

THE *Transport Worker*

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

JUNE 2012

**Washout puts
Gisborne/Napier
line in jeopardy**



4 ASSET SALES



The case for asset sales gets steadily thinner and less convincing.

11 HIKOI AGAINST ASSET SALES



The RMTU's flag flies proudly over the huge demo at Parliament.

21 MATANGI MIRACLE



Wellington's ancient EE units finally replaced.

COVER PHOTO

The oft-threatened Gisborne-Napier line received its 'final warning' earlier this year after a washout caused massive damage. See story page 12.

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

Design and production by Mike Regan.

Printed by Thames Publications Ltd, P O Box 11-025, Wellington.

WWW.RMTUNION.ORG.NZ

ISBN 1173-6488



Wayne Butson
General secretary
RMTU

TAP cracks appearing

THE much vaunted KiwiRail Turnaround Plan (TAP), released with great fanfare in 2010, has had its first major review and the Union and delegates have been briefed on the outcome. The detail of the review is commercially sensitive and not for release, therefore, we cannot actually quote any of it.

However, there are a number of factors which are in the public domain and widely known to us all.

Two years after the plan was released we know that there have been landslides, earthquakes, droughts, floods and a mining tragedy which has delivered a very lethargic New Zealand economy. We also know that the TAP was based upon a \$1.1 billion support package of which only \$750m was committed by the Government there is a shortfall of \$400m or thereabouts.

Lethargic economy

The lethargic economy has baffled Treasury and its ability to forecast the Crown accounts' income and expenditure – out of which KiwiRail has fared no better, as stated in the Annual Report 2011. All the KiwiRail budget numbers are inaccurate for all divisions – it is just a debate, by division, of by how much. We have seen the 'For Sale' signs go up over Hillside's gate and we had a public announcement by the KiwiRail CEO to staff that confirmed that \$200m was being removed from the Capex budget for Networks and there would be staffing implications.

Rumours abound about the job security for infrastructure workers of up to 200 jobs within KiwiRail Networks. There is talk about the rail ferry operation abandoning the traditional rail ferries and moving to a rubber tyre marshaling operation for conventional ferries.

More lines closing

We also know that the long distance passenger operation is searching for a buyer. During all the years of privatisation the only line to close was the Rotorua branch line but under the re-nationalised KiwiRail we have had the Stratford-Okahukura line mothballed (read points signalling etc ripped out and the line leased to a golf cart operating tourist company) and the writing very clearly on the wall for the Napier-Gisborne and Northland lines.

Is this what we all thought would be the outcome of all our efforts to get the train set renationalised?

Is this the outcome we were looking for in all the countless hours of strategising and lobbying of key Government figures?

Hell NO!

For me it was about locking in an environmentally sustainable transport infrastructure system for future generations, for the betterment of NZ Inc and to undo the neglect and decay that had stymied rail's ability to operate – let alone compete for a reasonable share of transport. It wasn't about cutting the limbs from the tree to make rail into a conveyor belt on a couple of lines.

Big companies needed

Yes, we need Fonterra, Solid Energy and key ports (none of whom use the ferries) but not to the exclusion of all else.

Let me be clear, I know that we HAVE to cater to the needs of Fonterra, Solid Energy, Mainfreight and the like but we must also cater to the far flung regions like Northland and Gisborne so as to provide transport options to them and to maintain transport pricing competition and options.

I also accept that the 'greater good' concept is a function of the state and not of the KiwiRail board. However, this Government would see this sort of approach as being foreign to its principles.

So don't hold your breath.

Important bargaining round

They want less of the state and more private sector commercial involvement. They also appointed the KiwiRail board members and so it is clear where the driving ethos is coming from for asset sales like Hillside and a growing push for contracting out of your good rail jobs.

Suddenly the 2012 MECA bargaining round has become much more important to us all. There are a few key claims which will test the mettle of each side.

Is the TAP going to deliver us nutrients or will it be death by a thousand drips? 🌍

Notice Board of note

This issue we have chosen Port Timaru's branch notice board as clean, tidy and easy to read. Well done!



Resignations

Dear Editor,

I sincerely wish to thank all RMTU Head Office staff for the help and advice I have received over the years in my various capacities as an RMTU branch/national official. I have seen the dedication and lengths you all go to preserve our members' conditions, often in the face of objections from some of our own. RMTU members are very fortunate to have such an experienced and loyal group of officials representing them. I wish you all the very best.

My last day with KiwiRail was 20/04/2012 having joined the locomotive running branch on 18/02/1974. Unfortunately I have been diagnosed with a very rare form of leukaemia which has led to my medical retirement. Having been a party to our collective agreement and also a member of the Locomotive Engineers Trust Fund has eased the loss of regular income greatly. Our collective agreement has conditions within it that previous generations fought very hard for and when one, such as myself, is a recipient of those hard-fought for conditions I cannot help but feel grateful for their efforts.

I would strongly urge all the younger folk within the locomotive ranks to explore membership of the Fund for when the times gets tough it can be a Godsend.

The locomotive ranks and RMTU (and it's predecessors) have been a huge part of our lives for 38 years. Time now to relax and await the miracles of modern scientific medicine.

I wish you all a safe and happy future as rail workers and please, support and give encouragement to your elected representatives by attending and participating in your branch meetings.

Murray Dunlop
Middleton.

Dear Editor,

This letter is to advise you of my pending resignation from KiwiRail and the RMTU on the occasion of reaching my 65th birthday and retirement. My last day of work is May 4 with my last service day being June 1, 2012.

Alan Wickens.

Dear Editor,

I wish to resign from the RMTU as I left KiwiRail on December 2011, after 33 years and 10 months service.

It was with some sadness that I left KiwiRail as despite a poor roster in Christchurch, in my opinion, it was still an enjoyable job with plenty of variety and some great workmates.

It took me five years of thinking about it before I got up enough courage to leave and try and chase the dollars in Australia. So I wish the Union and its members all the best for the future and thank you for all the work the Union has done for myself and other locomotive engineers. Perhaps, if enough of us leave for Australia, then the light bulb may come on for the senior management at KiwiRail that perhaps it was time to put a plan into action that would help retain their locomotive engineers. Mervyn Edwards.

Thanks

Dear Editor,

We wish to express our thanks to you and your members for your solidarity in joining the MUNZ picket at Centreport – Wellington March 2/3, 2012.

The outcome of this unified action was 'Maersk Aberdeen' remaining in the port of Wellington until 7am March 7, 2012.

Our Auckland members are most appreciative of the unity shown and action taken in Wellington.

Yours in Unity
John Whiting
MUNZ Wellington
Branch assistant secretary.



Documents reveal KiwiRail speaks with forked tongue

THE Ombudsman has ordered KiwiRail to release documents showing why KiwiRail rejected Hillside's bid to build Auckland's new trains, the IAB wagons and the DL Locomotives.

Documents released by the Ombudsman to Radio NZ last month showed that KiwiRail received nine bids for the work, six of which, including Hillside's, were discarded early on.

KiwiRail, at the time, said Hillside's bid was 30-50 per cent higher than the eventual winner, Chinese company CNR, and that they wouldn't be able to deliver in the time frame required. However, the released documents show that the price was actually much closer than first revealed – only around 20% more expensive – and that the differences were significantly exaggerated by KiwiRail, possibly to justify ignoring Hillside.

Now KiwiRail plans to put the Hillside workshops on the market.

Dunedin South MP, Clare Curran called the decision contemptible.

She said their "deliberate campaign to make KiwiRail's Hillside workshops commercially defunct has resulted in the sale of a valuable national asset".

She added: "The decision to privatise Hillside, which KiwiRail will have made in consultation with the government, is the final in a series of moves which undermines the ability of the workshops to operate effectively. The National government must be held accountable."

Meanwhile, Labour's economic development spokesperson, David Cunliffe suggested in an article in the Otago Daily Times that plans to sell Hillside may have already been on KiwiRail's agenda way back when it rejected its bid for new rolling stock.

Having moved some of their primary work off-shore, he asked, did KiwiRail know it was going to sell the plant at the time and

did they factor in the lower sale price when measuring their competitiveness?

The released papers also reveal that KiwiRail's claim that the work wouldn't be delivered on time was false. Hillside said in their tender that they would deliver most of the wagons on time and the rest would be a month late. KiwiRail chose not to believe them.

"This whole fiasco was simply a hoax

dundant to make the firm a more attractive proposition for sale. Though quite how you make a company more attractive by shafting its productivity and gutting its work force beggars belief."

"National talks of prioritising jobs where costly convention centres in Auckland are at stake, but highly skilled railway workers in Dunedin have never been courted in the same way," said Curran. "This latest decision will affect more than 130 jobs, and around 75 Dunedin engineering businesses clustered around Hillside."

The loss of this strategic asset could be considered as another part of the portfolio in the Government's asset sale programme.

"National, has ignored the community who petitioned in their thousands for the workshops to be retained, and without any public consultation," said Curran.

Curran and Butson both call the decision irresponsible and worry about the negative impact the sale will have on New Zealand's infrastructure and workforce.

"If National was serious about getting New Zealanders into work they would promote policies that have the interest of all of Kiwis at heart," said Curran. "It's a contemptible decision."

"Putting Hillside workshops up for sale would never have been needed if the government had a focus on keeping New Zealanders in jobs,"

said Butson, adding that the government's lack of any agenda for Kiwi jobs had been laid bare.

"This government is sitting on its hands, while one of KiwiRail's most significant assets is privatised," he said, however, he added that RMTU members had worked with privately owned companies before and would do so again.

"Hillside has a cohesive, motivated workforce, and we look forward to work-

Business blues

NEWs that manufacturing index numbers have dropped nearly six per cent in March, is yet another sign of an economy going backwards, says Labour's Economic Development spokesperson David Cunliffe. According to Business New Zealand, the seasonally adjusted Performance of Manufacturing Index (PMI) for April showed the lowest level of activity since November 2011.

"Of particular concern is that the fall has been led down by lower production and new orders, and that this April decline is very large," Cunliffe said adding that in regions like Otago/Southland the drop was two and three times as great.

"This is on top of the Government's decision to turn a blind eye to the disastrous consequences of closing KiwiRail's Hillside Workshops," he said. "Even worse is the latest rise in the unemployment rate back up to a tragic 6.7 per cent. All this only reconfirms what Labour has been saying: our economy is struggling to get out of the rut and the Government's lack of a plan is not working."

concocted by KiwiRail and their National party bosses to dupe the New Zealand public into believing they were being fiscally responsible when in fact they were shafting an efficient company, destroying an effective workforce and casting a grim economic cloud over South Dunedin," said Butson. "It is our belief that KiwiRail never had any intention of taking up Hillside's tender. Furthermore, they had planned all along to then make some of its workers re-

ing with a new owner with the determination and vision to make it succeed," said Butson. "The taxpaying public, the local business community and workforce have the most to gain if Hillside flourishes and these green collar jobs and skills remain in South Dunedin."

The business will be advertised for sale as a going concern from early May, 2012 with a final decision due by the end of August, 2012.

KiwiRail chief executive Jim Quinn said



the decision was made after analysing the financial impact of the reduction in construction and refurbishment forward work orders for Hillside Workshops.

While the sale terms were negotiable, the preferred outcome would be that it was purchased as a going concern, he said.

"We are looking for a sale outcome that secures Hillside's future as New Zealand's largest heavy engineering site," he said.

After ignoring Hillside's tenders, KiwiRail then cut 44 jobs at the workshops last June and then brought in contractors to carry out rail engineering duties less than four months after the redundancies.

In March a petition to save Hillside jobs was rejected by a parliamentary select committee.

"KiwiRail's decision to not bid for either the \$500 million contract for Auckland's new trains, or for 500 flat top wagons, was resoundingly rejected by Dunedin workers, business leaders, the city council and others as taking a very short-sighted view of procurement," Butson said. "If government procurement settings do not support local industry, then we simply won't keep good manufacturing jobs in New Zealand."

