

MARCH 2011

THE *Transport Worker*

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



Tangiwai terror recreated



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Wayne Butson
General secretary
RMTU

WE are all in deep shock as a result of the Canterbury Earthquake. The RMTU extends its sympathy and heartfelt condolence to any member who has lost, or had injured, a family member, relative or friend as a result of the earthquake. We also extend our heartfelt solidarity and support to those who have lost their homes or suffered property damage. The devastating loss of life and displacement of people is on a scale that I have never before seen in this country and, to be frank, never thought I would see in my lifetime. I travelled to Christchurch to visit KiwiRail worksites and Lyttelton Port on 25 February and what I saw was very unsettling. Yet the spirit of the members, and of other people of Christchurch that we met during the day, was inspiring. The feeling of unity and community spirit warmed me to the core as these are the self-same essential values of trade unionism. We are all looking for ways to support Canterbury through these tough times and various funds have been set up. Some unions have set up their own funds to assist members. We have also had discussions with employers as to what help and assistance can be given and they have been most generous in their giving – we all acknowledge and appreciate their benevolence.

Funds need to have their own appointed trustees and their terms of reference for what to do with the money collected. I personally have no desire to be part of any group who has to sit down and decide who is deserving and who is not. This would be very tough to do as so many are in need of so much help and assistance. It is my view that the Red Cross and the Mayoralty Funds are well managed and have transparency for fund allocation. This, coupled with experience, means that they are well placed to make sure that all donations are going to end up where they are most needed. Donations should go to these funds and I urge all members to give as much as they can spare. By focussing our efforts on a few key, large funds rather than a plethora of smaller ones, should ensure that they can make a meaningful difference. The greater the number of funds the smaller the amounts they are able to distribute. The damage and trauma of this quake is such that the rebuild is going to take many years and, one way or another, we are going to all have to be giving for a long time to come.

And so, back to politics

This Government's track record on employment is poor and so it will behove us all to watch what they do to protect and maintain employment within Canterbury. That wonderful employer Progressives (remember the appalling lockout of a few years ago) has already announced redundancies and sadly there will be other businesses which will also have to reluctantly shut up shop thus displacing workers. As we all know the Government had to borrow so it could afford the 'generous' tax cuts and so the borrowing programme will have to ratchet up to cover the greater costs incurred by the earthquake. This Government will, in all probability, respond with cuts to spending and more at-

tacks on beneficiaries and public sector workers or use the event as an excuse to ramp up their privatisation agenda under the banner that it's "for the good of the country". An alternative for the Government could be to question whether we need to continue building the Puhoi to Wellsford and/or the Kapiti expressways. Could that money be diverted elsewhere? Another alternative for them could be to follow the lead of Australia and introduce a special tax to pay for the recovery levied at differing rates between tax bands (0.5% for A\$50k to A\$100k and 1% for income above A\$100k). That would see all middle and high income workers sharing the pain equitably – a much fairer way of doing it in my view. All the above will dampen GDP but in the final analysis is fairer to us all in NZ Inc. This is election year and so let us all judge this Government on what they do and let the test be on how fair it is to all Kiwis and not just the rich, privileged, big business and the Road Transport Forum. 🌐

MMP IS FAIRER

In 2011, we will vote in a referendum on keeping MMP.

Find out why MMP is the fairest and most representative electoral system for New Zealand, and how to keep and improve it.



Making submissions on the MMP referendum bill, 2010

campaignformmp.org.nz

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 them where you've moved to.

Late last year the Union fielded a complaint from a member who hadn't received last year's voting form. When it was looked into it was discovered he had moved THREE times and none of his mail had followed him. Problem was, he failed to inform the Union of his changes of address.

If you have moved in the last year or two check to see the Union has your latest address by:

- talking to your branch chair who has a list of local members and their details
- go to the Union website and update your details at <http://bit.ly/exmEyL>
- phone 04-499-2066 or fax 04-471-0896

Petone's Anzac flagpole labelled 'outstanding'

THE Anzac Memorial Flagpole flagpole at the southern end of the Petone railway station platform is now in line for protection as a historic place.

The 21-metre-high pole was built in March 1916 at the Petone railway workshops from kauri and Australian hard wood as part of a trans-Tasman connection between Petone and Hornsby (Sydney) railway workshops in honour of their WWI ANZAC workmates who had fought in the Gallipoli campaign. It was erected in time for the first anniversary of the Anzac Day landings on April 25 the previous year.

The Historic Places Trust proposes listing the flagpole as category 1 – its top classification – meaning it is of outstanding historical significance.

