possibly when the line was electrified and the station

facilities re-built in 1959. The ceremony had stronger support at Petone, from the men and managers of the Petone workshops. The highest-ranking NZ officer killed at Gallipoli, Major Norman Frederick Hastings, was a fitter at Petone.

The service at Petone has grown each year as more and more people attend. 🌐



After discussing issues of concern with RMTU GS Wayne Butson Mt track workers (l to r) Ross Fargher, Rob Butters, Will Teppitt, Phil Davies and Neil Edwards lined up outside the Mt Maunganui Union office for a photo.

OBITUARY

John Laidler 18/9/1961 - 26/4/2011

IT is with great sadness that the Otago branch acknowledges the passing of (William) John Laidler. Although not a member of the RMTU at the time of his death he was nonetheless highly regarded in his role as the South Island manager for Goughs Materials Handling. Prior to out-sourcing



in 2002 John was the South Island wagon manager and was known as a straight shooter. If you were after tact and diplomacy and political correctness then you didn't go to John. But if you were after common-sense and someone who made things happen then he was the right man. During his time as a manager within the rail industry

John helped many of his staff in times of crisis and ill-health and his compassion toward his staff still remains firmly etched in the memories of those who knew him. Although ill-health troubled him in recent times – and ended his life at 49 years – he worked and lived at a pace that achieved more than most could do in 80 years. To John's wife and daughters we extend our heart felt condolences.

- Timothy Spence

Selling Port Lyttleton?



LYTTLETON PORT'S recovery post the earthquake is vital to the region and it figures significantly in the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011.

"It's bad enough that Christchurch is to be 'Gerry-built'," said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson, "but the real threat is that CERA may allow Gerry Brownlee to sell the Port. Now that would be a real disaster for Lyttleton, Christchurch and New Zealand."

The Act's principles state that appropriate measures be provided to "ensure that

greater Christchurch and the councils and their communities respond to, and recover from, the impacts of the earthquakes and that social, economic, cultural, and environmental well-being of greater Christchurch communities is restored". This includes Port Lyttleton.

MP Gerry Brownlee is charged with overseeing the Act's statutes and is given 'special' powers under the Act which could conceivably see him sell the Port to private ownership. Another publically-owned asset which could fall prey to the National gov-

ernment's fervour to sell off the country's valuable assets to their wealthy cronies.

He could do it providing he does so in accordance with the purposes of the Act.

Readers should be aware that the Port is a valuable local asset in a great many ways and a profitable one in the City's hands.

With all that Christchurch citizens have to contend with, the last thing they need is a greedy government ripping into the heart of the region.

If you have an opinion about the this possible sale, make it known, NOW. 



The affiliated unions to the NZ Labour Party met in Wellington on 20 May, the day before the Labour Party Congress. It is very clear that we must work hard to ensure we get all of our members enrolled to vote and then to cast them. The election in November is winnable, we only require a 3 to 4% swing to have a Labour-Green coalition take the treasury benches. Privatisation of state assets will be a key issue for us all.



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Union Plus is pleased to be bringing you more benefits in 2010 including discounts on tyres, health clubs and telecommunications!

More value for money with insurances.

Only for current RMTU members.

Take out Life Cover with Sovereign and you will receive:

- 20% extra life cover free for two years
- Free TPD cover (10% of Life Cover value) for two years
- 10% discount on Sovereign premiums (includes income protection, trauma and other products)
- First premium refunded (up to \$100)

If you wish to take out cover, find out more, or review your current setup, please contact Union Plus on

■ 0800 320 400

■ insurance@unionplus.co.nz

■ www.unionplus.co.nz





Not Christchurch but Mt Maunganui

IT is, in fact, the demolition and construction of the new NZR Staff Welfare Trust Accommodation at Mount Maunganui.

In 2009 the Trust Board determined that the existing flats needed major refurbishment or demolition. After analysis it was decided that demolition was the best way forward. A local architect was approached and the work began on the design,

planning and construction. The current property sits on five titles and the new construction is confined to three of them. It is hoped that the remaining two can be sold after completion and some costs recovered. The construction of the \$2m complex of six units plus an on-site manager's unit, has been funded out of reserves and no borrowing is needed. The construction

method is Unispan to maximise the reduction of noise transmission. The red bordered picture shows the first flooring span being installed. 🇳🇿



\$1,500 AD&D

All members are now covered by a \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children. This is an automatic membership benefit of belonging to the RMTU.

Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year. Please complete and return the enclosed reply card to have an AIL representative deliver your AD&D Benefit and explain the additional \$10,000 option. This is very important to you and your family.



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Passenger depot

Pictured (l to r) passenger mechanical engineers Jon Patrick, Lot Mkandla, David Lane, Arthur Tiraa (manager) and Graham Parr checking out the new depot protection system prior to moving Tranz Scenic into their half new depot in Thorndon.

Orica Chemicals

Mt Maunganui

DURING a recent visit to Mount Maunganui GS Wayne Butson arranged to visit RMTU members employed by Orica Chemicals. He met with the onsite manager Richard May and was shown around the site by delegate John Matehaere. After the visit Wayne said "Orica is a very dangerous worksite as there are so many things that will not just kill you, but you would disappear without a trace. Their safety systems are very impressive and they have a very strong safety culture whereby everyone thinks and lives – safety first!"

The RMTU is in all facets of the transport logistic supply chain. 



Derek Murray and John Matehaere.

(l) Joe Brown.



(above) Alkali Make Plant .



(r) Sodium Hydrosulphide Plant.

(l) This photo was taken during commissioning of the sodium hydrosulphide bag massaging machine and shows Richard May, John Matehaere and Richard Thompson.



AUCKLAND RAIL BRANCH



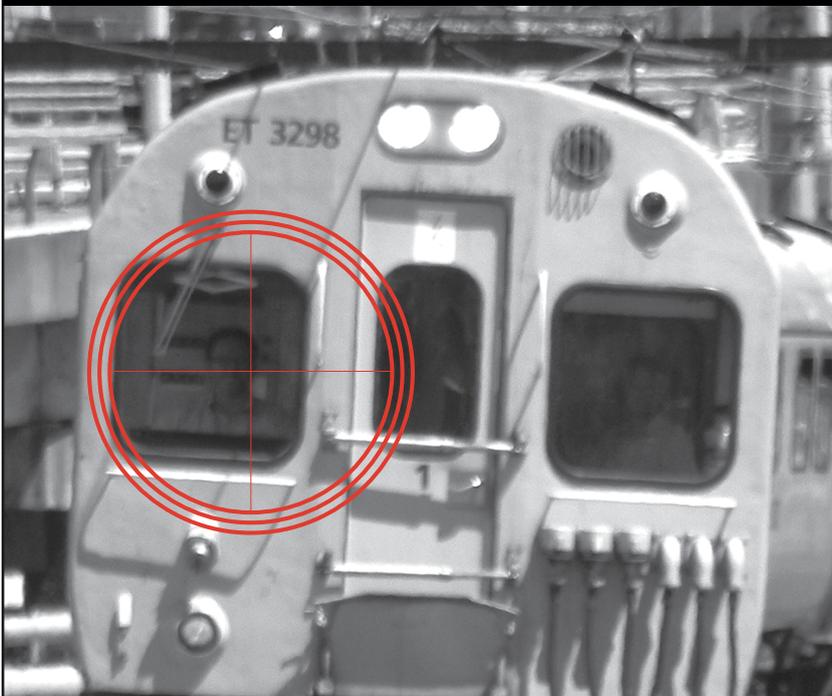
Mechanical delegate Rudi Brens watches over his patch from on high



. . . . while workers steam clean a bogie (above) to keep the aging stock spick and span, ride a train (below)



Sickness, accident & death



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

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

You could be next to miss out!

For as little as \$403 a year your future – or those of your next of kin – could be better assured.

Contact:

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

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

AUCKLAND RAIL BRANCH [cont]



... repairing braking components on a bogie (above) and repairing the well-used points in the Westfield yard (right).



A message of solidarity with Christchurch

As a consequence of being late with this editorial to HO and in the light of the events in Christchurch, I take the opportunity to use this forum to scribe the sentiments of many of us to the people of the region and our sisters and brothers caught up in this monumental tragedy.

Words are not enough, but it is all we have to express our sorrow over the loss of

PORT NAPIER BRANCH

loved ones and friends as lives are pulled apart through this ordeal and the ripples of grief spread across the globe. With communications down, in part, locally, the media has given us images of the devastation on a wide scale, and at this point in time we are probably seeing the broader aspects of its violence, as we try to comprehend or understand the impact of the damage caused.