Green Party co-leader Metiria Turei, who has been part of a group of local manufacturers, union representatives,

MPs, the chamber of commerce and the council seeking to keep Hillside running and in public hands, also said the privatisation of Hillside was a direct result of the Government's refusal to implement a smart procurement policy.

"A Berl report showed that having the new KiwiRail rolling stock for Auckland built at Hillside would have added \$250m to the economy, reduced the current account deficit by \$122m and created 1270 jobs. Unfortunately, National insisted that

KiwiRail only consider its narrow commercial interests and ignore the wider impacts of its decision."

Dunedin Chamber of Commerce chief executive John Christie, who played a leading role in the Save Hillside campaign, said he was not surprised KiwiRail had put the workshops up for sale.

"The upside is a new owner, if they have the appropriate strategic objective, can grow the business and look at other opportunities, perhaps outside of rail, to utilise the skills and resources that are there. It would be a tragedy to see the jobs and resources lost."

The Council of Trade Unions secretary Peter Conway said the sale of Hillside rail engineering workshops in Dunedin is a backward step.

"Neither the Government nor KiwiRail have supported these workers and the fantastic work they do. The heavy engineering workshops at Hillside are an important part of the regional economy. These jobs should not be lost," he said.

Dunedin Mayor Dave Cull tried to put a positive spin on the sale announcement, calling it a potential positive for Dunedin.

"Sometimes the ideal solution isn't available so you have to take the best one.

This one appears to be the best move forward in terms of the future of Hillside workshop," he said. "There has been speculation they might just close the place."

"This Government's aim to create more jobs in New Zealand is just another National inspired smokescreen," said Butson. "They speak with a forked tongue and the sooner they're gone the better off New Zealand workers will be."

Meanwhile, Cunliffe in his ODT article said the sale posed a number of important questions for him:

- Having moved some of their primary work off-shore did KiwiRail know it was going to sell the plant at the time and did they factor in the lower sale price when measuring their competitiveness?

- How can KiwiRail hope to maintain its

rolling stock if Hillside is run down after sale and have they assessed the risk in this regard?

- Strategically, rail is the best method by far for transporting goods long distance, so how is this strategic value being reflected in KiwiRail's decision-making?

- How does KiwiRail's decision-making reflect the important spill-over benefits to the wider Dunedin business community? and

- Will the wider costs and benefits of the change be counted?

"Retrenching Hillside will reduce tax paid through GST and PAYE," he said. "It will increase the cost of unemployment benefits . . . it will cause real trauma for many families."

He adds that the National Government has "not lifted a finger to ensure the long-term consequences of closing Hillside" and that "Dunedin deserves better".

He promises that the next Labour-led government will get alongside local business and commit to positive partnerships for sustainable growth and decent jobs.

"We won't just turn a blind eye when a company like KiwiRail is making irreversible decisions that have huge implications across the community," he wrote. 

Help sought for outstanding Konemu settlement

IN 2000 the Union found itself locked in litigation with the Northland Port Corporation with the Union claiming an unlawful lockout had occurred and the company claiming an unlawful strike. Essentially our members in the mechanical ship repair division of the company were refusing to cross a picket line at the port company. The cases went through mediation, the Employment Tribunal, the Employment Court and the Court of Appeal before the parties reached a settlement.

On 11 June 2001 the union signed a Record of Settlement with Northland Port Corporation, now known as the Konemu Settlement. The Northland Port Corporation paid over a sum of money to the Union which was to be dispersed among the 31 member claimants to the dispute. To date we have been able to make contact with, and pay out, 24 members but we are still holding an amount of money for the following ex-members of the Union who worked at Northport Engineering Ltd:- Ray Bailey, Bob Clyman, Heta Davis, Joe Marin, Peter Ryan and John Silveria.

If you know the current whereabouts of any of the above, would you please ask them to get in touch with the Union. They would need to provide proof of identity to enable a payment to be made to them. 🌐

Global solidarity an essential weapon

IN my position as RMTU North Island ports representative it was a privilege to attend the Maritime Union of Australia conference held at the Sydney Conference Centre from February 27 to March 2 this year.

Also in attendance from New Zealand were Ruth Blakeley and Scott Wilson.

At a guess, there were some 300 to 400 delegates there including some large and small international contingents involved in all aspects of the maritime industry, especially some of the smaller unionised countries that face political adversity within the Pacific region, such as Papa New Guinea and Fiji.

Over the duration of the event there were many speakers from various affiliated unions across Australia – and internationally – and some very emotive accounts of the plights they face against companies like Rio Tinto.

Of particular note was the steel workers from Quebec Canada, who have been locked out for months. These strongly dedicated unionists are burning 30 cords of wood on the picket front per week in minus 50 degree fahrenheit temperatures. One speaker indicated at that time they were having a mild day at minus 20F? Rather difficult for us to comprehend, to say the least.

On the fourth day we were put onto buses and taken to down town Sydney (at lunch time) to march to the offices of AEGON a financial/insurance company that took over the superannuation fund of the Dutch dockers. Somewhere in the exchange of the funds from the previous manager to

AEGON some 770 million Euros (\$NZ1.25 billion) has gone wayward, thus the frustration 'to put it mildly' of the Dutch dockers.

Having entered the very high rise building that the AEGON offices were in we were prevented from going any further by the police as there was a H&S risk and the lifts were stopped. After a few minutes it was mentioned that we were at the wrong building! Apparently AEGON had vacated two weeks previously. Someone then advised where the new offices were, a stone's throw away, so we repeated the exercise and some of us were able to reach the top of the building without hindrance (including all RMTU members).

In the end the local AEGON people were prepared to talk to the Dutch delegation. It was a long walk down from the top!

The Auckland Ports situation was in its early stages at the time, evoking huge international support across the conference.

Our Union also had an invitation to the opening of the new ITF offices in Sydney which was opened by Paddy Crumlin, president of the ITF and national secretary of the MUA, along with David Cockroft secretary of the ITF.

In summary, it is important that our Union has representation where global solidarity is essential in a world of corporate greed. The opportunity to attend such meetings and grow the inter-union connections has its incentives and gives us global recognition.

Dave Marden

NMC North Island ports rep. 🌐

KiwiRail wage round



Pictured is the RMTU and KiwiRail bargaining teams for the 2012 negotiations following the first two day session.

Freight transport final report an improvement but still not satisfactory

THE Productivity Commission final report into International Freight Transport, published last month, is cause for concern. The RMTU plus New Zealand ports, MUNZ and other CTU-affiliated unions with an interest in international freight were all very concerned at the directions taken in the Commission's draft report released in January and were pleased that many of their concerns, particularly in the area of employment, did not appear in the final report.

However, like the draft report, the final report fails to address some of the most important issues for shippers. It is still mainly about port profitability – yet its own data shows the big problems lie in the high prices charged by the shipping lines. It misses opportunities to address shipping company dominance or recommend effective ways for the ports to work together strategically from a national viewpoint.

Restrictive practices

The draft report had a whole chapter on employment relations at ports which contained many aspects the RMTU objected to, including long lists of employment conditions labelled as 'restrictive practices'. Considerable weight was given to comments from employers who were interviewed by a consultant who failed to interview the port unions. There was little evidence backing those comments and suggestions that changes might be needed to the Commerce Act and the Employment Court to satisfy employer complaints.

The CTU, on behalf of the affiliates, made a strong submission on these and other aspects of the draft report, and met with officials and commissioners.

The final report now has a chapter

called 'Improving workplace productivity', which takes a much more constructive approach to increasing productivity. There is still criticisms of union and port governance and leadership, and a finding that 'the persistence of some work practices represents a forgone opportunity to capture lost value and distribute it in a manner that can potentially benefit all parties' – although it says this is directed at both unions and management. Still worrying is that the Commission sees little wrong with more contracting out from an employment point of view.

However, it finds there is no need for special employment policies for ports, and makes no recommendations. On the face of it, this lays the basis for a constructive future approach to workplace productivity by the Commission. Unions have offered to work with them on further development of these ideas independently of any inquiry.

Profitable & private

The weight of the report's recommendations is to commercialise the ports: it says that their principal objective should be to be a successful commercial business as profitable as a privately owned one. It recommends partial privatisation and that councils should consider a 'landlord' port model where the port owns only the land and contracts out terminal operations. It recommends removing local government representatives and staff from the boards of ports. That leaves little room for regional development aspirations and the non-commercial aspects of a port, but the Commission takes the view that running local government assets on a purely commercial basis gives them the financial returns to look after their non-financial

Continued on the next page

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:-

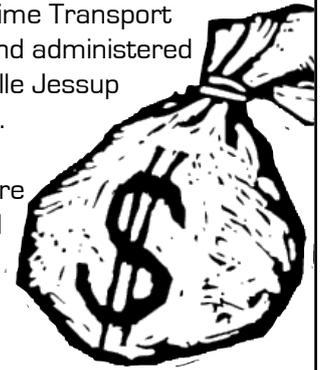
- AMP Capital Investors (NZ) Ltd;
- TOWER Asset Management; and
- Tyndall Investment Management New Zealand Limited.

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



The next step is for the government to decide which of the report's recommendations it will implement. We need to watch these developments carefully.

objectives. This is the economic assumption that 'the market knows best'. Many local governments do not agree.

The port focus might be understandable if ports were the major cost driver in the logistics chain. But they are not. Case studies in the report show average onshore port charges to Auckland importers and exporters are dramatically lower than those in Sydney – around half the cost. They are also lower than Long Beach (California) and surprisingly competitive with Singapore (the world's busiest transshipment port and second busiest container port) and Shanghai (the world's biggest container port with very low labour costs).

Comparing charges

The report showed quotes it had received for a standardised container freight shipment to and from Sydney, Shanghai, Singapore and Long Beach, with comparisons for the same shipment to and from Sydney. Auckland's charges as port of origin were on average 56 percent of Sydney's. Auckland's charges as a destination were on average 54 percent of Sydney's, 72 percent of Long Beach's, 33 percent higher than Singapore's and 64 percent higher than Shanghai's.

Yet the total cost of freight is much higher for New Zealand importers and exporters compared to Australia – by between 7 percent and an astonishing 87 percent. Why? Because actual sea freight charges from shipping companies are between 27 percent and a gobsmacking 635 percent higher than for Australia. It's not due to travel distances: Long Beach in California is

closer to Auckland than Sydney – but Auckland sea freight costs are 27 to 53 percent more expensive than Sydney's.

The report looks for other reasons why shipping companies charge us so much more than Australia. It finds a mixed picture of how competitive they are. For example our ports are smaller and so are the ships calling at them, so fixed costs have to be shared across a smaller number of containers. On the other hand there are only two to four services on New Zealand routes investigated, compared to eight or nine from Australia to some of the same destinations. The report concludes that 'case studies show evidence of higher sea freight rates on New Zealand services compared with Australian services that do not seem to be fully explained by cost differences' and recommends that pricing cartels like shipping conferences be subject to normal competition rules – a welcome step. However, it says that such arrangements are little used so it is not clear that it is solving the problem. Shipping companies will still be free to keep other types of cooperation agreements that could limit capacity on routes or coordinate bargaining against ports.

Twisting arms

Submissions from exporters and ports expressed concern that the shipping companies had excessive market power and were not fully passing on cost savings. A shipping company's ability to twist arms to get port companies to invest in new facilities but then move their services to another port is given credence by the very low asset

utilisation in ports.

Regarding productivity, the best measure of labour productivity given in the report is the 'vessel rate' – the number of containers moved per person per hour. Tauranga and Auckland have very similar rates, suggesting that technology, equipment, port layout, ship and cargo types are much more important factors than contracting out. Indeed, Australian container ports contract out under the landlord system but have lower vessel rates than New Zealand. On the whole, according to a Ministry of Transport analysis, 'the container productivity of New Zealand ports appears at least comparable with, and in some cases better than, Australian and other international ports'.