The flagpole's construction was required in order for the Petone workshops to fulfil its part of a trans-Tasman exchange of flags and unfurling ceremonies. A similar flagpole was built and erected at Hornsby and both were used at synchronised ceremonies attended by high ranking politicians and public figures including prime minister William Massey and opposition leader Joseph Ward at Petone, as well as the wider community.

After this initial momentous ceremony ANZAC Day ceremonies all-but ceased at the Petone site until the 1970s.

"The Anzac Memorial Flagpole is a special structure because it is one of the earliest Anzac-related World War I memorials constructed in New Zealand," its report said.

Protection for registered places is not automatic, but councils are required to take the registration into account when developing regional and district plans.

Historian Karen Astwood, who wrote the report, said: "The flagpole is one of the few remaining early vestiges of the railway workshops."

During the Gallipoli campaign 2721 New Zealanders died, including 37 New Zealand Railways workers. 🌐



New shadow Labour minister

SECOND term Labour MP Darien Fenton has been appointed as the Party's new Labour Spokesperson, taking over from Trevor Mallard.

Darien, former CTU vice-president and Service and Food Workers



Union national secretary, has been the associate labour spokesperson over the last two years and also the spokesperson for transport safety.

"I'm already working with the CTU and unions like the RMTU to develop Labour's election policy for workers' rights, so I'm delighted to have the chance to work even more closely together," says Darien. "Labour will have a solid platform that will focus on rebuilding fairness in New Zealand workplaces and industries, and growing wages and jobs."

Darien says that under National unemployment has increased, job and wage growth has been non-existent, the cost of living is making it hard for families and workers' rights have been undermined.

"But the real tragedy of three years of a National, Act, Maori Party government is not just the tough times workers and working families are experiencing, but the chance to improve the lives of workers and their families has been lost – for now. Labour can do something about that, but only with the support of workers and their families at the coming election" says Darien. "We can make a real difference for working people and their families with the election of a Labour-led government on 26 November 2011."

"We can win and by working together, we can do it!"

National targets YOUR ACC – again

THE RMTU has put its weight behind a campaign to keep ACC as it is – and as it was intended – by joining the ACC Futures Coalition campaign to keep it as a publicly-owned, single provider committed to injury prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and as a 'no fault' compensation social insurance system for all New Zealanders.

The Coalition is a group of affiliated organisations and individuals who want an ACC scheme that operates on the basis of its founding principles of:

- Community responsibility;
- Comprehensive entitlement;
- Complete rehabilitation;
- Real compensation; and
- Administrative efficiency.

"We must look after people who, through injury, are unable to contribute to the welfare of the community," said RMTU GS Wayne Butson. "All injured people must be covered by this community-funded scheme on the same uniform basis. We must fight the National Government's privatisation plans."

Labour's new ACC spokesperson, Chris Hipkins agrees. He told the House last month:

"Under National's plans to privatise ACC, ordinary working Kiwis will end up paying more to get less cover.

"The private insurance companies will be out to screw down costs and maximise profits. Anyone who has ever lodged an insurance claim for a burglary or car accident will know how hard it is to get money out of insurance companies.

The Coalition is opposed to the current government's direction on ACC which they stress over-emphasises the insurance aspects of the scheme and undermines its social responsibilities.

"The RMTU is devastated by how the scheme has been run down these last two years," said Wayne. "Once again we are fighting a National Government's plan to wind down a perfectly good, publicly owned scheme in favour of a seriously deficient private one."

"Merrill Lynch, John Key's old firm, have estimated the insurance industry is in for wind-fall profits of over \$200 million a year if ACC is privatised," said Chris Hipkin. "That's money

that's coming out of the pockets of ordinary Kiwis and it's not going into rehabilitation or compensation for those who need it."

Just before Christmas the government released the report of the stock take of the ACC accounts. It is a huge document which the Coalition is carefully analysing.

However, some points to emerge are already very worrying:

The government intends to privatise the work account following the next election by opening it up to competition with private insurers. Work is already underway to make this happen

They intend to extend the Accredited Employer scheme which enables larger employers to self-insure and manage their own workplace accidents rather than signing up to ACC


Related to this New Zealanders will see greater use of private third party administrators (TPAs) in the management of individual cases. TPAs have a bad track record

Removing the Disputes Resolution Services Ltd (DSRL) from the ownership of ACC to improve independence.

The Coalition will provide more information once its analysis is complete. In the meanwhile, says Wayne, we should do what "we can to raise public awareness about National's post-election intentions. Now is the time to be very worried."

National's ACC privatisation scheme will allow the insurance companies to privatise profits and socialise losses says Chris Hipkins. "When National last tried to privatise ACC, one of the key players was an Aussie insurer called HIH. They went broke and the Australian government had to bail out \$500 million worth of worker insurance cover. That's what we're in for here if they do it again."