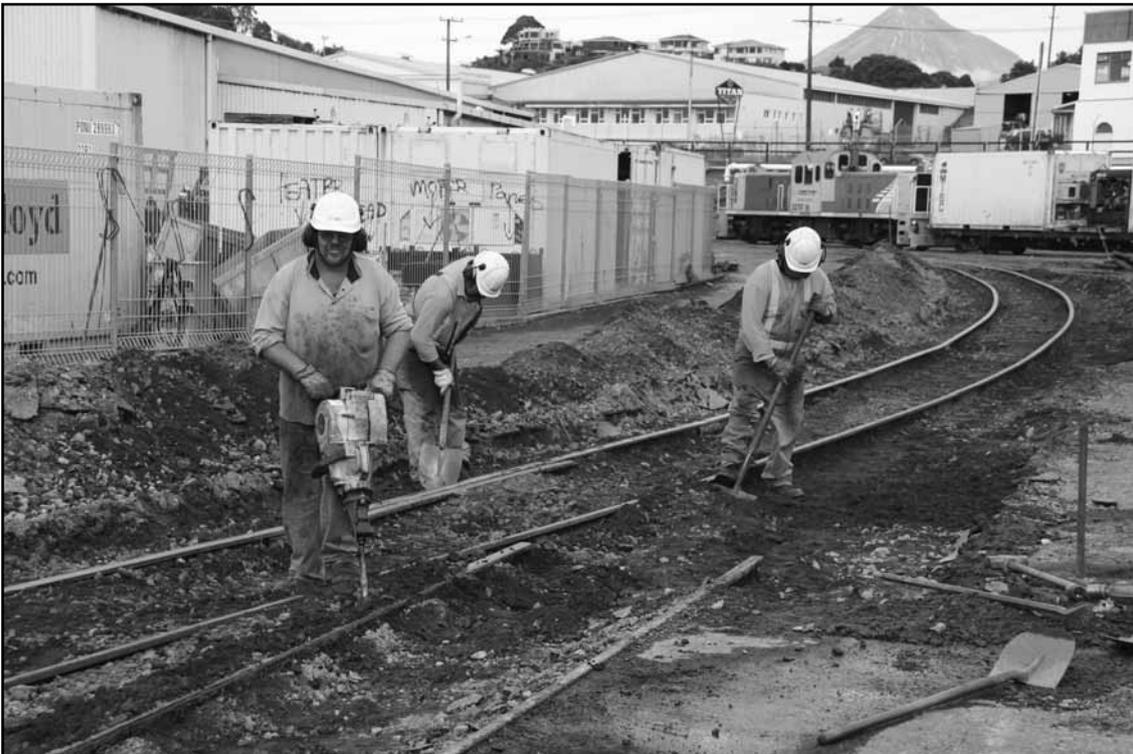
To all the people in Christchurch and to those in Lyttleton and in particular – our sisters and brothers – kia kaha, our thoughts

and prayers go out to you. May the light at the end of ‘this’ tunnel get ever brighter as the scars heal both in heart, mind and spirit, and in the re-build of lives and your towns.

From your RMTU Union brothers and sisters at the Port of Napier we trust you will prevail through this time of uncertainty, stress and loss.

We hope by the time this gets to print, that through combined endeavours the road to recovery will be shorter.

PORT TARANAKI BRANCH



Port track workers caught working whilst onsite at Port Taranaki are KiwiRail networks RMTU members Kevin Harrison (ganger), Les Reid and Reece Burkett.

HUTT BRANCH

THE Hutt branch has been quiet for some time but we appear to have collared a talkative branch member into being the branch scribe.

Last year saw the in-house appointment of Karl Bouterey to the position of workshops' manager after a period of revolving door management since the departure of Mike Smith (who went to Aussie, of course). Karl appears to be shaping up well although we have some work to do on teaching him that many sentences in the English language do not have to end with "you know". Late last year several substantial rolling stock projects came to a successful conclusion including the DXs and the prototype refurbished Ganz EMU. As the company was in a state of flux, we were unsure how we were going to bridge the gap until the new projects were confirmed, so we arranged for most of the temp staff to finish-up and we loaned our locomotive staff to other workgroups (on-site and off-site) on a revolving 90-day (max) basis to ensure everyone got the opportunity to add another feather to their cap. Extensions were granted after a review of the situation on a case-by-case basis. Overall, this worked out well and now only a small number of staff are 'on loan' as project work is beginning to kick off again with the EF (Class 30) reliability programme recommencing with 30111 (which should be back in service as you read these notes) and the DH and DFT overhaul programmes. Additionally, other locos are in for heavy

servicing as required.

