

THE Transport Worker

ISSN 1173-6488

ISSUE THREE SEPTEMBER 2007



CENTENARY

Volunteers required to help clean the Ohakune yard – again – before celebrating 100 years of the NIMT

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CONFERENCE

A provocative banner photographed in Edinburgh

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ECA v ERA - lessons for us all



It was time to celebrate in Tranz Metro Wellington on the first Saturday after the pay-day when the new pay rates were paid. The branch organised a three-hour BBQ lunch for all. We stuck together and got there in the end!

BACK in 1991, the National Government brought in the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) and within 12 months the rail employer of the time used this legislation against its workforce by introducing Tier 2. This meant current workers' terms and conditions were grandfathered (Tier 1) and new workers were put on lesser terms and conditions.

The master plan was that all workers would end up on the inferior Tier 2 terms. This was not confined to rail workers but rather, spread like a cancer throughout New Zealand. Many, if not most, ports also used these anti-worker tactics.

For our rail members the RMTU battled to restore the Tier 1 conditions for all workers. It



(L-R) Mani Raumati presented with a gift from his work mates by Hayden Smith for his efforts in assisting in the regaining of Tier 1 rates, Brent Keith (absent) was also thanked.

has taken 15 years to achieve this and without a doubt the Employment Relations Act (ERA) assisted us in that battle.

Our negotiations with ports continue to claw back losses from the 1990s.

We must not be complacent about labour legislation. Hard-fought gains can quickly be attacked with anti-worker, anti-union legislation. The ERA may not be perfect but many business leaders believe the ECA did not go far enough!

The dangers are clear – and may become very real if Labour is defeated in the next election. Already, we believe, National have their eyes on what is going on across the Tasman. Don't let it happen!



THE JOURNAL OF THE RAIL AND MARITIME TRANSPORT UNION

ACC - gone by lunchtime?

THE National Party has confirmed that it will privatise ACC if it is elected next year.

The worker's compensation scheme, acknowledged as one of the best in the world, was last "opened to competition" in 1998, at a cost of more \$40 million to taxpayers. In 1999, following the election, the privatisation was reversed.

Horrible prospects

PSA organiser for ACC, Rex Askerud, describes the prospect of privatisation for members as "horrible".

There are 2300 employees at ACC and redundancy and significant job change would be inevitable.

The PSA is currently in bargaining with ACC for a new collective contract. One issue in contention is the salary cap on redundancy payments, which has not moved since 1998.

Another issue is pay, which ACC has refused to include in the contract. "Rates of pay are quite good, but salary increases are mostly worked out using a performance pay system and most people are disenchanted with the process – there's no transparency," says Rex. ACC is also trying to change sick leave provisions.

Members are currently being canvassed on how they wish to proceed, and the possibility of low level action has been raised.

The irony of privatisation is that employers' ACC levies, on average, have fallen nearly 40 percent since 1999 when the scheme was privatised, from \$1.21-\$1.28 per \$100 of payroll to around 75c.

National leader John Key has been quoted as telling farmers that their levies have risen 140 percent since 2000. However, with more than 550 levy classes it is easy to select groups that have had increases based on accident rates. The table on this page shows that for most employers, levies are much cheaper than in Australia



Hazel Armstrong believes National would act quickly to privatise ACC in their first term, to make it more difficult to be reversed by a later government.

where private schemes are the norm.

A former ACC board member and health and safety lawyer, Hazel Armstrong, says that National's proposed model would see private insurance companies take over large, low-risk employers, leaving higher risk and smaller employers with a residual state scheme.

She points out that it is farmers who, in fact, would face even higher premiums under privatisation because they would not be part of a large state scheme.

"From the point of view of New Zealand, do we actually want the state insurer to carry the burden of small, high risk employers in farming, fishing and forestry?" she says.

She believes National's push to privatise is "ideological".

No rational reason

"There is no rational argument for it. For the benefit of New Zealand workers and employers - there's nothing in it for them. The only reason is that there's external pressure from the private sector which wants part of the market and National is prepared to oblige," she said. "ACC is a world-class system. I'm currently involved in promoting our model in China because it's cheap, comprehensive and it works."

Hazel believes National would act quickly to privatise in their first term, to make it more difficult to be reversed by a later government.

"Last time, the privatised version was only for one year and Labour could reverse it. The longer the scheme is privatised, the more difficult it is to pull it back. The structure is there for them to privatise, planned out from the last time it happened. They know how to do it."

New Zealand's cheap premiums

This table shows just how cheap New Zealand's ACC levies per \$100 of payroll are. Compare our average rate with Australia where state accident compensation schemes run on the model that is being proposed by the National Party.

State	Victoria	NSW	SA	WA	QLD	Tas	NZ
Average Levy	\$1.88	\$2.57	\$3	\$2.32	\$1.43	\$2.59	88c

• Figures as at 1 July 2005. New Zealand's average employer levy has since fallen to around 75c per \$100 of payroll. Figures supplied by the Australian heads of workers' compensation authorities.

Fono success



Komiti Pasefika Members (Inset left) Outgoing and incoming co-convenors of KP (L-R) Teresa Brown (Actors' equity union), No'ora Samuela (SFWU), Stella Teariki (PSA), Taima Fagaloa (SFWU) and our own RMTU organiser, Henry Fagaiava. (Inset right) RMTU KP delegation (L-R) Henry Fagaiava, Jonathan Kopu (Auckland Branch), Julia Harrison (National Office), Hanipale Nouata (Wellington Rail Branch) and Marokii Tereu (Wellington Rail Branch). (Inset top right) Helen Clark opens the Fono.

THE fono had great guest speakers including Prime Minister Helen Clarke, who opened the fono, and Mark Goshe who spoke on leadership among Pacific Islanders within our unions and in Government.

Outgoing NZCTU president, Ross Wilson, attended with NZCTU secretary, Carol Beaumont. Ross spoke of the huge gains made within the union movement

involving Pacific Islanders.

Komiti Pasefika (KP) members and affiliated unions had their opportunity to farewell Ross at their fiafia (celebration) night for which Ross thanked and acknowledged them. He also acknowledged the big part the RMTU played in his union career.

Ross was the former general secretary of the RMTU before moving onto the NZCTU.

Outcomes achieved at the Fono were to formulate remits for the upcoming NZCTU Conference on behalf of KP and Pacific Islanders. They will be forwarded to the NZCTU.

Sad note

On a sad note was the notification that one of our PI 'mothers' – Liz Lilo – is very ill. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Liz and her family through this rough time. Liz is one of our great pioneers of KP and played a big part in making KP what it is today.

RMTU organiser, Henry Fagaiava, was appointed to the co-convenor's role of KP.

Henry shares the role with Stella Teariki from the PSA union and will play a partnership role to organise KP members in the bottom half of Aotearoa.

Teresa Brown, from the Actors' Equity Union, will look after the top half of the North Island.

Our thanks and deepest gratitude go to the outgoing co-convenors, No'ora Samuela, Taima Fagaloa and Efu Koka for all their hard work and helping make KP what it is today and building on what our aiga (family) before us paved and laid foundations to.

Tu-fa'atasi! (Stand together as one)

- If you would like to know more about the KP network and how to get involved please contact Henry Fagaiava at National Office on 027-600-6581 or (04) 499-2066 or email henryf@rmtunion.org.nz

NZCTU Komiti Pasefika Biennial Fono Conference

Auckland, August 9 and 10.