Further concern

A further concern the RMTU has is with the Productivity Commission's approach is that while its own objectives require it to provide advice that leads to 'the best possible improvement in the wellbeing of New Zealanders', it limits itself to improving 'economic efficiency'. Once again, it assumes that 'the market knows best' and will lead to 'best possible' improvements in wellbeing. Our experience tells us otherwise.

The Commission made significant improvements to its report during the submission process. However there is still much to be concerned about. The next step is for the government to decide which of the report's recommendations it will implement. We need to watch these developments carefully. 

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.

Safety funding boost and independent review announced

THE RMTU, along with industry, is welcoming a \$37 million boost to occupational health and safety over the next four years. The Minister of Labour, Kate Wilkinson, announced the boost along with a full review of the country's health and safety system. The Minister has set a target for a 25% reduction in workplace deaths and serious injuries by 2020.

The RMTU welcomes the opportunity of a better resourced and trained inspectorate and will advocate strongly for improved health and safety standards during the review. 

The railway versus Rommel

SPEAKING at the foot of the Petone Railway Station commemorative flagpole, the GM of the Interislander, Thomas Davis said “this service is unique”.

He went on to outline the reason why: “It was one of the first Anzac Day observances in New Zealand and second by a matter of hours only, to the service at Tinui in the Wairarapa.”

More significant, he said, was the fact that the flagpole was built by railways staff at Petone, Lower Hutt and Hornsby in New South Wales as a memorial to railway servicemen who lost their lives at Gallipoli.

“This is the only ceremony in the country that marks the military service of railwaymen,” he said. “More than 7,500, half the rail workforce at the time, went on active military service during World War One.”

“They were critical for moving troops, equipment and supplies at times when other forms of transport were not equipped to do the job,” he said. “This was particularly true in World War One where the theatre of war was relatively static.”

The experience of WWI and the shortage of railwaymen available to keep trains running, led the British Government to ask New Zealand for skilled railway staff when WWII broke out.

In New Zealand it achieved its own importance where the movement of troops and supplies became a priority and led to railways jobs becoming ‘reserved occupations’ – meaning the men were exempt from military service.

He went on to recognise all railwaymen and women who contributed to the war effort in all major conflicts – some of whom did not get due recognition.

“One of the more visible groups were the railwaymen who joined rail operating companies,” he said. “In 1940 many of them left New Zealand as the New Zealand Railway Group destined initially, for France to operate railways with their British counterparts. But the rapid advance of Nazi Germany put paid to that plan and they were sent instead to Egypt to operate and extend railway lines in the Western Desert where they did exceptional work upgrading and extending existing railway lines and extending the line from Egypt over 275 miles



Some of those gathered for the service.

into Libya – almost to the port of Tobruk.”

He said at one stage the Kiwi railwaymen set a record for constructing a length of track in one day.

“Such was the railwayman’s instinct to ‘rise to the occasion’, nothing was beyond their ‘give it a go’ attitude.”

He said a measure of their contribution is the assessment by Field Marshal Montgomery, when he said at the beginning of the Battle of El Alamein in 1942: “Now it’s the railway versus Rommel”.

Their story has been told by another railwayman, Brendon Judd, an operational safety coordinator in Otahuhu, who has written the book ‘Desert Rail’ to keep alive the memory of the railwaymen who served in WWII.

He said it is a great story, but was disappointed that most of the group had returned to working on the railway before the war ended and were not invited to take part in celebrations when the end finally came because they were considered not to have seen active service.

“The stories of the flagpole memorial and the New Zealand Railways Group in the Western Desert make it much easier to remember what we are honouring and why. And when we say, ‘we will remember them’ we can be clear in our minds we are referring to all railway staff who have been involved in military service. By their actions, they have helped create a peace we must all be grateful for and the inspiration to preserve it.” 🇳🇿

Significant memorial

ONE of railway’s most significant war memorials is the tablet in the entrance hall to Wellington Railway Station’s railway offices. The tablet contains the names of the 446 railwaymen who died in military service during World War One.

Last month, Rail Heritage Trust executive chairman Euan McQueen (left), KiwiRail chairman John Spencer (centre) and Rail & Maritime Transport Union general secretary Wayne Butson (right) laid wreaths below the tablet as part of this year’s ANZAC Day commemoration. 🇳🇿



Bargaining training

DELEGATES from Hillside, Otago Rail and Port Otago branches attended a two day training course in mid April entitled 'Organising for Bargaining'. This is the first time that the RMTU has used this particular course, and from the response from attendees it appears to have been a resounding success.

The course is built around a simulation of a wage negotiation in a medium sized business. Participants take the roles of management and union negotiation teams. Day one is spent covering the theory of collective bargaining and de-bunking some of the widely held beliefs and myths about negotiations. The simulation can then last for the whole of the second day, with time put aside to brief and de-brief the participants.

Strategy & tactics

The premise is that negotiations, or the face to face encounters at the table, are part of a wider process – that of collective bargaining. Collective bargaining includes preparing for negotiations, identifying aims and objectives, gathering claims and supporting information, and agreeing on strategy and tactics in pursuit of these aims.

In other words, if the parties don't do their homework and figure out what they're trying to achieve then this is a recipe for failure.



(l - r) Brian McKay Otago, Tim Spence Otago and Don Bates KiwiRail.



(l - r) Joe Carson OETT, Rusty Wild Dunedin KiwiRail and Dave Kearns Hillside.

In even plainer English: How do you know whether or not you've 'won' if you haven't taken the trouble to work out what 'winning' looks like?

The theme of the workshop is that the process takes organising and that bargaining is part of organising not the other way round. So, recruiting members, setting up a strong delegate structure, having efficient communications (yes, that means social media and texts as well as notices boards and flyers), educating members, building a strong union profile through branded clothing, regular meetings and encouraging activists is basic organising – and it all helps us when we engage in collective bargaining. A well organised union has more bargaining strength than one that is poorly organised.

Experienced team

Our delegates worked hard through the exercises on day one. We were fortunate to have a great deal of experience in the room. One table of five delegates had 142 years' experience between them! Also, many of our Dunedin delegates had been active in the campaign to save jobs at Hillside and Hutt Workshops and were part of 'Keep Kiwis Working'. They understood the value of building an organisation – on and off the job.

It helped also that the Hillside, rail and port branches were all going to be involved in collective bargaining this year.

By day two the teams were ready to assume their roles and put the theory into practice. Brian McKay was a frighteningly good advocate as the CEO of a medium sized engineering firm and Stu Johnstone made a first class union organiser. The simulation was scarily realistic and Wayne Butson and John Kerr had the privilege of eavesdropping on both parties in caucus. The debates were fascinating and demonstrated the high calibre of RMTU delegates.

All in all this was a valuable two



(l - r) Joe Carson OETT, Les Ingram Hillside and Steve Wilson Hillside.



(l - r) Ken Latherby, Stu Johnston Hillside and Marty Duncan KiwiRail.



days' work. We're already reaping the benefits in the understanding our delegates are demonstrating in current bargaining rounds in KiwiRail and Port Otago. Thanks to everyone for their energy and enthusiasm. 🇳🇿



(l - r) Lyall Kelpie OETT, Pat Tutty OETT, Larry Beattie Hillside and Stu Johnston Hillside.

Hikoi opposes asset sales



THE RMTU's flag was clearly visible over the estimated 5000 people protesting at Parliament last month against the Government's planned asset sales programme.



Otira town for sale - again

AN Auckland couple who bought Otira after seeing it from the window of the TranzAlpine, are struggling to sell it again. Bill and Chris Hennah bought the old railway township for about \$70,000 in 1998. Two years ago, they put it on the market for \$1 million, although they say they are willing to sell the hotel separately. They've had quite a bit of international media coverage – and a few “nibbles” – but they blame the publicity surrounding the Crafar farms' sale for putting investors off. At this stage, they're not panicking because they don't plan to retire for another couple of years. If they can get a buyer for the hotel, or even lease it, they say they will make improvements elsewhere in the village. The bar manager, Michelle Neate is one of their best advertisements. “There's no argument, life in Otira is bliss,” she says.

“The people in the village at the moment are really good people.”

The main difficulty the couple had faced was with the Westland District Council, which would not give resource consent for subdivision and development because of the risk of flooding or earthquakes.

Bill said the Department of Conservation was not keen on the town's growth because Otira was in the middle of a national park.

The Otira Hotel, originally a Cobb & Co coach stop, has been on the same site since the 1860s.

The town has long been a base for railway and road workers, but many of the houses, which date back to the 1920s, have been moved to new locations on the West Coast.

Otira has about 40 people. 🌐

Otira Tunnel review update

THE joint KiwiRail and RMTU safety review of the Otira rail tunnel is well underway with a report to the steering group expected shortly. The tunnel is 8.5km long and situated between Arthurs Pass and Otira. It is used predominantly to carry coal from the West Coast to Canterbury.

The joint working group have systematically identified the hazards in the tunnel and are reviewing the current safety procedures including personal protective equipment. An independent air monitoring company are conducting environmental monitoring to assess whether exposure levels are within the Workplace Exposure Standards. Other aspects of the review include emergency preparedness and systems for reporting hazards. 🌐

End of the line?

MAJOR storm damage to the Gisborne-Napier railway line could spell the end of this track, which was already facing an uncertain future.

A storm in March caused three big washouts – one of which measured about 100 metres and another about 40 metres – along a three-kilometre stretch of the line between Gisborne and Wairoa.

KiwiRail estimates repairs would take five months and cost between \$3.3 and \$4.3 million. It has not committed to doing the work and is looking at the longer term viability of the line.

Meanwhile, Gisborne residents turned out in force in April, demanding that KiwiRail repair their railway line.

Mayor Meng Foon estimated “at least 2000” people took part in a march through the city in a bid to save the region’s rail link.

The message from the march was “fix our rail” and was directed at KiwiRail and the Government, Foon said.

The washout has left sections of track dangling in the air.

Foon said Gisborne’s business community, in particular, was worried by the prospect the line could be closed permanently.

As fuel prices rose, rail had become increasingly viable with businesses increasing the goods they were freighting from five wagon loads a week to sixty.

KiwiRail chief executive Jim Quinn said the section of track through the Wharerata Range just south of Beach loop was hardest hit, and staff were “assessing reinstatement options”.

He said parts of the line were so difficult to reach it took KiwiRail teams two days to access it.

“At this stage we are continuing to focus on gathering the facts which will form the basis for a decision to be made on how best to proceed,” said Quinn. “However, from what can plainly be seen, the damage is extensive and any repairs would take considerable time to complete.”

The future of the line has been in question for some time. KiwiRail said last year that it would make a decision on its future later this year, with mothballing or closure possible options.



Quinn said he did not know how long the line would be out of action and he would not comment on whether the damage would have any bearing on its future.

The line usually has one or two train services a week. This was increased to three a week in January. The line runs at a loss of about \$2.4 million a year, but hopes were raised late last year when Gisborne transport company Weatherall Transport became KiwiRail’s “retail provider” and put additional business on rail.

KiwiRail were apparently unmoved by

the protest with chief executive Jim Quinn saying “nothing” had changed. “We want to make sure the facts are clear and a decision can then be made.”

He said the cost of fixing the three washouts, which could take up to five months and was estimated to cost between \$3.3-\$4.3 million.

But it also had to look at the cost of further upgrade work replacement of sleepers and bridges in the next 10 years, and decide whether the investment was justified commercially. 🇳🇿

Selling our souls

Why the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement is worrying community and legal leaders

SO serious are the implications of the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) that more than 100 jurists from New Zealand and other countries including some of their most eminent lawyers, have sent an open letter to the negotiators calling for the right of investors to sue governments directly to be excluded.

Secrecy abounds

This key clause, and indeed the whole agreement, has been negotiated in secret and will not be revealed, it is believed, until four years after it is signed.

Of major concern is that the Americans will insist (as they have done with other similar agreements) that this agreement should allow foreign corporations to stop our Government (or any future government) from changing New Zealand law in a way they think might undermine their value.

"You may recall how Warner Brothers stepped in when *The Hobbit* was threatened by strike action and how our Government was forced to change OUR laws to suit these foreign bullies," said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson.