A long-awaited replacement milling machine for Plant 1 (bogies & components) has finally arrived and its new resting place is under consideration as the Plant layout is being revamped to consolidate processes which should beef up productivity markedly. For those of you wondering how we've coped without a replacement for so long, we did the job by hand. That way we remained effective as an engineering resource as well as demonstrating to our small group of apprentices how things were done in the past before full mechanisation!

Speaking of effectiveness, SAP continues to be problematic. The company appears to have not applied the lessons learnt from our last excursions with this software and the outputs from this project have not met expectations. We have since learnt that our Aussie cousins have deciphered the SAP acronym as Systematic Annihilation of Productivity. After many many months, some useful outputs have been forthcoming although inter-group working remains a thorn in our side. We would have thought that a more holistic approach to the project would have been taken but maybe we contracted some fly-by-night outsiders once again.

The north wall of our main building is finally up for replacement and we hope that as you read this, the contractors will be beaver- away at this nominal 16 week project. The wall is an unsightly advertisement for how derelict we can make ourselves look to

the public as we experiment with blending faded blue paint, several iterations of logo signage, and a generous helping of rust. Further alterations on-site have included resurfacing on the eastern side that serves the Network's Stores, and a small extension to the office staff car parking area. There are further plans to relocate facilities within Plants 1 and 2 (Passenger Vehicles) but those in charge are finding that they have to clear a space of one function before refilling it with another!

Safety remains at the forefront of our operation with some interesting numbers being reported; Plant 3 (Electrical) continues to lead the way with well over 3,200 days without any lost time injuries. At our recent WMD service, we were wowed (again) by a speech from Hazel Armstrong on accident statistics and the government's intentions towards ACC. She left us with no doubt how important it is to fight for the living and to strive to ensure that effective health and safety programmes feature in our workplaces. (As I write, it was reported that an engineer in the Bay of Plenty lost a finger due to crushing in a machine. She was operating the machine with little appreciable knowledge of its operation and the equipment had no safety guard! It could have been much worse). What do we say? If it's not safe – don't do it!

We are looking forward to the next JRA staff survey to check the Company's progress towards increasing the level of staff engagement. Until next time, remember – We're stronger together.

OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

LATELY we have seen pay parity accepted as offered by the company, but along with the deal came the 'advancement and progression' documentation and more.

One section of the Company, after two years of negotiation and research, thought they had cracked it. But HR said go back, have another look and, by the way, there will be no such thing as a trainee. After much more discussion a new document was submitted for comment. But before the ink had dried another bump in the road. Why take two sections of the company which are working well, disestablish their senior positions, and create a new leading

hand position covering both sections? This is the amalgamation of senior technicians in signals and communications, with their different skills and assessment systems for advancement within the grades.

It became obvious that there are many variations of the concept and although we are all reading from the same book, some are only looking at the foreword, some at chapter one and others at the conclusion. Once again it is hard to determine what is genuine and what is misinformation.

It's the old divide and conquer and piecemeal plan.

Meanwhile, our locomotive brothers are becoming fed up with the new radio install

which doesn't work correctly. Not only that there is some concern at the mismatch between diminutive buttons and large fingers but also the placement of equipment.

We also have the perennial problem of the "anti-fatigue" device, otherwise known as the am/fm radio, with their random reception. The answer seems to be putting a splitter in the vhf radio antenna feed.

So the questions remain: If it fails, what happens to the loco radio? And wouldn't it be better to fit the correct type of antenna?

Do we mention the refuelling debate?

Last month the untimely death of John Laidler shook many here. It's becoming a lottery to open Monday's paper to see who else has departed this mortal coil.

PORT TIMARU BRANCH



A wagon familiarisation at the Timaru freight terminal with (l to r) Alistair Grant, loco engineer, Tony Oldman, Kiwirail terminal manager, Bryan McNally, team leader, Mike Muir, Timaru CT, Mark Kumar, Temuka Transport and Alistair Cumming, OCM Southern from Christchurch.

THE year is certainly flashing by as detailed by a number of events at Port Otago so far this year.