RMTU delegates were Hanipale Nouata (OnTrack-Wgtn), Jonathan Kopu (OnTrack-Auckland), Marokii Tereu (TollTranzlink-Wellington) and Julia Harrison and Henry Fagaiava from National Office.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S COMMENT

IT'S Annual General Meeting time again for branches – a very good time for me as it means that I get an excuse to go out and about endeavouring to attend as many of the meetings as I can. By attending, I am able to get a feel for the levels of activation and support that the Union has on a branch basis. In other words if we can't activate members to attend and participate in the affairs of the Union branch then how likely is that we can expect to be able to motivate and activate members when – and if – the need arises so that we can undertake industrial activity in support of an issue or claim?

The Union is a democratic organisation and we do this by 1 member 1 vote. Through this process we decide what is important to branches, and therefore the Union, and what is not. Accordingly, if there are not high levels of membership participation then the Union will continue to have to make decisions or strategic calls on issues with the danger that these decisions are being made by a diminishing number of decision makers. A situation of declining participation levels would, and does, enable factions or interest groups to dictate what is, or is not, important to the Union. So as you can see, high participation levels are essential to maintain a responsive and vibrant Union acting for the needs and wishes of rank and file members. It can be said that 'the price of democracy is participation'.



Wayne Butson, general secretary

Participation is true for Unions but it is also true for all democratic entities. This year we will see communities go to the ballot boxes to elect and select new mayors, councillors, regional councillors, district health boards and other political institutions. Voter turnout in 2004 was 46 percent – the lowest since 1989 and the first time since then that the overall turnout fell below 50%. The drop in turnout between 2001 and 2004 was relatively constant across all types of local authorities, however, district councils

registered the greatest decline, with the average turnout dropping from 57% in 2001 to 51% in 2004.

All of our NZ ports are substantially owned by local or regional councils and our metro train systems are all dependent on regional council backing and decisions. If for no other reason than this, it is essential that members of the RMTU participate and use their votes wisely in the forthcoming election. We must find out which candidates support the retention of local port ownership and greater use of rail as a public transport option. We need our members to volunteer to assist with the election of candidates who are promoting policies which support these positions. For example, we had aspiring Lower Hutt mayor, Ken Laban, attend the Hutt Shops branch AGM. He was invited to say why RMTU members and their families should vote for him. To everyone's delight he said he supported rail transport in the Greater Wellington region and for as much work as possible to be channelled through the local workshop.

Don't sit and grizzle about politicians at any level if you don't participate in the process. If you stay on the sidelines it is entirely likely that someone else will grab the ear of the your politician and get their agendas looked at before yours.

Participate – Your job and your family's future security may depend on it!

EWFF

ONTRACK working party



Following the Sean Smith fatality the Union placed a ban on the use of EWR wagons until a joint RMTU-ONTRACK working party reviewed their operation. The RMTU reps on the joint EWR wagon working party are (L-R) Jerry Hobepe, Paul Jones, Harry Sinclair and Scott Wilson. The wagons are now back in operation and the minutes of the first meeting of the working party circulated. The work is ongoing.

Dear Sir,

I would like to thank you for awarding me the Ernest William File Scholarship. I am currently in my second year studying a Bachelor of Business Studies, majoring in Accounting and Management at Massey University in Palmerston North. The Scholarship will be a great help towards covering the expenses of text books and course fees. I have been offered an internship working for a large accounting firm in Wellington



and am really excited and looking forward to finishing my degree in 18 months time.

I am extremely grateful for the financial assistance I have been given

Sincerely

Courtney Twist

Outraged

Dear Editor

I am outraged over the detention of Fijian trade union leader Taniela Tabu who was taken in for questioning by the military and told the second time that he brought there to be killed. Mr. Tabu was later questioned by the police. Fiji has real problems and the sooner commodore Bainimarama restores democracy by holding elections the better. Unionists have the right to hold meetings and, if necessary, strike to uphold their conditions and political beliefs.

Wayne Ritchie

Inspiring

Dear Editor,

Many thanks to the NMC for selecting me as one of three delegates to attend the NZACTU Conference in Sydney from June 13 - 15 this year.

The theme of the conference was 'Campaigning to Win 2007'. This being election year in Australia the word was loud and clear: "Get rid of the Howard-led Government with their ANTI-WORKER INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS WORK CHOICE LEGISLATION!"

Not unlike the NZ National Govern-

ment of the 1990s Employment Contracts Act.

The inspiring speeches by ACTU president Sharan Burrow, secretary Greg Combet, Paul Goulter and activist Linda Everingham gained a standing ovation from the 600 conference delegates.

The workshops I attended were varied and interesting, but what stood out for me was the NZ National Distribution Union presentation and DVD on the September 2006 Progressive Enterprises Lockout. The workers' solidarity and resolve to pursue their just cause was very compelling and moving. A few tears were shed by some Australian delegates.

I recommend every unionist should view this DVD.

I enjoyed the experience, meeting fellow RMTU organisers and delegates.

Yours fraternally,

Wayne Ritchie

Delegate Hillside Workshops.

Resigning

Dear Editor,

I wish to thank you and the RMTU for all the good work you did for myself and my fellow workmates over the last 21 years.

Sadly I have resigned my job due to workplace harassment which was made worse by what transpired at past meetings by management.

So unfortunately I am also resigning from the RMTU as well but on the best of terms. All the best to you and all your members and I hope not to see any of you at my new place of work.

Robin Tapp

New Corrections Department employee.

Dear Editor,

After 21 years in the rail industry and association with the Union I will be leaving to take up a project role in the telecommunications industry.

My last day in this job will be Friday 3/8/07 and I'd just like to say thanks the RMTU for its help and support over the years.

Shayne Macnee

United Group Ltd

Correction

In the last issue we published in the story about Repanga William Taana that Henry Fagaiaava unveiled his plaque. He didn't but we can't locate who did. Our apologies.

PROFILE

Andrew Moore

• Mechanical engineer/Fitter welder, Health & Safety Rep employed by United Group Rail (NZ) Limited, Woburn Railway Workshops.

ANDREW has been in the engineering industry for 23 years, 13 years at Woburn workshops. He performs a range of welding tasks including plasma cutting and gas welding on locomotives. He is also passionate about Health & Safety and has been a H&S rep for the last five years having completed Stage 1 & 2 H&S rep training. He will take Stage 3 training this year.

Due to the recognised hazard from fumes in his work, Andrew is required to wear personal protection equipment (PPE) – a respirator – to avoid breathing hazardous fumes. These respirators need to be fitted

to masks and not helmets due to the nature of this work. Ten years ago Andrew's faulty respirator was replaced. Last year he again needed a replacement but he was told that one of the older models would have to do. He had a good look at the older models and after some research found they did not meet the new standard modified 10 years previously. The issue now affected all welders.

Andrew raised the issue with his manager and at the site H&S committee in November 2006. Nothing happened. Out of frustration, the committee issued a hazard notice to the company and within 12 days they were advised that the purchase of new respirators had been approved. The time from recognising the hazard to issuing the hazard notice was eight months. It was not a knee jerk reaction.

Andrew says: "I am really disappointed that there is such a drawn out process to get



approval for spending on essential safety equipment. I became a H&S Rep because I care for the health and wellbeing of the guys on the floor. I have seen guys, who would have worked without decent gear, dying off. We all want to go home to our families at night."

Andrew's next project is to get a defibrillator on site. Well done Andrew. The workshops are a safer workplace with trained active H&S reps like you.

Maurice McKenzie

It is with much regret and sadness that we record the sudden passing of Dunedin locomotive engineer Maurice Malcolm McKenzie on July 10, 2007 at Cromwell.

Maurie's wife Irene was the office girl at Middlesmarch on the Otago Central Branch line when Maurie, who was the fireman on a passing train, first met her back in 1965. They were married in 1969 and have a son Steve in London and daughter Helen in Wellington.