Meanwhile the government is selling the TPPA as a free trade between friendly countries and denying any questions about the small print.

Far-fetched

In November last year, Prime Minister John Key described as "far-fetched" the idea that investors could sue the New Zealand government directly in a secret international tribunal to enforce rules in the proposed TPPA.

Under standard US terms for such agreements, investors can claim millions in compensation from governments on the grounds that new regulations adversely affected their investment. Under a TPPA that would apply to investors from all participating countries, including our largest sources

Remit to Labour Party

The RMTU has put its full support behind an EPMU-remit to the Wellington Regional Conference of the Labour Party in June. If it is accepted and passed it will then go to the national conference.

The remit asks voters to consider a number of factors before supporting such an agreement including:

- Increased access for our agricultural exports to the US market;
- That it does not undermine health costs and measures;
- Does not favour overseas investors or suppliers over domestic ones nor expand intellectual property rights and enforcement in excess of current law;
- Does not weaken our public services nor reduce our flexibility to support local development;
- Contains enforceable labour and environmental clauses; and more.

of investment, the US and Australia.

Under these arrangements, an American corporation, for example, would be given far more extensive rights against our government than any New Zealand company would ever have. It would mean that a future government, perhaps elected to change policy in an area like environmental protection or health and safety (maybe smoking), could be threatened with a crippling lawsuit unless it backed off.

A worry for lawyers

Bryan Gould in the *NZ Herald* writes: "A particular worry for lawyers is that our courts, too, could be overruled. The foreign investment tribunals have decided that courts are part of a country's government (riding roughshod over any doctrine of the separation of powers) and that they, too, must comply. Even if our courts had upheld the validity of a law properly passed by Parliament, that decision could be challenged by a foreign corporation

"These sorts of agreements are giving unbridled power to multinational, mainly American-owned, companies."

alleging it breached their rights under the TPPA. Even a jury decision in private litigation could be challenged and lead to the Government paying millions in compensation."

He cites a case brought recently by Chevron where a tribunal ordered the Ecuador Government, in defiance of its constitution, not to enforce a ruling by Ecuador's Appeal Court that Chevron must pay \$18 billion to clean up toxic waste in the Amazon Basin.

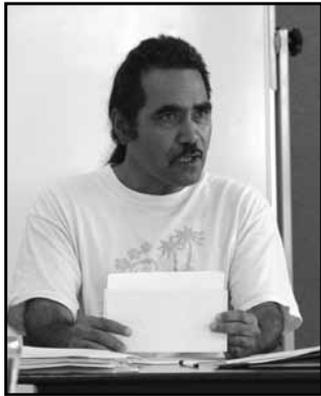
Power to multinationals

"These sorts of agreements are giving unbridled power to multinational, mainly American-owned, companies," said Butson. "These companies have far too much power already and the more they get the more they want. If our own elected representation cannot combat their influence we are in real danger of losing our independence."

"The concessions made in secret by today's Government would permanently lock New Zealand into a marketplace controlled and dominated by foreign corporations. Voters would be left without any possibility of redress," writes Gould. "We have already sold off into foreign ownership a higher proportion of our national assets than any other developed country. The TPPA could mean that control over what remains, now and into the future, would in effect be handed over to international corporations. This is a heavy price to pay for a trade deal in which our partners, at most, commit to buy what they want to buy anyway." 

Some clear messages from this year's Ports Forum

A mixture of RMTU delegates and observers from around NZ's ports attended the 2012 Ports Forum on March 14-15 in Wellington. For a number of RMTU members this was their first Forum. It was ably chaired by recently elected president Aubrey Wilkinson, from Port of Tauranga.



Aubrey Wilkinson

Peter Conway CTU who delivered the opening address and spoke on the dispute at Ports of Auckland (POA) describing the situation as a collision between a board and management who want to completely dictate to their workers and their union which they wanted to get rid of. He said this was "sadly familiar territory" with a National Government and its expected agenda of attacks on workers, beneficiaries and unions while giving their rich mates tax cuts and privatisation opportunities. His final message was crystal clear: "When worker rights are under attack – stand up and fight back."

National derided

President of the CTU Helen Kelly spoke in depth about the POA dispute and other issues facing New Zealand workers. She derided National's propaganda that "workers ought to be grateful to have a job".

CTU economist Bill Rosenberg spoke about the recent work of the Productivity Commission – a group brought together by the National Government to look at the future of international freight and transport services. Ports and airports are its main focus with ship rates a significant problem. He said NZ is getting ripped off by international shipping companies playing ports off against each other to drive down prices.

Very little of this is mentioned let alone analysed in the Commission's papers.

RMTU's newly appointed Health and Safety organiser Karen Fletcher presented a case study from Port of Tauranga where delegates discovered that the capacity for H&S internally was very high. The downside of this is that POT H&S is dominated by contractors on site to the detriment of direct employees which has hindered development of the overall H&S culture and safe practices. The significant question that arose was:

How can an employer have a H&S approach that does not directly involve

the workers? You can't have a H&S policy and coverage without all parties affected being involved.

RMTU Organisers John Kerr and Phil Spanswick ran a workshop titled 'Waterfront Organising Campaign' which covered the history of organised labour and unionism on the NZ waterfront and a history on non-unionised labour. They also took delegates through

- Planning a recruitment and organising campaign.
- Recruitment techniques.
- Building a strong delegate structure in your workplace.

The message is clear: We must fight to organise labour into legitimate unions on the NZ waterfront.

Labour spokesperson on transport Phil Twyford, reiterated his party's commitment



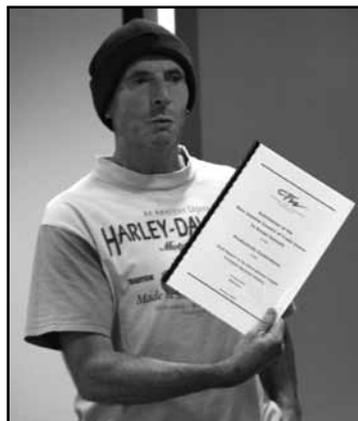
Denise Roache

to reintroduce cabotage – though he wouldn't say how soon after gaining power. This merely confirms that if we are to effect change through the political process we have to continue to lobby hard. Labour are our friends but we still have to work hard to make sure our issues are high on their agenda.

He also gave Labour's view of the so called 'Productivity Commission'.



Howard Phillips.



Dave Marden.



Mike Nijssen.



Te Ra Poroa.

“The consequences for working people in NZ if this fight is lost will be to leave our children and grandchildren with far, far worse working conditions than we have and a long fight to get back.”



Helen Kelly, CTU.



Geoff Davenport.



Bill Rosenberg, CTU.

Greens Party spokesperson on industrial relations Denise Roache, said the Greens are increasingly more outspoken on employment matters despite it being a traditional Labour area. Unsurprisingly, the Rena grounding was a hot topic, and matched delegates' strongly held view that the current lack of regulation in coastal shipping needs fixing.

Casual labour questioned

Geoff Davenport from McBride, Davenport and James spoke about casualisation.

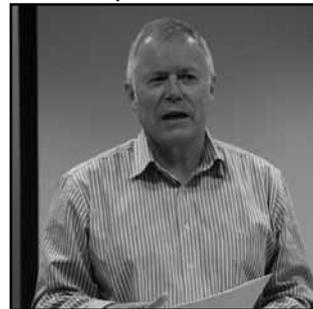
Members, looking around their workplaces, have begun to wonder about the employment status of colleagues and fellow



Karen Fletcher.



Wayne Butson.



Peter Conway, CTU.



Phil Twyford, Labour MP.

workers. Does casual work give workers the ability to decline work one day and accept on another? Geoff also discussed holiday pay, ALT days, superannuation, access to collective agreement benefits, and more. Delegates were encouraged to assess the status of casual workers in their workplaces and discuss developments with their organisers.

Unacceptable CEA

Joe Fleetwood and Mike Clark of MUNZ, spoke in detail about the POA dispute and its wider ramifications including the current collective employment agreement. Joe said the 'new' agreement proposed terms that were unacceptable to MUNZ including such things as total flexibility of the workforce (read: at the beck and call of the employer 24/7/365) with no ability to plan home and family lives and not knowing what their weekly wage would be each week. Joe asked for the continued support of other port workers.

“The consequences for working people in NZ if this fight is lost will be to leave our children and grandchildren with far, far worse working conditions than we have and a long fight to get back,” Joe said.

Delegates left with the clear message: We must plan and strategically organise non-union labour across all ports in NZ. 🇳🇿



Naylor Young.



Mike Clark, MUNZ.



Craig Cooney.



Phil Spanswick.



By
Helen Kelly
CTU

Government's true colours on c

WE know that in economic environment of the global financial crisis and Canterbury earthquakes means times are tough, but what we have also seen is that when times are tough, a government's true priorities come to the surface. The government's 'stimulus' hinged around its tax changes - which at the time, we pointed out to be unfair - have proved to be not only unfair but unsuccessful at providing the kind of stimulus we need. The tax changes gave tax cuts to those on high incomes, while hitting lower income families with a hike to GST. Wage increases have not matched price increases and there are not enough jobs. We are currently seeing some of the highest unemployment rates since the 1990's. There are now 160,000 people unemployed – 9,000 more than just three months ago. The jobs available are simply not increasing fast enough to keep up with people who need them. And over 53,000 people left permanently or long term for Australia in the last year.

There has been plenty of opportunity in recent years for the government to take a more proactive approach to jobs creation. The Canterbury rebuild may still offer many much needed construction jobs, but I fear we have failed to adequately prepare our workforce. Rather than intensive training schemes to upskill Kiwi workers to be able to participate in the rebuild, we are fast tracking the immigration of skilled migrants.

We are witnessing the Kiwi version of austerity with spending cuts in many areas, a zero Budget and public sector job losses. The government is setting an example of cut and hope. It has increased minimum wages, but only marginally and these were largely gobbled up by GST increases. Rather than bolstering employment rights and encouraging good jobs, it has cut them too. And employers are being encouraged by this approach to be more militant. I see it as no small coincidence that the rise of high profile industrial disputes mirrored the government's employment law changes already made that reduce employees' rights and the government's own example of being an employer.

The Ports of Auckland is an entrenched and ongoing conflict between a Board and management who want to completely dictate to the workers and a union trying to defend decent jobs. Facilitation is progressing and we believe that, provided the employer takes a more reasonable approach, the dispute will be resolved. It is an example of a comprehensive union campaign with tremendous

support throughout the union movement, international solidarity, and a real effort to reach the wider community. I am really proud of the way these workers, their union, your union and our union movement stood up to be counted in this dispute.

The Talley's Affco dispute is also a real standoff, with an employer, known for being ruthless, has said their wage offer was contingent on the union not striking – but then locked them out before any strike. The workers have been locked out since 29 February, (nearly 80 days without pay at time of writing this). This is another brutal lockout in the meat industry, hard on the heels of a 65 day lockout at ANZCO CMP in Rangitikei.

Affco are maintaining an extreme bargaining position on changes they want in a new collective employment agreement. They offer a return to work only on unreasonable conditions and with a lengthy time frame and several tranches, and force workers desperate for their jobs to accept individual agreements entirely on Affco's terms. There is already a significant number of workers on such individual agreements (the company says it is now a majority).

In addition to prior claims, the company claims in a new document:

- Remove seniority from the agreement and any right to be re-hired in the new season;
- Have a seven day roster and workers would have to work any time, any day; and
- Provide for the introduction of a system where people can be terminated if the employer determines that a worker should be, even without any misconduct that would justify dismissal.

The above proposal on termination includes this wording:

'... shall also apply to any situation where the employer elects to terminate the union member's employment upon the grounds that irreconcilable differences exist between the employer and union member or the union member and another employee or employees or determines that the interest of the employer would be best served by terminating the union member's employment notwithstanding that the union member has not been guilty of any conduct or omission that would justify the dismissal upon the grounds of misconduct or poor performance . . .'