Port Chalmers workers show solidarity

It was considered that the greatest need within Christchurch would be for donations of money. The company consulted with RMTU and MUNZ members on a plan for staff who wished to be involved to donate one day's leave which would be matched dollar-for-dollar by the company and donated to the Rotary Club of Lyttelton to help earthquake victims at the port. Workers at Port Chalmers raised \$24,000 and the company matched it and rounded it up in a cheque for \$50,000.

Cruise season

The cruise season completed with the visit of Pacific Dawn on 4 April. Out

PORT OTAGO BRANCH

of a scheduled 66 cruise ship calls we ended up with 63. Of the cancellations, two were affected by adverse weather and one omitted the South Island because of mechanical problems. Overall, the season went smoothly with the main problem being space on our Beach Street wharf. Next season we have 77 vessels booked to call, so it won't get any easier.

Log export volume

The volume of export logs so far this year is well ahead of last year and it is likely we will get close to 450,000m³ by the end of June – 60% above our yearly average. Demand for our forestry products in Asia looks to continue strongly for the foreseeable future.

Dredge – New Era

The Port Otago dredge 'New Era' is on

the slip in Dunedin for survey and maintenance. This includes removal and rebuilding of the main closing rams which have not been touched since entering the water 25 years ago. Other work includes replacement of several sections of dredge pipe and hopper plating. The starboard Schottel has also been removed and stripped down to replace bearings and seals. The whole of the external hull is being repainted and below the waterline area coated with anti-fouling.

Cashing up of annual leave

With the recent changes to the holidays Act (2003) allowing employees to request their employer to pay out in cash up to one week of their entitlement to annual leave, we are pleased to see that Port Otago will not be considering any such requests.

Unions have a long tradition of international solidarity.

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Tough times under National

THE trade union movement is facing many challenges. There are 271,400 people who are without a job, another 103,600 part-timers seeking additional hours of work, youth unemployment is at 27.5 percent, inflation is running at 4.5 percent, work rights are under attack, public services are being cut, Government-funded tenders are often going offshore and the Budget attacks on KiwiSaver and Working for Families make things even tougher for many.



By Peter Conway
NZCTU secretary

There is no doubt that the country is facing tough times. The global financial crisis and the earthquakes have had a major impact. In tough times we really see what the priorities are. For this Government, it appears that the priorities are tax reductions for those on the highest incomes, while there are cuts in Government spending in real terms. A massive 42 percent of the tax cuts went to the top 10 percent of income earners. Meanwhile GST rise has pushed up

the cost of living. Not only was the so-called tax switch unfair, it was not revenue neutral as the Government claimed, it has not made the economy grow, and it has widened the gap between rich and poor. For instance the gap in take home pay between someone on \$30,000 a year and \$150,000 a year widened by another \$135 a week due to the tax cuts.

It looks like the Government has abandoned the aim of closing the wage gap with Australia. In April, Bill English said that the 30 percent wage gap was a 'competitive advantage' to attract investment to New Zealand. Instead of putting a real effort into jobs, skills and lifting wages, this Government has been busy attacking work rights. In the first 90 days it is now possible for someone to be sacked for no reason and with no appeal rights no matter how unfair the dismissal. The ACC scheme is being weakened and prepared for partial privatisation. Access rights for workers to get union advice and support have been weakened. The Government is currently pushing through a Bill in Parliament to make meal breaks negotiable. And it looks like, if they are re-elected they, and Don Brash, will have a go at even more changes to the Employment Relations Act.

So what are we doing about all this? First of all, we are running a strong election cam-

paign that will focus mainly on discussing these issues with union members. Then we must work incredibly hard to make sure that people are on the electoral roll and actually turn up to vote on 26th November. We will have plenty of resources and events – but after the Rugby World Cup the general election campaign will be a mad sprint – and we need to ensure we focus on those things we can achieve to make a difference. The CTU is not affiliated to a political party and we need to remember that union members don't all vote the same way. But we are on firm ground in pushing for a worker-friendly Government.

Secondly, we need to modernise the union movement. In May we launched Together which is a new union organisation. It aims to connect with the many people who want advice and support, agree with union values, but for whatever reason are not in a position to join a union. Together will not bargain, or take a grievance, nor accept members where an existing union is present or organising, but it will provide advice and support, and connect workers with others in their sector. If we are to meet the challenges we face, we have to advocate for a worker-friendly Government and a new employment law, but we also have to improve union organisation. 🌐