Maurie started his railway career as a cleaner at the Dunedin Loco Depot on May 28, 1962 along with six other future engine drivers. Of those seven Maurie was the only one to have completed his 40 years service.

In 1962 the Dunedin Loco Depot was still very much a bastion of steam, so after a month on the job, Maurie successfully sat and passed his Boiler Ticket which enabled him to take charge of all the steam engines stabled in the shed as well as the shed's stationary boiler and other associated duties. The work was hard and dirty, the hours long and not very sociable to say the least.

After a 12-month stint in the shed, Maurie succeeded in passing his Steam Fireman's Ticket which enabled him to go out as a fireman on the shunt roster in the goods yard, or 'bull ring' as it was more affectionately known. As time passed, and the opportunity arose, Maurie worked his way up including suburban and express passenger trains.

Maurie always had a liking for Central Otago so from his early firing days he always took the opportunity to relieve for staff holidays in Ranfurly or Cromwell when extra staff were required in the country depots to assist with the additional movement of the live stock and fruit traffic.

In 1972 Maurie sat and passed his Second Grade Engine Driver's Ticket. In those times it was sometimes necessary to transfer to another depot to obtain a driver's position to get driving time in towards your First Grade Ticket and also to retain seniority. In 1973, Maurie successfully applied for a position in Ranfurly becoming one of three engine drivers stationed there. Whilst there he sat his First Grade Ticket gaining the necessary qualifications to drive express freight, suburban passenger trains and express trains.

Maurie, Irene and family remained in Ranfurly until the depot closed in 1982 when he was transferred back to Dunedin where he remained until his death.

Of Maurie's 62 years, he spent 45 of them working for the Railways in the locomotive branch.

Maurie was a man of his word and was always a reliable and conscientious worker. He was well respected, which was evident by the large attendance of both past and present Railway staff at his funeral service, with loco men from Invercargill, Christchurch and Westport in attendance.

Following the eulogy, his cap and badge were placed on his casket as a mark of respect.

On behalf of Maurie's fellow workmates, we extend to Irene, Steve, Helen, Simon and Maurie's extended family, our sincere condolences.

Killed on the job

In Loving Memory of
Sean-Edward Bryant Smith
4th August 1981 - 19th June 2007



Hamilton Park Chapel
Monday, 25th June 2007
1.00 pm

Jim Hanson

It's with sadness that the Dunedin branch notes the passing recently of Jim Hanson.

Jim was an engine driver in Dunedin for many



years before his retirement. His power with a pen was legendary and many will remember his well-written verse. Jim was one of the very well respected staff instructors on his retirement and his skill at imparting his knowledge of all

things rail is still remembered by all those still working in the Dunedin depot.

Jim was a great one for a good story and could always be relied on to fill the gaps when a hard day's study was becoming to brain numbing. All it took was a small seed: "Jim what was that like back then?" and away he would go, hopefully till smoko or lunch.

Jim was a legion as an instructor, and a real character as a driver. He will be remembered by all those he worked with and helped train for many years to come yet.

Delegate training: Wellington



Andrew James -
*Very informative
and I have
gained new
understandings
on process and
negotiations.*



Ayvan Zvegintsev
- *A very
informative day
and I'm looking
forward to
putting these
new skills into
action and to
good use.*



Terry Duffy
- *Great
informa-
tion and the
training was
enjoyable
with a good
slice of fun.*



Graham Hurst
- *Delegate
courses great
fun and very
informative.*



**Maurice
Godtschalk**
- *Very
knowledgeable
and eye
opening and it
was a pleasure
to attend.*



Kamal Chandra - *At-
tending the training
has been good for
me. I have built up
a good understand-
ing of my role. This
will assist me to
develop good com-
munication and to
deal with issues in
my workplace.*



Jason Ohlson
- *Training was
very
informative and
it will enable me
to perform my
role as a delegate
more efficiently.*



**Hayden
Harwood**
- *Hardcore
training and
ready for the
hard yards!*



**Richard
Harris** - *I
found the
delegates
training very
educational.*

Delegate training: Taranaki



(L-R) Rail & Port delegates Rob Stone, John Taipari and Rob Wilson working on an exercise together.



(L-R) Port & Rail delegates Neil Giddy, Daniel Manu and Brian Baldwin debating the 'role of a delegate'.

Jamie Nicol's road to back to work

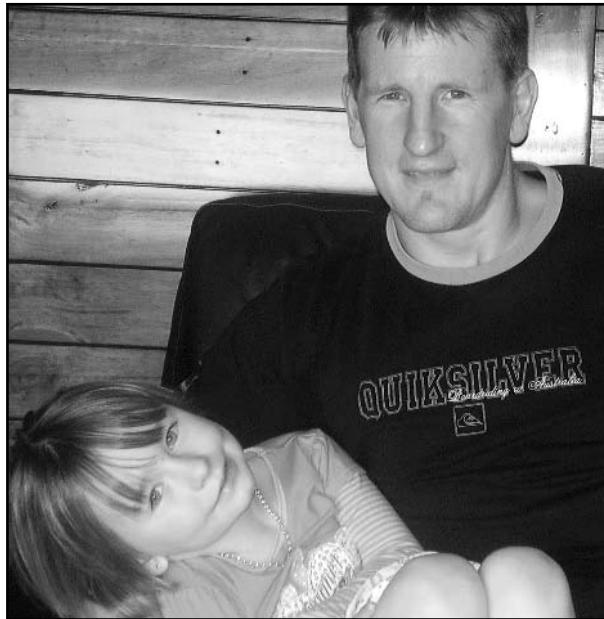
TWENTY SIX months ago Jamie Nicol was biking home from work when he was hit by a car whose driver was over the legal drink-driving limit.

Jamie, a member of our Union who works for Toll/Owens as a straddle driver and forklift operator in the timber dept, landed on his head. Even though he was wearing a helmet he suffered major head trauma.

The trauma was so bad the doctors did not think he would live.

Jamie was placed in a drug-induced coma in Tauranga, and flown to Auckland hospital. He awoke four days later.

Therapy started immediately. Sixty-two weeks of extensive physio, working on balance and co-ordination then strength and conditioning was followed by three months of speech therapy.



Jamie Nicol and his daughter Page

Now, amazingly, Jamie has started the

process of returning to work, with the support of his occupational therapist, ACC case managers, Mark Shergold, Trevor Hall from Toll/Owens and Kelvin Rush from the RMTU.

For those of us that know him its not surprising that he has overcome all the obstacles in his path. Jamie, the proud father of 4 year old daughter, Page, acknowledges the support of his partner and wife Melanie who has been, in his words, "a rock".

Jamie will start with just three mornings a week and will be monitoring himself along with ACC, his occupational therapist his manager and delegate.

He says in some ways he now feels stronger than before the accident and is looking forward to returning to work. It's important to him that he be judged on his work and ability and not the injury.

LE reunion on track

THE committee charged with organising the 2008 Jubilee Reunion has formed and is working well. There is a mix of retired and present members along with wives who are working hard to ensure that this Reunion will be very special.

The venue will be the Riccarton Park Raceway for all evening events which is surrounded by quality motel units and the committee will ensure attendees will be accommodated as close as possible to the venue.

Fundraising and accommodation/registration sub-committees have been formed.

We are not in a position, just yet, to advise of the 'special' activities as they are in the planning stages.