These disputes are partly about flexibility. There is nothing wrong with some flexibility. Employers need flexibility sometimes to get the job done – and so do workers to balance the demands of their families and other commitments with their job. But some

*Port of Tauranga
and rail branch
officials
presenting a
donation cheque to
the Rangiora Meat
Workers.*

display

employers want far too much flexibility. And they want it without the agreement of the worker. They want to impose it, and they want to load all the risk and insecurity on to the worker.

Flexibility is no longer flexible when it is done without agreement of the worker. When major changes are made without the agreement of the union, and when it is all about what the business needs and not about what workers also need, then flexibility has gone too far.

This builds on the narrative that if you do have a decent job, with reasonable pay and conditions, you are at risk of being labelled 'uncompetitive' or 'privileged'. It now seems to be a crime to have a decent job in New Zealand.

Employment law changes have been on the cards since this government came into power. The 90 days fire at will law has seen employees sacked without reason on the 89th day of employment, and predictably, hasn't provided any of the employment benefits it was proposed to address.

The government has now announced its next lot of employment law changes and intends to remove obligations for employers to conclude collective bargaining and opt out of multi-employer bargaining. The changes would also see employers being able to deduct the pay of workers who undertake partial strikes and see new employees no longer having the protection of being employed on the terms of a collective agreement for the first 30 days of their employment.

And employers will be able to initiate collective bargaining at the same time as unions, meaning that the requirement to negotiate in good faith could be on the coverage and terms the employer initiates on. When coupled with removing the duty to conclude, these changes herald ominous signs for disputes like AFFCO and Ports of Auckland.

In fact, these law changes would have made these disputes legally much more difficult.

The Government actually has an obligation to promote collective bargaining. Instead it is deliberately undermining collective bargaining – a device which could lift wages, protect job conditions and reduce inequality in New Zealand.

What we need is an improved employment law that provides for industry standard agreements and more collective bargaining – not less.

So there are many challenges. But the union movement is



showing great solidarity. And we are reaching out to all sorts of groups – churches, iwi leaders, environmental groups and so many more. We are pushing hard on the petition for a referendum on assets sales and we will continue to campaign hard – particularly in support of workers locked out. 🌐

Woodville steam celebrations

WOODVILLE'S 125th celebrations held on Saturday March 24 remembered the 125 years since rail came to the town.

For the event, the Feilding and Districts Steam Rail took its Wab 794, and F 163 – which is rarely seen on the main line – to Woodville, along with their four 56ft steel carriages and FM guards' van.

The F 163 had a primary role in the celebrations, being its main 'guest locomotive'. It was used to re-enact the first train arriving at Woodville.

Steam Incorporated were also asked to contribute and sent a Da 1431, which hauled a 'Round the Block' excursion called the 'Tararua Scenic Daylight' up the Wairarapa Line to Woodville and then later headed through the Manawatu Gorge and back to Paekakariki down the North Island Main Trunk.

KiwiRail contributed a DC, a DSC, two OM milk wagons and one each of the new type of curtain side container wagon for display at Woodville Station.

The Pahiatua Railcar Society had planned to contribute a Standard Railcar Rm 31 and also an Rm 5 on the back of a truck. However, the Rm 31 is still at Hutt Workshops after their open day having encountered a problem preventing its return



Steam engines abound at Woodville's 125th celebrations bringing out enthusiasts on the side line and in the cabs. Far left is Kevin Woodward dressed for the role of driving an F 163.

PHOTOGRAPHS:
Daniel Garland

home. The Rm 5 didn't attend.

Nevertheless, the event was good and it was wonderful to see the F back on the main line, despite information on what was happening for the event and what the order

of activities was during the celebrations, was a bit thin.

Well done to the organisers for putting it all together! 🇳🇿

Members advised to tread carefully when reviewing claims

A recent case involving an RMTU member and Aon and KiwiRail has revealed some dodgy practices which may prejudice his decision to take Aon and KiwiRail to review after they determined to cease paying his compensation for an entitled work-related injury.

Aon recently decided to cut off his entitlements, claiming that his ongoing incapacity was no longer due to his covered workplace accident. The RMTU member disagreed and applied to have the decision independently reviewed.

The independent review process is provided for in the Accident Compensation Act 2001. Both sides make their submissions and the Review Officer will issue an independent decision on the matter.

However, it appears that Aon and KiwiRail have decided to insert an extra stage into this dispute resolution process.

After Aon received the review application they asked to meet with the injured person in order to discuss the dispute further, prior to the matter going to a hearing as per the Act.

Fortunately, Ben Thompson, a senior associate with Hazel Armstrong Law, accompanied him to the meeting.

Ben said he found the meeting to be “inappropriate and potentially prejudicial” to the RMTU member’s case.

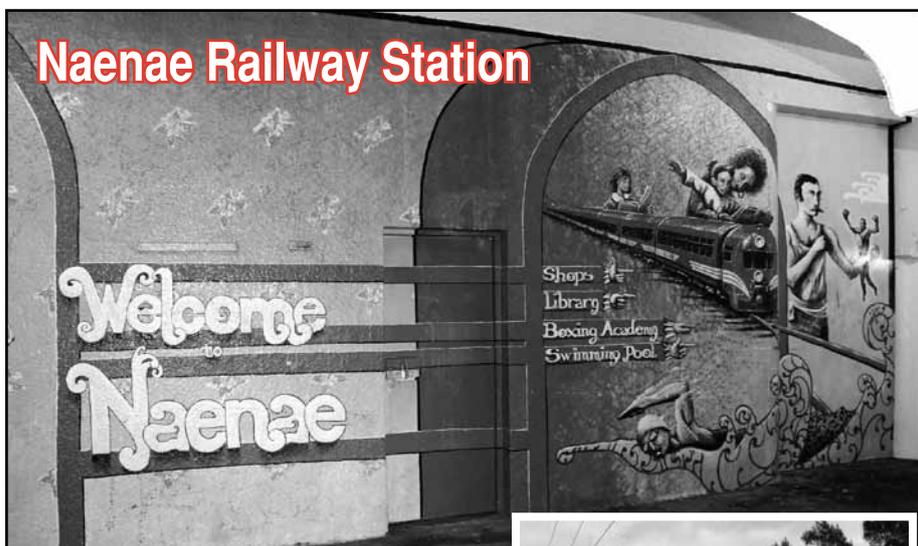
“After going through what they saw to be the strengths of their case, Aon’s/KiwiRail’s representatives then asked the RMTU member whether he thinks his injury was caused at work or not,” said Ben. “This is the very issue which is to be decided at review – the crux of the case – and is a matter for comment by medical specialists.”

The member had not yet had the opportunity to obtain his own medical evidence.

His comments at the meeting were recorded in writing by Aon’s representative. Fortunately, Ben was able to answer on his behalf, simply confirming that he disagreed with Aon’s decision, had lodged a review accordingly, and that he wished to have this issue considered by an independent Review Officer as per the relevant law.

Ben advises that if any Union member challenges a decision from Aon via the review process they should not attend a meeting of this kind.

“They are not legally obliged to do so,” he said. “By attending meetings of this nature and entering into dialogue with Aon’s representatives, the member could be at risk of prejudicing their chances of success at the review hearing. In our experience, ACC do not seek to discuss review applications with their clients in this manner.”



THE then Wellington to Hutt Valley branch line to Waterloo was opened on 26 May 1927 and was extended to Eponi and Naenae on 7 January 1946 and then to Taita on 14 April 1947. Double track went only as far as Naenae but was extended to Taita on 22 February 1953. With the opening of the section to Haywards (now called Manor Park) from 1 March 1954 and the closing of the Melling-Haywards section, this route became the main route to Upper Hutt and the Wairarapa. Meanwhile, Naenae Station is closed from 14 May until 19 August 2012 to allow a rebuild of the station to take place including a new platform shelter, resurfacing of the platform and renovation of the subway connections to Cambridge and Oxford Terraces.



New campaign

THE Service and Food Workers Union (SWFU) have begun a new campaign to reduce the gap between the rich and poor. Called ‘Living wage Aotearoa New Zealand’ the campaign aims to help those New Zealanders who receive low wages enough to meet their needs, enjoy their lives and participate in society.

The RMTU has endorsed the campaign and urges all its members to follow suit.

The principle statement of the campaign says: A living wage is the income necessary to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life. A living wage will enable workers to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society. We call on the Government, employers and society as a whole, to strive for a living wage for all households as a necessary and important step in the reduction of poverty in New Zealand.

For more information contact Annie Newman 0800-864-661

Workers' Memorial Day

WORKERS who gave up their lives at work were remembered again on April 28 with services throughout the country.

In the Waikato their small ceremony was performed by Rick Kuka their new Maori liaison officer for Te Kupenga Mahi together with his wife Donna. It has been reported as an "exceptional effort". They also felt privileged that RMTU president Aubrey Wilkinson his wife together with Phil Spanswick from Tauranga were present. Aubrey spoke on behalf of the Union focussing on the importance of the day. Theo De Bruyn spoke about some of his past experiences, Wayne Menehira spoke of his near misses counting himself lucky to be among the living considering some of the old work practices and lack of true safety plans. Paul Jensen finished our service with a few inspirational words and a prayer while Ray Brown provided the waiata expertise.

At Hutt Workshops the commemoration was brought forward to the Friday when a wreath was laid on-site within their memorial garden with the assistance and support from National Office and Hutt Workshops management.

Representatives of the RMTU also attended the service at Lyttelton Port held at the Science Alive Reserve behind the old Railway Station on Moorehouse Ave in view of demolition workers carving through the brick of the condemned railway station. Fortunately the Reserve remains in good nick with the cabbage trees planted each

year on April 28 growing tall.

The newly resurrected Timaru Branch have acknowledged the day and in their process of becoming a fully functioning branch promise to make it part of their calendar next year.

The memorial site in Dunedin's Market Reserve once again was the spot to gather to remember dead comrades.

Meanwhile at Port Napier around 50 people met at the Corban Frickleton Memorial Tree to remember those we have lost or been injured as a consequence of a work place accident. Local industrial chaplain, Neville Stevenson, led the proceedings and speeches were given by Viv Bull PONL HR, Adam Harvey OP supervisor and Tom O'Neill, SFWU who spoke on behalf of the CTU.

A strong showing of RMTU members – port and rail – were present, along with



Mike Williams, Lianne Dalziel and John Kerr at the Christchurch memorial.

organisers and reps from the EPMU, SWFU, PSA, MUNZ, PONL and HBSS management. Prayers and poems were read and all acknowledged the need for us to look after each other and the right for everyone to go home at the end of the day.

A touching memorial day for us as it was seven years to the day that we lost our brother Corban. 🇳🇿

Ben's back

JUST shy of two years ago, I left NZ to take up a position in England with Thompsons Solicitors, a large law firm representing the vast majority of UK trade unions. During that time I acted for workers from many different unions who had suffered injuries either in the UK or abroad. After working in the fault-based UK legal system, my faith in NZ's no-fault personal injury scheme has been renewed. I am very happy to be back at Hazel Armstrong Law, and to be working closely with the RMTU once again. 🇳🇿



The dawn of a new era!

Mani Raumati reports

It is with mixed emotions that we say goodbye to the grand old ladies of our nation's rail fleet and welcome some 21st century technology with the changeover of rolling stock on Wellington's Johnsonville line where Wellington's historic English Electric multiple units were officially recognised as relics of a bygone age.

This brings to a close a truly extraordinary era of faithful commuter service on one of the most challenging lines in the country.

The line was opened on July 2, 1938 presided over by the then Railways Minister, Dan Sullivan and Wellington Mayor, Thomas Hislop. In joint tribute to an outstanding operational career and in celebration of the inaugural Johnsonville 'Matangi' service, a special ceremony was arranged on Monday March 19, 2012 with appropriate pomp and ceremony. Representatives of both local and central Government interests were present with their respective entourage of advisers for the photo opportunity!