It is planned to send out an 'Expression of Interest' document soon to help the committee get a rough feel on likely numbers and their requirements. We shall use existing e-mail channels, superannuates meetings and RMTU sector delegates to ensure this



The Reunion Committee at the Riccarton Park venue (l to r) Back row: Warwick Armstrong, Mike Lynch, Tom Clement, Norm Mora, Gary Kelly, Murray Dunlop (secretary/treasurer), Dick Cheyne. Front row: Peter Harris, June Kenworthy, Grace Kelly, Colin Kemp (chairperson). Absent Cyril Kenworthy and Paul Corliss.

document is widespread. One committee member has been given the responsibility of e-mailing ex-colleagues in Australia to keep them informed of progress.

To contact the secretary/treasurer:

131 West Belt, Rangiora.

E-mail: murray.gaildunlop@clear.net.nz

Mobile: 027 288 7619.

AGM UPDATES

Marlborough



Newly elected delegate, John Maurice and member, Cherie Overend (inset) at Marlborough AGM.

Wellington

Wellington Rail branch secretary Mani Raumati (standing), addressing members at their AGM.



Nelson branch members at their AGM.



More Nelson members listen in on elections with great enthusiasm.

Nelson

Hutt shops

Labour MP, Dave Hereora, who is the Maori Senior Vice-President of the NZ Labour Party, chairperson of the Maori Affairs Select Committee and is a member of the Primary Production Select Committee, gave his insight at Hutt Branch AGM on Rail transport.



Hutt Branch member, Stuart Kermack voices his opinion at Hutt Branch AGM.



RMTU general secretary, Wayne Butson (far right) addresses the Hutt Branch with one of his famous speeches.

55 years and going strong

BILL VEALE, a long time rail worker and union member, passed his 55th year in rail service on February 18, 2007 with little fanfare, which is Bill's way of



doing things. He is one of a very few to reach this golden milestone and it is a pity it passed without the due recognition it deserves from his employer.

He started his long and illustrious career in 1952 as a junior porter based in Wairoa and then moved to Gisborne. In February 1957, after becoming a traffic assistant, Bill transferred to the Napier Branch where he moved around through the roles of shunter, guard and clerk until September 1972 when, as a clerk, Bill then made the big move (for its time) down to Wellington where he has remained in a variety of sales roles till 2007. He continues to work in the sales area of Tranz Metro Wellington. Well done Bill and thanks for being a loyal Union member.

TODD HARBOUR'S 20 years service was recognised by Tranz Metro with an informal gathering of staff in the sales area on Monday June 11, 2007. A speech covering Todd's history was made by his manager Martin Clark and his 20 year certificate was presented.



Todd commenced employment with New Zealand Railways Corporation on June 9, 1987 as a casual temp relief travel sales clerk based at Lower Hutt. This later included Waterloo and Petone.

When rail and buses were split into separate companies, Todd applied to stay with the buses. Being unrequired, he chose to continue with the Rail branch.

On June 9, 1988, one year later, Todd became a permanent travel services clerk at Lower Hutt and in 1991, a senior travel services clerk in Wellington.

Only three others have been around travel sales as long – or longer – than Todd and they are Robert, Bill and Duley.

Todd has always been a stickler for the rules and has supported the team, both at work and from home, on a number of things such as timetables and fare charts.

He is number 14 of 15 children, loves his music and computers, and is a keen traveller.

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Countdown to 100 years of the NIMT

CHOOSING a date for the NIMT (North Island Main Trunk) Centennial. 2008 was not easy with so many significant dates emerging from discussions with the Ruapehu District Council and central North Island people.

One date of note was the Parliamentary Special train, which ran from Wellington to Auckland and return, during August 1908. There not being enough horses and coaches available to convey Parliamentarians to Auckland, the PWD (Public Works Department) had a major task on its hands to get the line through in time for the Auckland visit of the American Naval Fleet. The result was a long trip in unheated cars, through an icy cold night, but the train got through. The first train from Wellington took 24.5 hours to reach Auckland. The return train, which ran one week later, covered the distance in just under 20 hours. The run was considered satisfactory, as many miles of line had only just been laid on brand new formation, with some of it still unballasted.

There will be a Centenary run of the Parliamentary Special – a key ONTRACK-organised event.

It was also only natural that November 6 should come to the fore, as this is the date the Last Spike was driven in by Sir Joseph Ward. This was also the major event in 1958, when 50 years of the NIMT was celebrated. It is likely that planning meetings will centre around this event.

February 15, 1909 is another very historic date of interest for central North Island people. On this day, the first through passenger express made the journey from Wellington and Auckland – the official start date of the NIMT expresses. Had the Northerner survived, it would have turned 100 on February 15, 2009. However, the sole remaining train, the Overlander, is still representative of the Wellington-Auckland through expresses. Let's hope trains 200 and 201 continue to survive and see the Centenary in. What made February 15 1909 an even more significant date though, was that this was when the NIMT railway line was officially handed over from the PWD to NZGR ownership.



The NIMT railway at that stage – the line between Te Awamutu and Marton – was authorised by Parliament in November 1884. The physical construction of the line took 23 years. It is interesting, that in line with the original authorisation, right up until 1974, NIMT mileage ran in a down direction from Auckland and went as far as Marton Junction. Prior to this date, stations south of there were still on the main line to New Plymouth.

Maritime members too

Central North Island people are very keen to support and work with ONTRACK, TOLL and RMTU in any way they can. Maritime members of RMTU will probably be surprised to know that their forbears also had an important part to play in the line construction. This especially applied to the building of the viaducts, where steelwork was shipped from Lyttleton to Pipiriki. Perhaps we can tell you

more about this at a later date.

The next meeting of the group will consider what can be done by keen volunteers who want to become involved

One thing that immediately springs to mind is a clean up of the Ohakune yard and repairs to the platform, station displays and more. Weeding, painting, oiling points, etc are all tedious jobs, but could be handled by a group of guys from outside the region. We will be planning a work party for 2008 and will advertise this.

Other jobs will likely include planning the celebrations and volunteers as car hosts on the Parliamentary Special, and much more.

TOLL have also mentioned sponsoring a special train. If they do, manning it will be another voluntary job. Rail employees would be given first choice.

- Chris

The New Zealand electoral system

By Ruth Dyson, MP for Banks Peninsula

NEW ZEALAND uses three systems for electing its public representatives: First Past the Post (FPP); Mixed Member Proportional (MMP); and Single Transferable Vote (STV).

MMP and STV are known as proportional representational systems, meaning that the result of an election is intended to mirror the overall proportion of votes a candidate or party receives. Under FPP the winner is the candidate or party that receives more votes than any other candidate or party after which all other votes are discarded.

Until the 1996 General Election, FPP was the system that New Zealand used to elect its House of Representatives. Under FPP a single winner was chosen in an electoral race by receiving most votes, regardless of whether that candidate wins the majority of all votes cast. It is known as a 'winner takes all' system where winning candidates or parties have to be the first over the line, after which all other candidates in the race automatically lose. In this system each voter can only cast one vote. FPP is still used to decide which candidate will be selected as a constituent MP representing an electorate. For instance, in Banks Peninsula I won the seat because I was the first to pass the post out of all the other candidates running by winning a plurality of votes cast.

While FPP has the distinct benefit of being easy for voters to understand, it also has its disadvantages, the largest being that since it is not a proportional system it can distort the wishes of the voting public. In the 1981 General Election the Labour Party won a majority of all votes cast however, since elections were not decided upon which party won the popular vote but instead by which party won the most individual electorates, the election went to the National Party which won the most electorates.

MMP has been used since 1996 and combines aspects of FPP and proportionality systems. In our Parliament there are 121 seats – 69 of them are filled by electorate MPs who must win their seats according to the rules of FPP as described above. The other 52 seats are determined by the proportion of party votes received. This is why voters apply two ticks on their ballot. One is to choose their electorate representative and the other to decide which party they prefer overall. Political parties select a list of candidates and place them in a priority listing. Once the proportion of votes each party received has been decided, these list seats are filled according to the top ranked listed MPs who did not win or run in an electorate.

STV is the system that New Zealand voters use to elect some local government and District Health Board representatives. In an STV election all candidates are listed with a box against their name. Instead of ticking just one candidate voters instead, rank candidates in order of preference. The counting process then tallies all first preference votes. If a certain candidate receives enough votes to pass the threshold required, the surplus votes for this candidate is then transferred to the voters' second choice and so on until all the seats available are filled. If a candidate does not receive enough votes to cross the threshold, they are eliminated and all the votes cast for that candidate are transferred to the voters' next choices. This process ensures that even if a voter does not receive their first choice, their vote is never wasted as it will be transferred to help elect their next favourite candidate.

Local body elections: Why vote?

INTERNATIONAL studies show that the more people participate in their communities, the more successful those communities become. While New Zealanders' turnout at general elections is relatively high, in the last local election of 2004 only 46 percent of eligible voters voted. This is despite the fact that local bodies are responsible for a vast range of services.

Whether it is arranging public transport, providing piped water, maintaining streets and parks, or regulating land use, the impact of local body decisions is often far more immediate and visible than that of national decisions.

Whatever reasons people give for not voting, they are not doing themselves or their communities any favours by not exercising their right.

If voters don't vote, those elected cannot claim a strong mandate, making it more difficult for leaders to lead. It is less likely that issues will get the vigorous debates they deserve; and there is more risk of decisions being made that most people – the 'silent majority' – don't agree with.

The most compelling evidence of the benefits of voting is shown clearly in Harvard Professor Robert Putnam's study of regional governments in Italy. He tried to understand why, over a period of 20 years, some regions developed more successfully than others. He concluded: "These communities did not become civil because they were rich. The historical record suggests precisely the opposite. They became rich because they were civic."

The essential ingredient in the successful regions was the high level of participation that people had in their community. They turned out to vote, they had effective local government, they built healthy, positive communities, and from this strong civic base they created wealth.

Having a sense of belonging and the concrete experience of social networks (and the relationships of trust and tolerance that can be involved) can bring great benefits to people.

Putnam says that most day-to-day issues in our communities – public health, crime rates, race relations, community development, teen suicide, and so on – all are demonstrably affected by how (and whether) we connect with our family and friends and community.

By taking an interest, and casting your vote for your local community leaders, you have nothing to lose but plenty to gain.

RMTU supports SFWU comrades

IN July, Spotless Services locked out 800 hospital workers after mediations failed to resolve their nationwide dispute with the Service and Food Workers Union.

The cleaning contracting company had refused to agree to a pay proposal that all other contract companies – and the DHBs – had signed. Many of the kitchen workers, cleaners and orderlies who were locked out were Pacific Islanders.

The lockout lasted nine days and the collective action taken in response was supported by unions affiliated to the NZCTU. Spotless bosses finally signed a letter of intent promising to pass on the same terms and conditions negotiated with other contractors



in public hospitals.

The win followed a ruling in the Employment Court that the lockout by Spotless was illegal. The Union legal team will now be

taking a case to the Court that locked out members are owed wages for the full nine days.

With Spotless willing to sign the national deal, all hospital service workers can look forward to a settlement that will remove poverty wages from our hospitals and provide a 'Healthy Pay for Healthy Hospitals'.

RMTU delegates, members and National Office staff joined local pickets in each region and showed solidarity and support.

SFWU thanked the RMTU who showed up (in some freezing weather conditions) in solidarity.

Another great outcome and Union Victory to add to the Union Movement!



UGL's Brendon Woodnutt watches as Wayne Butson signs off on the worker participation requirement for UGL's application to be an ACC Partnership Programme employer

Sign-offs



Stagecoach NZ HR manager Gavin Cook and Wayne Butson sign the renegotiated Collective Agreement for Cityline Hutt Valley Bus Garage - the deal includes 7% over 2 years plus additional leave.

AIL of New Zealand

AIL has been serving Rail and Maritime Transport Union members since 1995 with a **No Cost \$1000 Accidental Death Cover** provided automatically through your membership.

In addition to this, **AIL** now offers all members an additional \$5000 **Accident Death Benefit** for a premium of just \$1 for the first year, renewable every

year thereafter for just \$2.50 per year. There are no medical questions to answer and this is only available because you are a union member!

AIL also offers full family benefits plans on a Union-Only basis including supplementary Life Insurance, Accident Injury Benefits (Hospital/A & E/doctor treatment),

and Cancer Protection.

To take advantage of this service please fill in a yellow **AIL** reply card. MEMBERS MUST SEND BACK A NEW CARD TO GET THESE BENEFITS. Or contact **AIL** directly on freephone

0800 127 887

IN reading through the last edition of *The Transport Worker* I noticed a common theme running through both the rail and port sectors. There seems to be some form of different interpretation or understanding when it comes to health and safety. Is it the fact that those sitting behind a desk think they have right-of-way over those who work and deal with the practical issues on the coal

HAWKE'S BAY PORT BRANCH

face? To my way of thinking H&S is based on experience and common sense. The adage 'an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure' certainly holds credence here. At the Port of Napier, I believe we have a robust H&S committee and our officers play a strong role in its promotion.

Who decides

My rantings are NOT to criticise the efforts of what makes H&S teams tick or how it functions and deliberates its findings, this is all very positive. It is more a case of who decides what is safe and what is not.

For example, our leaders within management this season did away with back-to-back eight hour shifts to combat fatigue within the shipside driving pool. This is to be applauded. This was a H&S decision decreed by management. Undoubtedly this had a pay back for

both workers and the company, something achieved by mutual agreement, (though we feel that some contractual variations took place which are currently being debated – but that is a separate issue).

However when it comes to making decisions based around operational functionality and practicality, at times there will always be a difference between button pushers/desk jockeys, and the worker. This is when both parties need to talk about what is safe and functional, a shared process.

Unfortunately there are those in management that think they know best, without acknowledging the outcomes of working in a busy area, having to operate around such obstacles, and I'm sure we all have them.

This year Napier Port received a greater volume of containers, particularly reefers, which is all good in terms of growth. However, it was very noticeable that this influx had an impact on the infrastructure. As a result, measures were taken to accommodate the reefer increases by utilising generator sets. This, in essence, is where a difference was struck in H&S and the ensuing decision-making process, as the constraints of seasonal yard space took its grip on both employer and employee alike.

The Union got involved as it was felt that the H&S process had been by-passed as a result of lack of space. We were later advised

by one of the management leaders that they felt it wasn't a Union issue! I find this a little hard to chew as the Union is a 50% stake holder within the H&S committee, all unions must play an integral role in the workings of industry and we are the important voice of the shop floor.

Two issues

There are two issues:

- a non willingness of management to listen to the problem as they did not see it as being unsafe, even though alternative locations offered up. A company-created hazard that was identified, expecting drivers to be increasingly vigilant in a now congested operational area.

- a management requirement for those who worked in the area to accept the decision and operate around an area that could cause harm or damage.

So back to square one. H&S is paramount and should be driven from both ends, the bottom up and the top down in which both management and workers – whether union or not – need to have equal input in the process by way of open communication on both sides, especially during peak periods, so short cuts are not taken just to appease the customer.

The case continues in order to find some mutual resolve!

BRANCH notes from Wellington loco depot are long overdue; some would think we are a contented lot here in our little slice of paradise. Not all the time,

WELLINGTON RAIL BRANCH

but let's start with the feel good stuff.