Sentiment aside, what was truly interesting was the overwhelming interest and participation of present and past employees. In a generous gesture, Tranz Metro Wellington arranged a special morning tea in celebration of this milestone, with invites made to many past employees.

In a farewell gesture, the inaugural Matangi service to Johnsonville ran in conjunction with the final journey of a four carriage English Electric consist with both services crossing at Ngaio, thus affording interested members of the public an opportunity to participate.

Media interest was high. Armed with cameras and microphones, journalists bustled for prime position with rail aficio-



nados, interested members of the public and staff alike.

Invited guests, including Jerry Brownlee, the incumbent Minister of Transport and Wellington Mayor, Celia Wade Brown, were greeted with a special morning tea within the newly refurbished Onslow Brass Band Hall.

Sadly, although not entirely unexpected, what was missing was any recognition of RMTU staff and delegate involvement throughout the lengthy design stages of the Matangi units. Through an extensive, thorough, and at times trying process, the RMTU Wellington rail branch design team in conjunction with KiwiRail and the Greater Wellington Regional Council are now able to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

As Wayne Butson, general secretary of the RMTU so succinctly put it: "We now have 21st century trains with 21st century cabs!" 🇳🇿



Fred Hamer & Phil Gibbs – over 100 years experience



(l to r) Mani Raumati, Mahesh Chunilal and Ray Ali



Joe Byrne & Greg Smedly

Pro-union book

THE book *Wealth Vs. Work* by Allan Ornstein describes how the US has been divided into separate estates, with catch phrases that harshly sort people into “winners” and “losers”, Wall Street and Main Street, and rich and poor (or working poor); and how the government of the people has been replaced by big business and financial interests.

The author says it is a pro-labour, pro-union, pro-working-class tracing the history of ordinary, working people over centuries. It outlines the need for a fair and just society, one that sets limits on the accumulation of wealth and



inherited privilege, and includes safety nets for middle-class and working-class people.

Other topics include excellence vs equality, education and income, social mobility and stratification, manufacturing jobs, outsourcing jobs, unions and collective bargaining, unfettered capitalism, millionaires and billionaires, tax reform, college tuition and pension plans, merit and talent, innovation and technology, immigration, China and India and emerging global issues. 🌐

■ For more details go to:
wealthversuswork.com/

Old sleepers

(an occasional column taken from the annals of NZ railway history)

THE *Loco Record* was the Journal of the NZ Loco Engine Drivers' Firemen and Cleaners' Association (NZLEDFCA) and its stated aim was to give 'details of the work carried on by the Council'.

One of the intentions of publishing the *Loco Record* from its commencement in January 1910 was 'to give the correct wages and conditions for Loco Men throughout Australia'.

The first edition published the following:

A FRANK STATEMENT BY OUR MINISTER OF RAILWAYS

Loco. Wages Lower in N.Z. Than in Australia.

E.F. and C.A. Official's Statements re Australian Loco. Wages Substantiated by Our Minister.

A NEW ZEALAND VISITOR

The Hon. J.A. Millar, the New Zealand Minister of Railways, has been in Australia for nearly a month inquiring into the systems of railways management. He has been in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia, and he left Sydney by the Moana on Saturday.

"I have been received with the greatest kindness all round," said Mr Millar, "and have been shown everything I wanted to see. But if there is further complaint about our management, compared with Australian management, when I return, I'll simply publish our freight rates, our passenger rates, and our wages scale in parallel columns alongside the Australian figures. I am confident that the New Zealand rates are fully 15 per cent lower than the mean of Australian rates. Striking an all round balance, our passenger rates are about 10 per cent lower, and we pay wages considerably higher, except in one or two cases, such as those of locomotive engine-drivers.

- Vol. 1. No. 4. June 1, 1910

There are numerous articles throughout these early publications of comparisons between New Zealand and Australia and it would seem that the NZLEDFCA kept a close eye on our neighbours over the ditch. Apparently, not a lot has changed!

Some other interesting items of interest from the same volume include:

- That the average number of men employed on New Zealand railways during the year ended 31st March 1910 was 12,224 against 12,505 the previous year.
- That the loads of engines on the Culverden line were becoming excessive, and trains are made up to anywhere between 60 and 70 wagons.
- That the sheep traffic on the Incline is falling off, and the Creek men are not sorry.
- That 48,990 miles is run in New Zealand for every one locomotive failure and constitutes an excellent record.
- That a 'compound engine' broke down and a tunnel had to be dug underneath to get at the broken gear.
- That 'last year's' (1909?) Railway Statement showed that in the Manawatu 259 permanent hands resigned, 64 retired on superannuation, 38 died, 132 were dismissed, 932 were engaged and 322 transferred.
- That the Australian Commissioners told the NZ Minister of Railways that the loco unions never asked for anything unreasonable.
- That a Christchurch driver reported the delay to No 8 in this way:-
*"The wind was high, the steam was low,
The train was heavy and hard to tow;
The coal was slack and full of slate,
That's why No 8 was late."*
- That a loco foreman did not see the humour of this report and recommended a fine.
- That the hand of the Department fell rather heavily on the running staff on the Westland section when 16 loco men and seven guards were fined £1 each for breach of bridge regulations. 🌐

Are you a policyholder with AIL?

OVER the last 10 years, many RMTU members have taken family life insurance policies with American Income Life Insurance (AIL). If you are one of these members, you and your family may well be covered for accident injuries too - both on and off work.

If you or a family member has to go to the doctor, A&E or hospital to get treatment for an accident, be sure to retain the ACC certificates you are given - you'll need these for your claim documentation.

To lodge a claim, you'll need to fill in an AIL claim form. These can be found in your Policyholder Service Folder. Send this in with a copy of the ACC certificate.

If you have been in hospital,

you'll need a Hospital Discharge form. You may then also be eligible for a recuperation benefit when you come out. Again, you will need the ACC medical certificate to show how long you have been off work.

Remember, the sooner AIL has that documentation, the sooner they can pay a claim.

If you have any questions, would like to review your policies with an agent, or would like to know more about AIL programmes, please call AIL's PR manager Mario Soljan on freephone 0800 894 121 or email at mario@ailnz.co.nz

■ Visit their websites at www.ailnz.co.nz or www.aillife.com

Branch sponsors two children

THE Lyttelton branch of the RMTU recently agreed to sponsor two children via the Familial Trust, an organisation that works with families struggling with addiction such as alcoholism, drug abuse, etc.

The branch has sponsored the two children for 10 weeks through a Kids



Group term time programme aimed at helping them learn boundaries, safety, it's ok to say no, that they're not alone and to give them self esteem, confidence, trust and sharing

and social skills through positive modelling of behaviour through leaders.

The branch agreed that as a union this type of support is part of its wider social and community responsibility and have agreed to look at further sponsorships either continuing the Kids Group programme or sponsoring a child through the Familial Trust Children's Holiday Programme.

New RMTU apparel

New T-shirts for RMTU members to show their union-loyalty and affiliation.

In red, grey or black they come with a variety of slogans and symbols and are designed to stand out in a crowd.

Order yours today by completing an order form on the RMTU website or by contacting Julia on 04-499-2066.

RMTUnion.org.nz



PHOTO ROUNDUP FROM THE BRANCHES



(above) Aymee Geaves, Port Timaru.

(r) Willy Grant, train manager, Christchurch.



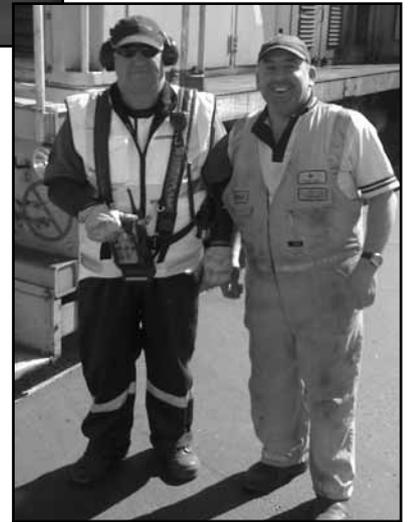
(above) Lyttelton's security team.

(l) Eddie Dickson and Paul Corliss at the Heathcote Valley Inn in Christchurch.

(below) Wayne Wilson and Marty Duncan in Dunedin.



Middleton's servicing shed.



AUCKLAND RAIL BRANCH

THERE are a lot of changes occurring on the network here. Shortly we will lose the Papakura signal box leaving only Pukekohe in the Auckland region, as the re-signalling programme continues.

The rail electrification programme is also continuing with new pylons going

up all the time. Owing to tight timetables most of this work is being done at night and some of the gangs won't have seen the sun for some time.

A stage 2 mockup of the new EMU is to arrive in June. This will consist of a whole carriage complete with drivers cab.

Meanwhile work is progressing steadily on the new Wiri depot which is planned to be ready to receive the new EMUs in the second half of 2013.

The branch has recognised the plight of the Affco workers and has made a financial contribution to their cause. We are also encouraging members to make any individual donations they can manage. 🇳🇿

Unions have a long tradition of international solidarity.

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

Sign up to UnionAID today

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

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





(above) Dion McNatty, train manager, Christchurch.



(r) John Reizinger, RCO, Middleton.



(l) Mike Kilsby, an Otira LE.



(l) Wiremu Te Huia, Steve Russell, Pete Rickerby and George English all Mk3 tampers.



(above) Keiran Frell, Tony Mann & Mike Nijssen, Port Timaru.

FIRST up we would like to mention the departure of three of our drivers to the dusty paddocks of the Pilbarra. Dave Coleman, Jessica Gage and Bob Clarke, from the servicing side of the operation. We also lost Michael Peacock to Forest-field somewhere south of Perth. Good luck to you all. Those of us left at your former depot wish you and your families good health and good fortune.

Back here in the most productive dairy region in the world, we are experiencing the annual slow down for Fonterra after one of

WAIKATO RAIL BRANCH

the most exceptional years production wise.

Which may allow a little respite from the chronic staff shortages we are experiencing at the moment.

We have a drivers school in at the moment with one or two targeted for Te Rapa and another school being advertised presently.

We have been allocated a 4wd vehicle after a long drawn out debate over the necessity of such a vehicle for the purpose

of running south, especially during severe weather, only to be told it cannot be used during bad weather as it may get messy and our staff need to mend their ways before it will be allowed to be used. Sounds a little silly but we don't make the rules and it is worth a chuckle.

Loco rosters seems to be a major problem. We don't seem to be able to get a roster that is workable. They all seem to be loaded with too much forward rotation, too many



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- 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



WAIKATO RAIL BRANCH [cont]

night shifts, too many single days off and too few drivers to fill the links. Single man servicing, although there may be someone shown on the roster to assist, often times that person is out doing other jobs like running trains, fueling cars, looking through the computer to fulfil some other tasks, assisting the team leader or the LOM – the list goes on. But the servicing staff are left on their own to service locos including sanding, fueling and cleaning, radio test – the list goes on. It's a problem we need to remedy yesterday but we keep running into a lot of excuses and promises.

We gathered together for Workers' Memorial Day with a little ceremony performed by Rick Kuka our new Maori liaison officer

for Te Kupenga Mahi. We thank you and your wife Donna for the exceptional effort and time taken to remember our fellow workmates from all industries. Tena koe te rangatira, tena koe ki to mahi e mahi ana mo tatou.

Also, we had the privilege of having our president Aubrey Wilkinson his wife and Phil Spanswick from Tauranga present. Aubrey spoke on behalf of the Union with a focus on the importance of the day. Theo De Bruyn spoke about some of his past experiences on behalf of the company, Wayne Menehira spoke of his near misses and counts himself lucky to be here considering some of the old work practices and lack of true safety plans. Paul Jensen finished our service with a few

inspirational words and a prayer. Ray Brown provided the waiata expertise. It was a good gathering with a good kuapapa.

Our network brothers have voiced their concerns over the prospect of contracting out some of their work, which may be a warning sign for all of us. It brings back some bad memories of the TranzRail days and we definitely don't want that again.