We welcome back Fred Hamer. About 10 weeks ago while climbing through a rake of wagons on a dark and wet night he slipped and fell, luckily, there was a hand brake to soften the fall. Unluckily breaking three ribs in the process. Having been on light duties Fred has slowly weaned himself back into the work force. Special thanks to our operations

manager Debbie Bell. Fred, one of our last steam driver looks likely to retire on June 7, 2008 after 53 years and one week – a truly magnificent achievement. Anyone interested in getting their Steam Ticket should contact Robin Simons, operations manager in Palmerston North.

We also wish Martin Mason (gorse pock-ets) a speedy recovery after also breaking some ribs – falling from a ladder.

Congratulations Ivan Johnson on becoming Regional Manager Northern and welcome trainee loco engineer, Jim Featherston, fresh from the hallowed halls of the Woburn Training Centre.

Finally, we say goodbye to Terry Stonham

who is heading back to Te Rapa and welcome Wayne Olson to Wellington from Te Rapa – an example of a mutual exchange that has worked to everyone's benefit.

We had a rather unsavoury incident where a potentially slanderous comment was written in the repair book. It reflects poorly on us all. If you have a beef with someone go and see that person or your manager. The loco repair book is certainly not the forum to air our dirty linen.

The much heralded SW cars have arrived and are now on the Masterton run. There has been mixed reviews with some teething troubles mainly around door and step faults causing late running. This is better now and

Continued on the next page

the focus is now on the lack of horse power from our old DC locos – it's notch 8 all the way and no chance of making up any time lost which has led a Tranz Metro manager to speculate that the train crews are deliberately running these trains late. This is, of course, rubbish. The braking system is a vast improvement. The graduated release allows

WELLINGTON RAIL BRANCH [cont]

pinpoint stopping and a higher approach speed. The train is currently a 7-car consist and each car is about 5 tonne heavier than the old cars. Still they ride well and look good – a credit to the engineer in charge of the project.

Fuel savings incentives kicks in as I write. Some may remember the days of 'Fuel Fighter 661'. I doubt that this will change the driving habits of the majority of us. Of help would be to get the dynamic brake operative, most have been isolated due to a lack of spare parts. There are prizes for saving the most fuel.

With winter upon us the yard is a victim of frequent flooding, and with the water comes mud. The area needs some attention to ensure it is free draining. Mention the Wellington yard to Martin Penny from ONTRACK and he visibly shudders. He knows the yard has some serious issues and is best left undisturbed; touching it would open a Pandora's Box.

The company's smoking policy has been in force for sometime now but some staff still choose to ignore it and can be found by taking a walk through the lodge on any late or night shift.

The rail safety campaign is starting off this week with ads in most of the national papers and graphic TV commercials depicting railway accidents. We need to all get behind this and do our bit. In a perfect world the rail corridor would be fenced off and road crossings either over or under the track.

TV1's Close up recently featured Tony Watkins (LE) of Masterton giving an extended interview on rail crossing accidents and a personal observation of several he has been involved with. It was well thought out and well put across. Tony echoed the thoughts of us all.

ONTRACK have been doing a lot of work in the Wellington area the most noticeable is the installation of LED units in the signals, these do make a difference. There is no trouble seeing a signal indication even in direct sunlight, the signals approaching to Ngauranga (down intermediate & down home) could also do with LED units, at this time of year the sun is very low on the horizon making these signals very hard to see.

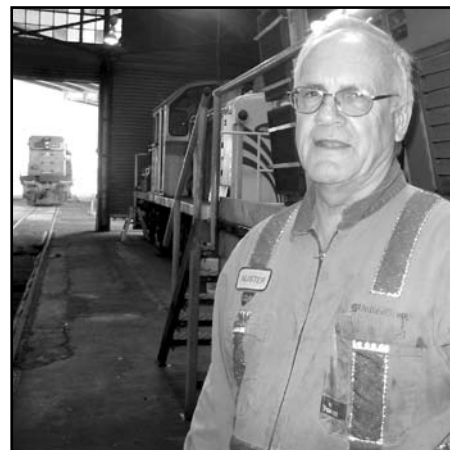
The roster centre has been coming up for some flack and ever since the move to Auckland it just hasn't got it quite right. Todd Valster from RMTU head office is looking into this matter and would appreciate examples of rostering that don't reflect the ROMS3.

Have any other depots had trouble with the new trans log recorders? There have been a couple of examples where the vigilance has only operated when the locomotive was stationary, nothing when travelling. Others, unable to cancel the cycle, erroneous downloads, and one showing a locomotive travelling at 160 kph in the Wellington yard. When working correctly a train's progress can be monitored in real time showing a moving map of the area. You will be amazed at the information it shows. If the vigilance is faulty don't leave your starting station, if the fault occurs on the road advise train control, take the train to the next crossing station and await a second person or a replacement locomotive.

Is there any progress on the new ATX train monitors? Since their introduction excessive brake pipe leakage was one issue I recall. The initial Bulletin in December 06 also stated that persons who had dealings with these monitors needed to be ST23. To date no one in the Wellington depot has had the honour of going through this process.

Finally, almost all the joint operating/safety plans expired in June and have yet to be renewed. Let's hope we don't have any mishaps.

(L-R) - Mechanical engineers Kenny Barclay and Tim Jarden. Tim has taken on the role of delegate again at the Wellington United depot.



Allister Grant - United mechanical engineer.



Matt Gamble - United mechanical engineer and delegate just prior to him leaving the company after 15 years. Time to move on, good luck Matt.



Gordon Finch Toll
Interisland Ferry
Terminal operator
and Wellington
branch member.



LOGISTICS officers at the Port of Lyttelton have given 14 days' notice of strike action over non-settlement of their Collective Agreement.

LYTTELTON PORT BRANCH

Since negotiations broke down, the 10 LO's, who combine the roles of controller and planner, have given the company notice that they will not work during the night shift hours of 11pm to 7am until further notice.

The Collective Agreement, which expired on July 1, is separate to the main port agreement, which runs until April next year. The parties have agreed to take the dispute to mediation.

Coal shortage

Meanwhile, lack of coal supplies continue to plague the port company's coal operation. The coal receipt staff are cutting back to two shifts a day because, most days, only four trains will reach the port from Stockton, with an occasional extra train from Rua or Reefton. The situation is likely to continue until December when the Spring Creek operation should start to boost supplies.

Asset sales

The RMTU has helped raise the protection of Christchurch City Council assets, including the Port of Lyttelton, as a local body election issue. The left-wing grouping, Christchurch 2021, decided to take a position on asset sales after the present council tried to sell off the port's operational arm to Hong Kong's Hutchison Port Holdings last year. At a ceremony on the deck of the historic tug Lyttelton, mayoral candidate Megan Woods and a team of 2021 candidates standing for community boards and the council, signed a pledge to retain public ownership and control



Christchurch City Council candidates Yani Jobanson and Linda Rutland aboard the historic tug Lyttelton with the 2021 campaign pledge to preserve council assets.

of city assets such as the port, the airport and public housing. The event was well covered by local media.

When the city council voted last year to sell the operational arm of the port, it said it was retaining the 'asset' because it would still have held a controlling interest in the land and wharves. However, the business of the port, the employer of our members, would have been controlled by private interests, with much of the profit going to foreign investors instead of the local community. The sale of the port operation to HPH was stymied by Port Otago, which bought up sufficient shares to prevent the port company being privatised.

Comings and goings

Cargo handler and RMTU member Ross Fife has had enough of shiftwork and is about

to try life on the outside. He will celebrate leaving the Lyttelton Port Company with a holiday trip to Egypt and fulfil a lifelong ambition to see the pyramids; then home to find a new job – anything that doesn't involve night shifts. Another old hand, Dave Maher, has already left the cargo handlers to move north to Cambridge.

The maintenance workshops is seeing some changes. Fitter Doug Collins, who had a role in commissioning the new crane, is leaving to try life in Perth. Steven Gray, having completed his fitting apprenticeship, will move across the harbour to join his brother at Lyttelton Engineering, while Brett Hartley has joined as a new mechanic and the company is advertising for a new fitting apprentice.

The security team, which has been short staffed since the beginning of the year, will have three new members soon.

THE very busy season is easing a little. Our members have been run ragged over the past months and training for new skills has been at below minimum

will survive the coming season with increases in dairying in our region. The predictions ten years ago of lack of industry training is coming home to roost.

Our large toplifts have been fitted with safety cages, a result of Ned Kelly's accident when a container fell over the mast and crushed him. This was a recom-

mendation of OSH and certainly gives our drivers good protection. It is amazing to think that tractors had to have these for the last 30 years. It should be an industry standard. We can report that Ned, who should be dead, is making a good recovery, however, he is not back at work full time yet.

Recently four of our delegates attended a

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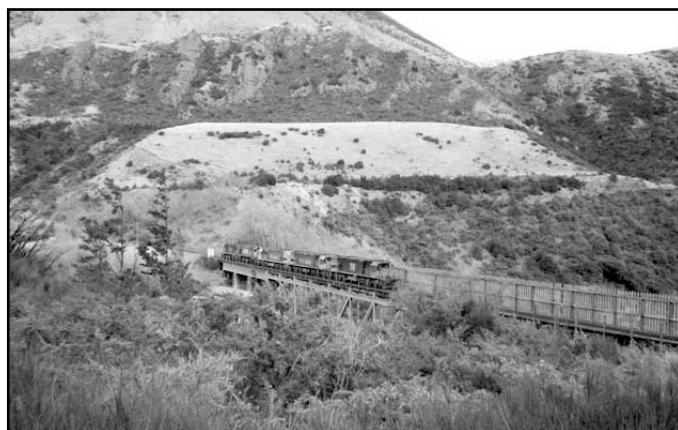
TIMARU PORT BRANCH

required. At this rate we are not sure how we

IT was very interesting lately to view some Australian television. They were showing advertisements on the AWA Australian Workplace Agreements. The employers on one hand were showing big bully unionists barging their way into businesses and tearing

Precarious Inspections

Toll Rail coal train travelling onto the Broken River



Viaduct. This 100 year old (plus) viaduct is another example of international

engineering feats achieved with horses, carts, picks, shovels and hard labour. The rock face abutments are currently being checked by abseilers for ONTRACK.

CANTERBURY RAIL BRANCH

up the AWA while on the other hand unions showed some staff asked to work late with no notice and one employer demanding a woman work or lose her job. It was a wake up call to any union who may be bluffed into thinking that workplace agreements were better than sliced bread. If the NZ National party gets in to power this type of behaviour would be right up their alley.

Pay rates are to feature very high in the coming wage negotiations in the next few months. Very interesting to listen to a mining union rep speaking to a very large group of union members recently. He stated that the miner's union had a strike fund of \$24 million. Now what foolish employer is going to have that union on when they have that amount of ammunition in their war chest? Consequently their pay rates are very very

good. So good in fact, 12 more mines were to open before the end of the year.

We now have Toll owning 100% of the freight side of things. Third Avenue sold all of their shares leaving many rail staff with near worthless shares. That was the gamble many took. Although we watch to see where Toll are heading I suspect that there are some enterprising companies out there that would also like to run their own trains on government-owned tracks.

Business is going reasonably well on all

fronts and I suspect some of these larger freight movers will be getting their heads together to have their own trains. Let's hope it's sooner rather than later. Many people would like to see private companies run light rail passenger vehicles on the tracks. Toll are dragging their feet on this one.

Till next time, which will be our AGM and everyone WILL be there, stay safe and look after your mates, you never know when you might need them.

local CTU union forum at Timaru along with several other unions. They found this very educational and has helped them in understanding the wider union issues faced by all of us. Again comprehensive training was an issue for all industries represented. Chequebook recruiting has reached its end and now is the time for companies to train its own people, just like the training our bosses got many years ago.

Pat Rose Warne a 30-year supportive member has

TIMARU PORT BRANCH [cont]

retired from driving and is already missing working his anytime shifts (yeah right). He looks ten years younger already.

The branch is starting to work on its collective agreement even though we have several months before the expiry of our present one. There are many issues to work through as some of our conditions are no longer appropriate or relevant.

As always a large pay increase will fix many of the issues.



Trevor Davis checks the new safety cages fitted to the Toplifts after a container fell over the mast recently and crushed Ned Kelly. (Inset: How it looked late last year!)

AS I write this report I notice that things have quietened down a little over the last few weeks. It's hard to believe that we are in August already.

We have had lots to celebrate at Port

OTAGO PORT BRANCH

Otago. Our new fourth crane was commissioned late July and there was a "crane commissioning party" for all the staff. A good band and plenty of alcohol and food - just the way the boys like it. It was a well-organised function by our very own RMTU member Emma Morey whom I'm sure lots of people will know. Well done Emma.

Early this month, all staff were invited to a meeting announcing "Project Neptune" - planning for the future and to attract the bigger 6100 series ships. There is still lots to do with resource consents, dredging the harbour to accommodate them, widening the channel to allow ships to come in, and so on, but all in all it will see lots of opportunities to boost the workforce and will bring lots of dollars into our community.

Our Maersk imports to Lyttelton have started and by all accounts we have received very good feedback for a job well done. Toll rail and Port Otago seem to be on the same wave length. Of course with all the work comes lots of negotiations with the unions

trying to agree on how best to cover shifts. We are currently trying to reach consensus on which times work best with shipping in mind, but so far I must say that it's been a frustrating exercise and one would hope that we can reach a satisfactory outcome for all concerned before too much longer.

It is heartening to see lots of jobs advertised for various positions in the company. I believe we are increasing cargo handlers by 30.

The CTU/Government forum was held recently in Dunedin. We can stand proud that so many RMTU members were in attendance. Unfortunately, Helen Clark was ill and couldn't attend and it's always nice to be able to talk straight to the MPs. Some very informative workshops were held. It was no surprise that David Benson-Pope was conspicuous by his absence but Pete Hodgson entertained us magnificently.

Our vice president has recently had major surgery and is now making steady recovery at home. I spoke with Bruce last week and he assures me that things are getting better but he is sick of watching TV. We all wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing him back on deck in the very near future.

Our congratulations go to Lara and James Binnie on the recent arrival of Josh and Sophie. Also, we congratulate two first-

time grandparents, Gwenda Phillips on the arrival of her grandson, Jackson and Malcolm McDonald on the arrival of his granddaughter and grandson, Sophie and Josh (yes Lara's dad).

On a slightly sad note we have farewelled some long-standing members.

Russell Olsen elected to take early retirement and finished with the company a couple of weeks ago. He has been a loyal, hard-working guy for the RMTU and was still on the executive when he departed. So Russell, all the best and don't forget where we are. Most importantly, enjoy your retirement and go have lots of fun. Safe travelling.

Colin Watterston, also with over 30 years membership, left us due to ill health. Colin was a guy that was always the same no matter when you saw him. A really hard-case chap. We wish Colin all the best for the future and hope that he has a nice relaxing retirement.

Both will be missed and will leave a huge gap to be filled.