To each and every member of the RMTU remember we are stronger together,

The Waikato branch wish you all well

Kia tau ki a tatou katoa

Te atawhai a to tatou Ariki a ihu karaiti

Me te aroha o te atua

*me te whiwhingatabitanga ki te wairua tapu
ake ake ake.*



PORT NAPIER BRANCH

WE finally got sign-off of the main collective agreement. The process seemed to lag at the tail end however, the back pay put an end to all the 'whys and wherefores'. One of the new provisions achieved is the initiation of rostered hours for the members of the shipside

group who choose to opt for the regulated work patterns; offering set guaranteed hours of work and time off, including the ability to work extra hours as a choice. A lot of work went into creating the roster from both sides. Our thanks to one particular member of the management group who

started off on the coal face at Napier Port over 40 years ago – Warren Kohlis – who put plenty of time and energy into helping resolve this project because it did face it's critics. Also thanks to Chris Atkins, RMTU shipside delegate and Phil Spanswick our organiser. The other provision of note was for the introduction of twilight/sunset



\$1,500 AD&D

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

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

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



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freephone 0800 894 121
mario@aillnz.co.nz

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

clauses. Overall a good outcome for us as the rosters fly in the face of the POA dispute and the attempted dismantling of these types of conditions by their management. The deal is for a three year term.

The next bout of talks will be for the crane drivers' Gottwald agreement expiring at the end of June.

The season is now in full swing and like most ports, space, man power and enough hours in the day are at a premium. This is a time when H&S is essential – being vigilant to operations and practices. If it isn't safe don't do it!

As a consequence of the POA dispute and increases in rail volumes we have had

PORT NAPIER BRANCH [cont]

a record turnover in box numbers across the wharf. Empty containers also have had an impact. It will be another couple of months or so before we see the drop off as the apple crop kicks in. An estimated 10 million cartons of apples for export will come out of Hawkes Bay this year, with kiwi fruit to follow.

On the political front, there is so much bullshit rolling out of this government and its partisan approach with its business cronies toward the working people – and it just keeps growing! As a consequence, necessity now dictates we must now focus

on our brothers and sisters at Hillside and the plight KiwiRail has exposed them to. One does not need to go into the ramifications of such a mind boggling situation but we must give our full support in whatever way is needed.

Finally, on the local front we say goodbye to two of our long-serving members on the marine section who are being made redundant as a result of the de-manning of the tugs.

Brian Harber, 45 years, and Ron Bland, 25 years. All the best in your retirement gentlemen, stay active. 🇳🇿

It is with some upset that we write these notes. The I & E Group is suffering two bouts of 'restructuring'. The first is the For Sale sign that has been tagged to our Hillside Workshops brethren in Dunedin, and the second is the Tier 3 & 4 management shake-up at head office level. We can't add to the better informed commentaries already made about what's happening at Hillside except to say that perhaps the Activist editor's comments (Issue 4) which best summed up the more pragmatic option given the progress to date. As for the management shake-up, we are all waiting to see which apples fall from the tree. Let's hope the outcomes are a win-win for all concerned and not a step backwards in an attempt to structure the company into a lean and slick operation according to some unproven mantra.

Again, our workload continues on a more or less steady course and again, there are no indications of progress with the Ganz (EMU) project. We are however, kept busy with the out-of-course work which is something we continue to do very well.

Last time we wrote we indicated that there is an on-site investigation and evalua-

tion of the structural soundness of our main buildings and allied testing. We haven't had any preliminary updates as yet but there was a tracked drilling rig taking samples around the site. Despite its size and intense operation, no oil or gas fields were found! And I don't think any underground services were interrupted either!

Training day at PN

Mid-April saw our branch officers attend a branch chair and secretary course held by Todd in Palmerston North. It was a great opportunity to once again share our thoughts, experiences and the odd frustration with our colleagues from other branches. The topics were many and Todd worked damn hard to get us all through the tough agenda for the day, even taking a correction on the chin when Myles pulled out the Rules and Standing Orders booklet and quoted chapter and verse when he didn't agree with an answer. Well done Todd.

Later in April we had our flag ceremony at the ANZAC Memorial Flagstaff at Petone Railway Station. Each year this ceremony sees an increase in attendees and this year

was no exception. Thank you to all who attended to recognise and honour the railway men and women who laid down their lives during the wars. To round-off April we brought forward our Workers' Memorial Day to the Friday and laid our wreath on-site within our memorial garden. Again we acknowledge the assistance and support from both National Office and Hutt Workshops management associated with these very important ceremonial occasions.

GM turns up

Last month we finally got to have the group general manager (Rick van Barnveld) to meet the troops after being our head sherrang for something like the last 6+ months. He was onsite to acknowledge our recently publicised milestone of having three groups of staff achieve 10 years LTI (lost time injury) free and present a plaque marking the occasion. Accordingly, Bruce McKnight accepted the plaque on behalf of the staff (Bruce has been actively involved in H&S initiatives for many years). Rick

Continued on the next page



HUTT WORKSHOP BRANCH [cont]

also joined us for a modest light lunch to mark the occasion and to chat with some of the troops. We hope that future visits will involve him getting around the site and chatting to more people on the shop floor and making himself known to all.

A call to members: Have you changed your contact details over the last couple of years? If so, grab your membership card and please contact your delegate to fill out a form to update those details or get on the Union website and do it yourself! Your MECA is to be renegotiated and voted on. You must be in to win!

Consulting at coal face

Aaah statistics, don't they make interesting reading? You all would have read *The Activist #4* by now and noted the performance of the mainline locomotives. There is a bit of implied irony in one class of locomotive out-performing the very class of locomotive that was meant to have sounded its death knell! Methinks once again someone will have to rehash their thinking when it comes to bringing about real (and effective) change within the rail company. Would it be asking too much for those in charge to consult with those a

little closer to the coal-face? We know what to watch for when trying something new.

Recent communiqués from National Office indicate that the squaring-off for the wage round has begun but there are two sticking points impeding the bargaining process. Let's hope they turn out to be nothing more than determining who will make the tea and who will provide the biscuits! The bargaining team have our full confidence and support.

Until next time, dear readers, remember – we are stronger together. 🌐

WELLINGTON PORT BRANCH

WITH the political climate over the past few months providing trying times for unions with increasing pressure from anti-union employers, it has

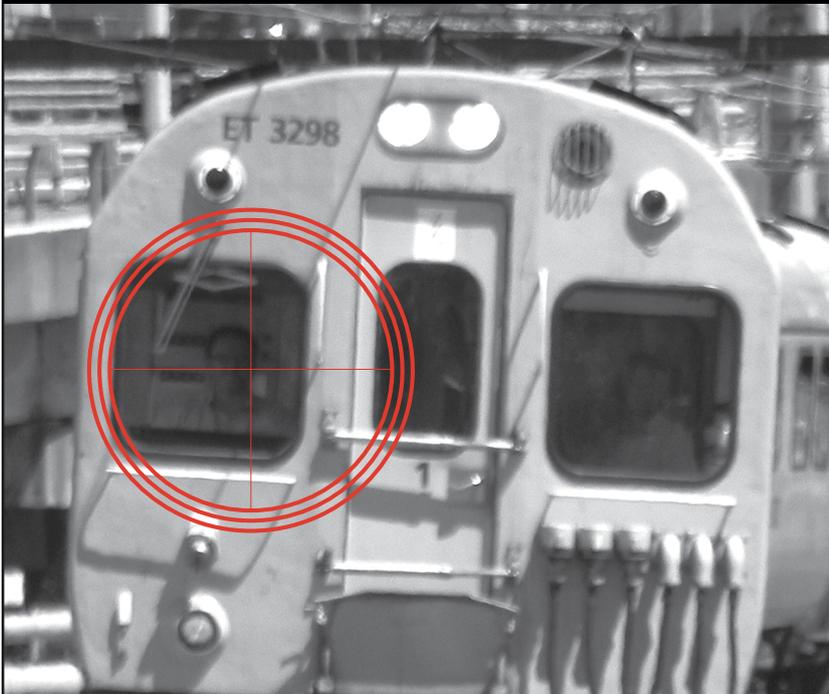
strengthened our resolve and commitment to do battle with these 'rogues'.

POAL dispute

Much has already been reported on this dispute by the media and other sources. At the time of writing, MUNZ and the POAL are currently in facilitated bargaining. It is hoped that the outcome is favourable

Continued on the next page

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

for the union as I am sure other port companies around the country are watching with a vested interest. This has been a well-orchestrated attack on working conditions together with the casualisation of permanent workers' jobs. We cannot ignore this nor let them get away with it. A groundswell of national and international support for our Auckland brothers culminated in a strong protest rally on March 10. Wellington port delegate Pat Pikari and casual cargo handler Bennett Field attended to support the Wellington MUNZ supporters and to fly the RMTU flag.

C3

We welcome aboard the Wellington Port log marshallers, C3, to the RMTU. Currently RMTU organiser Todd Valster is trying to nail down a collective for the lads at C3. Hopefully all will progress well. Of note, C3 have just started receiving logs via rail. New safety barriers have been installed on

WELLINGTON PORT BRANCH [cont]

the C3 siding and the slip road has been closed to all port traffic except the logging trucks and loaders.

Port

After experiencing an increase in TEU the past year, forecasts are looking a wee bit bleak for the upcoming year. At a recent monthly barbecue put on by the Port company, CEO Blair O'Keefe stated that we are on budget for this year but only by way of the Auckland dispute bolstering our box numbers from the ships diverted to Wellington. New business is on the horizon and it is hoped that we will benefit from this.

Training

Casual cargo handler Toa Tareha has just completed straddle training on our Peiner and Noell straddles. All our drivers are trained to NZQA standards and this in

turn goes towards completing a National Certificate in Stevedoring level 3. Congratulations Toa!

CMP Rangitikei

The branch sponsored two families from the recent dispute at CMP Rangitikei. Many thanks go to members who supported these families, the koha was greatly received.

Talley's Affco

The Meat Workers Union and its members are under attack from one of the richest families in NZ – the Talleys. Hundreds of working class freezing workers have been locked out in a Dickensian approach to starve them into submission. This branch condemns these outlandish attacks. Again, this seems to be another orchestrated attack on workers' rights and conditions and shall not – and will not – be tolerated. 

UNION members at Lyttelton Port continue to work around a port being put back together piece by piece. Despite the rocking and rolling (we stopped counting months ago) LPC's half yearly report states:

'The Group has continued its strong performance and has delivered a 55.5% increase in its earthquake adjusted trading result for the six months to 31 December 2011 compared to the same period in 2010. This was achieved in spite of earthquake damage continuing to restrict operational flexibility.'

This is code for 'it's bloody hard to get around the Port because it's a mess, wear your seatbelt, and watch out for the never ending stream of trucks taking Christchurch's demolition remains to the reclamation.

The report continues: 'The ongoing delivery of excellent customer service despite these challenges over the past 18 months has strengthened relationships and is supporting the growth of our customer's revenues.'

LPC will employ five more skilled general hands in the civil maintenance area – some positive news. The Civil Maintenance staff have been working with reduced numbers for some time out of a couple of

cramped Portacoms because their lovely recently-renovated building, albeit still standing, hasn't made it through the quakes in good nick. It's great news that these guys will finally be getting a fuller complement of staff and can carry on with the work of putting the Port back together.

On a less happy note, security staff are faced with yet another change proposal from the Company. Security went through a difficult restructure two years ago and to be faced with another one is nothing short of galling. At a meeting recently they decided the proposal was not workable and are now writing their own version to send back.

Representatives from the RMTU attended the Workers' Memorial Day service held at the Science Alive Reserve behind the old Railway Station on Moorehouse Ave. The demolition diggers are working their way through the brick of the railway station although it is not apparent yet how much will come down. Fortunately the Science Alive Reserve, the site of the old shunting yards, remains in good nick with the cabbage trees planted each year on April 28 growing tall. It's a sign of how long we have been commemorating this day on this site when the first trees planted are now heading to two metres.