On a finishing note, the article from Port Chalmers in the last Transport Worker seemed to stir a hornet's nest. One is not sure whether a few things hit nerves or not but one or two managers seemed a little upset. I reiterate that it wouldn't be said if it wasn't how it was. Everybody is entitled to an opinion.

Until next time be safe out there.

A potential for serious harm occurred recently in the assembly shop area when a lifting strop failed while lowering a DX loco onto its bogies with the 100 tonne crane. While it could have been a worse situation the front of the loco fell about 3 metres. The lifting strops were new and you wouldn't expect them to fail as they had been tested under controlled conditions and tagged as such. We await the

outcome of the investigation with interest. It seems bizarre that some of our members recently attended a course on safe lifting with strops and cranes that this could happen.

It has been bitterly cold down here in the Deep South with snow and ice as seen on TV news. Some workshop areas have no heating at all and with roller doors damaged and not repaired for weeks you can imagine how cold it has been here.

Our former branch secretary Robin Tapp has resigned after 21 years from Hillside and the RMTU as he has a new position at the 'Milton Hilton' prison. Robin will be missed here especially for his computer skills. Best of luck and be careful.

Our former branch secretary Robin Tapp has resigned after 21 years from Hillside and the RMTU as he has a new position at the 'Milton Hilton' prison. Robin will be missed here especially for his computer skills. Best of luck and be careful.

MARLBOROUGH BRANCH



Toll Interislander Picton members Catherine Diftord (sitting), Carol Hildyard (standing) and Phil Moorehead

OVER at ONTRACK the staff have had to contend with the winter weather, floods and washouts. It is a credit to those who turned out to ensure that the lines were open as soon as practically possible. Since the last issue several staff, who are regular users of 4WD vehicles, have been put through a Christchurch-based training course to hone up on their skills and maybe learn some new ones.

This month has also seen the running

OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

of two development courses for rescue-at-height where the patient is unconscious - take note bridge bods, comms and Security. The rescue course saw various members of staff dangled from the turntable, whilst various items of rescue gear were evaluated and a recovery system developed which uses ropes and crane units on hi-railers. That afternoon we went on rescues from towers. The other pilot course run covered the vexed question of load security on our trucks. There were a few bemused looks at some of the facts presented. It was also a shock to some as to what was LAW and what PENALTIES could result. The theory session was followed by a practical walk-around of vehicles in the yard, which was a further eye opener as to what was legal and what was not. We hope that the input from the staff in both these pilot programmes will result in good nationwide training being implemented.

When walking through the TGR yard most have to blink and wonder whether they are in Dunedin or Wellington. The yard seems to have been overrun with Tranz Metro blue instead of the TGR yellow and brown. This all results from TGR contracting to remove the bogies from under the withdrawn Tranz Metro stock so they can be returned to Hillside for refurbishment and eventual placement under the new Wellington region stock.

COMMENT

Road vs Rail, a level playing field? – Yeah right!

THE recent announcement that logs from the Mount Allan forest are to go by road, did not really come as a surprise.

After many months of submission and deliberation, the long-awaited decision was released. Road wins.

The rail submission was supported by the Taieri Gorge Railway, Toll and ONTRACK.

Logs were to be carried to two destinations by dedicated services. The obvious one was to Port Otago, the not-so-obvious was south to the Dong Wah Fibre Board plant (formerly Rayoniers).

Locomotives and rolling stock were to be joint effort by the two rail operators, whilst ONTRACK was supplying engineering resources and materials for the loading point on the TGR, investigating possible alterations at Wingatui, reinstatement of Milton, upgrading of crossing loops and the terminal at Rayonier and provision of extra trackage at Port Otago. ONTRACK even had substantial finances approved for the project as did the Dunedin City Council.

Unfortunately when all factors were stacked up there was still a vast difference between the financial models for Rail and Road, and until this is dealt to, road will always emerge the victor, even when the rail option is there.

The politics of decision making are many and varied, and there are factors brought into play that you would never dream of. If a transport subsidy was sought, then your books were open to scrutiny, and in today's competitive environment who would want too.

But it is interesting to note that since

the decision was announced, the forestry companies are spending a minor fortune on upgrading logging roads. Taioma Road, a public asset, will be closed to the public for the duration of extraction. State highway 88 to Port Chalmers is deteriorating faster than they can patch it up and no one really knows how many truck movements there really will be to the Port or other destinations.

So how many accidents or deaths will occur as a result of this decision? The public roading network will be assailed by more tonnage and the council doesn't know what the rebuild or maintenance budgets will be. Logging trucks thundering up and down the Taioma Road, across the sole rail crossing which has a steep approach in the unloaded direction, and an equally steep ascent with blind corners on the loaded side. Wipe out a train load of American sightseers and see what results. Injure a few locals whilst we are about it. Does anyone care?

When this scribe moved to an area adjacent to SH88 27 years ago, an acquaintance in the then MOW stated that the design criteria (tonnes per hour) for that road was being exceeded in 28 minutes. With the Port developments since then what is the time scale now, and what will it be when the extra logs hit the road?

Move on five years to when the logging is finished. What state will the roads be in, at what cost to the local communities and how many close calls, injuries, or deaths will be attributed to this decision? Too late then, to say we should have railed it.

Finally there is the question of carbon credits.

Yet another fine mess to deal with.



MARLBOROUGH BRANCH

Hazards of night driving

Track inspector David Sparrow from Kaikoura lived after swerving to miss a dog on the road at 3am.

Welcome to Marlborough branch's latest member, Myles Benseman, from Toll Tranz link Spring Creek



Solidarity with Philippine's workers

IN late May, the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo visited New Zealand as a guest of the NZ Government. At the same time Filipino trade union leader and spokesperson of the "Free Ka Bel Movement" Dennis Maga bravely visited here to raise awareness of the ongoing detention by the Philippines Government of Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltan and the horrendous number of political extra-judicial killings that have occurred, and are occurring, under the rein of Arroyo. In the six years that she has been president, nearly 900 left wing activists, church leaders and journalists have been murdered. This number does not take into account those who have been kidnapped or just go missing never to be seen again.

"Ka Bel" is 74 year old and described as an 'enduring voice of labour' and humble leader who has spent his life supporting Filipino workers. He was abducted in February 2006 by the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) and kept in detention despite a court order for his release. He is very unwell and must be released soon.

Members of the RMTU, along with other unions, protested at Parliament on Monday May 28 while Arroyo was having a state lunch-



eon inside Parliament. The messages were very clear – "Free Ka Bel" and "Stop the killings".

Dennis Maga was appropriately put in a cage as part of the demonstration.

According to information from the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Philippines is a significant trading partner with over \$600m of trade, made up of 80% exports from NZ and 20% imports. NZ also provides official development assistance of \$3.3m to the Philippines.

We must all be aware of the human rights issues within nations that we are supposed have a friendly trading relationship with and fight for the rights of those who are denied.



Philippines activist Dennis Maga cages himself in protest at Parliament

British union faces same problems

IN February Wayne Butson and the national vice president Ian Wilkie, attended the RMT Conference in Scotland. This was the first such invitation received by the Union from its namesake in Britain. The RMT says it is Britain's fastest growing specialist transport union with members in almost every sector of the transport industry. The similarities between the two unions doesn't stop there. Privatisation of rail has been equally as disastrous in Britain with the Government there also being compelled to take the track back into national ownership. As unions worldwide prepare to battle the many challenges globalisation, inter-union alliances will be necessary tools to maintain conditions and living standards.



(above) A ceramic Maori Wabaika club – a gift from the RMTU to the RMT and (right), with Edinburgh Castle as a backdrop are (l to r) (rear) John Leach RMT president and Bob Crow RMT general secretary and (front) Ian Wilkie and Wayne Butson.