LYTTELTON PORT BRANCH

May 1 was celebrated at the newly built Valley Inn in Heathcote Valley just on the town side of the Lyttelton Tunnel and a small crowd attended the drinks and nibbles. The old Valley Inn was lost in the February quake and it is lovely to see the new one and how well it is being patronised by Cantabrians.

The RMTU completed our host duties to the Unions Canterbury meeting on May 11. The Lyttelton Branch provide a light supper once a year at these monthly meetings, now held in the EPMU offices as the CTU building is no more. Unions Canterbury meetings are for affiliated unions to meet and discuss relevant union and political issues, locally, nationally and globally. All RMTU members are welcome. Unions Canterbury extend the invitation to the Labour and Green MPs to attend every second meeting and value direct contact with local MPs – many of whom we have longstanding working relationships with us.

That's about us. To our comrades around the country, kia kaha. It's not that long till we have another general election and can get rid of this utterly odious Tory government. Make sure your family and friends are on the roll and get out to vote when the time comes! 

WEST COAST RAIL BRANCH

IT'S been busy times here with lots of changes, losing good experienced track guys to loco, lots of new employees and not a lot of experience.

New members for the RMTU, which raises a very important issue as the new guys, in a lot of cases haven't had it so good they can not see the sense in being in a union, do not realise the struggle it has taken to get this far. They only see it being eroded by the smiling assassin and his team. So those of you who voted National – shame on you. I do hope you are at the forefront of all battles to come.

Ongoing ramifications

Very sad with the ongoing Pike River investigations. It seems that though the court of enquiry is finished there is still a lot of

work left to do. There was good programme recently on TV3 which showed bits of the enquiry from the Strongman Mine and how after all these years wives, husbands, sons and daughters are still affected. Some of those old miners were told things would be shut down if they told the truth.

What's life worth?

Well, my brothers and sisters, sad to say, even after all those sad happenings, this is actually happening in our workplace today. It seems no matter how bad the tragedy, people just want the money over all else. It's sad that the current review of the Otago Tunnel comes to mind when hearing people state that they would not say anything as they may lose their jobs when the tunnel gets closed. I find it hard to fathom this sort

of thinking. KiwiRail are pushing safety and health. It's actually up to us to protect that.

It's the old story, health and safety at any cost – BUT, really, no cost. What's your life worth? Stop and think. Yeah, sure you can.

Good place for a vacation

Well sad to say the good weather has passed us by. It now looks like the wet season is upon us so take care and for all you hopefuls, the West Coast had the best summer and fishing throughout New Zealand – something to think about for those next holidays.

Hopefully NZ will wake up and demand this government steps down. Scary stuff. Well take care out there. 🌍

TIMARU PORT BRANCH

THINGS are ticking along at Prime Port. The membership is growing and we're sticking to holding regular meetings and ensuring we do all the basic organising that's so important.

We've been watching developments at Ports of Auckland and we sent a message of solidarity to our brothers and sisters there.

The change in our regular ship day has

posed a few challenges although we've worked through these with management.

Beanies wanted

One item of RMTU clothing that members have requested are beanies and we're working with National Office at getting some of these for winter. We appreciate the value of RMTU branded gear in maintaining

our profile and building a group identity among our membership.

Mike Nijssen and Naylor Young attended the Ports Forum and their input was very well received from delegates with years of experience. We're getting the basics right here in Timaru. We know there is plenty more we could do, for example next year we could look at doing something to mark Workers' Memorial Day, but we also know we have to learn to walk before we run. 🌍

PORT OTAGO BRANCH

Export season

Although the traditional 'export season' is currently in place it doesn't really feel like it. One of the most obvious areas where volume has been slow is the reefer cargo.

Shipping

On all services we are seeing a lot more vessel changing than in the past. The issues on the Auckland waterfront has had minimal impact on our operation, though vessels running late caused by congestion in northern ports has been the major disruption.

RMTU training

Seven members of our branch executive attended a training session over two days in April. The training was conducted by John Kerr and was very well organised,

conducted and interesting. With the subject centering on negotiations, the information provided will prove extremely useful during our forthcoming contract negotiations starting very soon.

Security

During March we were visited by representatives from the American Coast Guard and Maritime New Zealand who were conducting security inspections and discussing security in general. The object being to ensure we are complying with both the Maritime Safety Act and the International Shipping and Port Security Code.

Harbour control

Due to a retirement, a position was opened at our harbour control centre. We have

been fortunate in attracting Brian Byas from a similar position at Port Lyttelton. Brian is a very keen RMTU man and we look forward to him playing a role within our local branch.

Cruise ships

April 19 saw the final cruise ship for the season depart. The new season will kick off again on October 14 with the arrival of the Sea Princess. Currently we have 86 cruise vessels booked for the 2012 - 2013 season.

Productivity

The Ministry of Transport has recently released statistics on container vessel productivity for the main NZ ports. On a net productivity measure, Port Otago has moved from 6th to 3rd rated over the 2011 year. 🌍

AS you will be aware, KiwiRail has decided to sell the workshop as there is no future work for us. This is because KiwiRail decided to sell our jobs off-shore, buying wagons and locomotives that are proving to be troublesome at least. The announcement has destroyed any remaining morale, and is leading directly to staff leaving to gain some surety over their futures.

KiwiRail, with the support of the Key Government, have systematically ground the spirit out of Hillside. They obviously don't value our skills and abilities. They've sent our jobs off shore, made 44 of us redundant and now seek new owners who might bring their own work, negotiate for KiwiRail work, and tender for wagons or other work in the future. We know this from our meetings with the Dunedin City Council's Business Development Department and the Otago Chamber of Commerce. There is interest out there. Prospective buyers want the skills staff bring. Here is an opportunity for an engineering company

HILLSIDE BRANCH



to access the Australian market through the back door with the advantages CER brings.

Cutting the tie with KiwiRail will benefit Hillside. No longer will we suffer from design changes costing us money and delaying delivery, and we will no longer be saddled

by the cost of supporting the KiwiRail infrastructure. KiwiRail told us last year that it was \$10/hour; our independent expert quoted \$30/hour.

Frustration is high: this process is beyond our control, and, if we can believe Jim Quinn, a sale will be a lengthy process. We have to keep doing our job to the best of our abilities, look out for each other, and believe there's light at the end of the tunnel.

On a different topic, there has been a lot of industrial action locally and around the country, and it is set to increase as workers are squeezed by increasingly bold employers. Unfortunately there are no shortage of disputes, and as union members we need to be out with our brothers and sisters on their picket lines, rallies, collections etc. We are all in the same struggle for fair pay and conditions. Remember, 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. Our notice boards will have info of any upcoming action, so let's get out there and show our support! 🇳🇿

OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

AS reported in *The Activist*, a successful training session was held in Dunedin that has resulted in your delegates having a much better understanding of bargaining. Although having a heavy rail representation, our maritime branch was still well represented. The training allowed for the free interchange of information, giving us all a better insight to each other's employer and the problems we share.

Solidarity between groups was further extended, when rail members joined their maritime counterparts on a picket line at Port Otago, in support of the reduction of staff. Albeit one member affected, but that member is an important part of the security and information area of the port.

April 28 was Workers' Memorial Day and once again a gathering was held at the Memorial site in Market Reserve. Whilst other unions were well represented it was disappointing to see the turnout from the RMTU considering the efforts put into advertising.

Then there was the bombshell: HILLSIDE. With management indicating their intentions as to the future of the site, the rumour mill kicked into high drive, with such comments as the Chinese were interested.

'They could build their wagons here'! Plus the usual comment about local industry and relocations. Then the papers got onto the downstream affect on companies which supply raw product or services. Then we were greeted with the so-called state of the nation address, which has already seen the financial knife slice through senior management and some rearrangement of responsibilities amongst divisions. The rumour mill is now working faster than the speed of a viral email. We are a transport company and realise that we must live within our income. But the word 'contractor' is being bandied about, and those of us who survived the last lot of contracting out can only say we hope they learned from the last time. Yes, we are going full circle, but I fear we will lose too many who have a 'railway' focus.

You only have to look at Pike River where the Mines Dept. lost its focus and its inspection regimes. Some 30 years ago this contributor was given a tour of the underground workings at Wairio where he was escorted by an underseer (an inspector appointed by the Mines Dept much the same as our track inspectors). But in the name of progress and the loss of focus,

they were dispensed with. The outcome is all too evident.

We need focus. Sure we have to live within our budget, but we need the right people in the right places with the right knowledge, even if it's leaner and meaner. We don't need 40 managers to supervise 10 employees.

Members have to watch for incursions by contractors into their areas of expertise. We already have seen major companies undertaking track work.

Then there are those who have left and gone to the dark side; contracting. They may be your mates, but they are taking, as the branch secretary is fond of saying, 'the food from the mouths of our wives and children'. They may wind up taking your job. Don't view them as a quick expedient to get the job done faster.

Just remember Workers' Memorial Day remembers those who have lost their lives at work. If management carry on as they are, it may become a celebration of the job that was. Lastly, the Taieri Gorge Railway was rewarded for their efforts in the travel industry with an Excellence in Tourism award from the local councils. 🇳🇿

CANTERBURY RAIL BRANCH

Earthquake effects rumble on

WE mourn the loss of one of our relay room personnel, Phillip Cooke (pictured) – not a good

start for the year. Cookie was well known to all for his love of trains and memorabilia. In tragic circumstances he was a casualty of the earthquake tragedy.



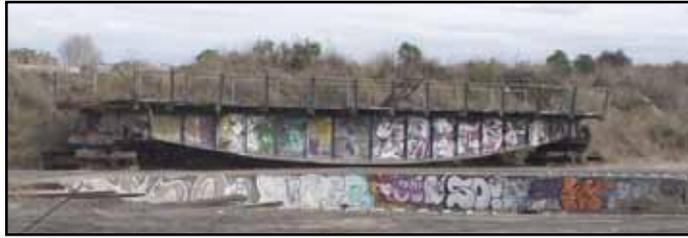
Under extreme personal and extending reasons Cookie took his own life which has rocked the KiwiRail fraternity and its extended family. Cookie is now travelling on that train of life with all of our blessing. To the Cooke family we extend our heartfelt sorrow and sadness in your loss.

This again shows the on-going effects of the Canterbury earthquakes and the pressures people down here are still under trying to get their lives back to something like normal again. It is important to remind everyone to look out for their workmates during these stressful times and be a little bit more patient when dealing with people who are obviously under stress in their work and home lives. It's not 'soft' to ask for help if you need it.

The Australians are headhunting our loco drivers again. Advertising appeared in the local rag recently wanting drivers



The old Putty shops built 1928 where the passenger trains are supposed to be serviced. The roof is asbestos and needs major bracing. Work is now underway.



Linwood loco turntable lifted about half a metre and had to be removed. Now sitting on blocks.



KiwiRail IE building where staff had to evacuate last month. They don't know if it is to be strengthened or demolished.



The Linwood locomotive depot which is to be demolished because of its unsafe condition.



The tent at the refuelling depot to service the loco fleet at the Middleton yard. The entrance faces the south toward all the bad weather.

for Western Australia. We do not have enough drivers for our own system. With the radio system failing big time on the West Coast this has

caused us to double-man trains which is a detrimental and significant drain on the roster system which is already drum tight. Money does fix some problems but I do not think money is going to fix this very quickly. Recruiting staff, training and transferring new people is a giant logistical problem. We now have a ticking time bomb among us. There are more coal mines opening up which want to freight their coal by rail. Meanwhile, we have rail staff wanting a change of lifestyle by travelling to Ocker land where they will be treated with high wages and significantly better working conditions.

Remits from our last branch meeting rolled in to the good attending crowd

recently. There has been some debate which had merit and which did not. At the end of the day some of us took time and effort to put on paper what we would desire

at the next wage round. So if you did not put a remit in then you must be a very happy camper and the status quo will be to your liking. What will come out fairly quickly is how far we want to go to get what we want – and at what point the company will say 'go fly your kite sonny'.