He was also very critical of how National has been running down the ACC scheme in an attempt to justify privatising it, but says "ACC is a world-leader and we should be fighting to keep it."

The Transport Worker and other RMTU publications will carry updates of this campaign with suggestions of how you can help. 

Radio reception frustrates loco drivers

FINDING the cause of radio reception problems aboard Kiwirail locomotives is like playing 'paper, stone scissors' – only no one seems to win.

The problem has become so aggravating that the Union has threatened strike action unless serious attention is focussed on fixing it.

Loco drivers report varying problems throughout the North Island network including poor connections, broken connections and foreign interference.

New Tait radios had been installed on the new trains and have had repeated software updates installed to improve performance.

Blame for the problems have shunted around like a hot coal from Tait, to the land-based aerials and finally to the drivers themselves – who have had enough. They are now demanding the problem be sorted out. Never mind the blame game, they say, just get working radios aboard the locos before something serious goes wrong.


RMTU organiser, Todd Valster says they have a good point and he believes that the Union managers are working hard to solve the multiple problems.

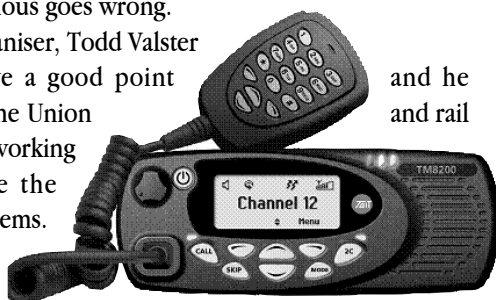
A recent meeting focussed solely on the central North Island radio problem on February 17 reported that numerous courses of action had been taken including:

- running a radio test car over all the lines radiating out from Palmerston North to test radio strength. Results from those tests showed that all radio strengths were at the required level - or better. The meeting agreed that the transmission stations could be ruled out at this stage as causing the problems.

- Radio traffic density – or the number of radio calls using the network. With the increase in use from within rail including contractors and others, the system is simply becoming busier. When one repeater is in use calls from other repeaters are essentially blocked until the first call has ended. This is the reason why some calls do not lock on immediately. Repeater stations are gradually being upgraded to deal with this increased traffic.

- New radios: In general, Tait Electronics has produced world-class equipment. However, it would appear that the person who helped them design the circuitry and electronics for TS8200 is contracted to them and is a bit elusive. When he began the project he lived in Wellington and has lately moved to London. This particular project is now not one of his priorities. The committee is seeking answers urgently from Tait Electronics – where, they believe, the buck stops.

Meanwhile the committee has set Tait Electronics a generous August 31 deadline. 



Expressions of sympathy

Dear Brothers and Sisters of RMTU,
I was informed of the huge earthquake in New Zealand, which caused heavy casualties. On behalf of members of the JRU, I'd like to mourn the loss of the lives of those who died in the disaster, and at the same time I'd like to express sympathy for all the injured.

According to the general secretary Wayne Butson, there have been no reports of fatalities or severe injuries amongst the Union members, though there is damage to the rail track. I well imagine, however, from the media reports, that there are great damages.

We have talked about if there is anything we can do. Please do not hesitate to inform us of everything that you'd like to request us to do.

As you know we have a Diet member, Kaoru Tashiro, who won the Upper House seat in the national election last year. He is also busily working, in concert with us, JRU, in order for Japan's government to extend a better helping hand to New Zealand people.

As we know, RMTU members know conditions of the afflicted people more than anyone, so please let us know if there is any call for help from them. Mr Tashiro says that he would like to do his best to respond to them.

We do stand together and fight together with you whatever may happen.

I hasten to ask you to accept my deepest sympathy for disaster victims and convey my message to all the members of the RMTU.
In global solidarity,
Masaharu Takei
President of JRU

Dear editor,
On behalf of members, officials and staff of the Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Union, please accept my deepest condolences for the brothers and sisters of your nation who have lost their lives in the tragic earthquake that struck Christchurch.

Tragedies like this are assessed in a number of ways: the lives lost and the wounds that, although brutal, will mend, as well as the untold personal consequences that plague us for years afterwards. You are a strong nation and a strong people. You will recover from this and while never forgetting those who perished, you will move forward and prosper again.

The fabric that binds our two nations is deep and nowhere is that more true than between respective labour movements. We have enjoyed the support and nourishment of your comradeship for over a century and at this darkest of times, we offer anything that we can to help you through the tragedy or to lighten the burden of recovery.

In solidarity
Allan Barden
National secretary
RTBU



Get involved in keeping MMP

AT the General Election this November we will not only be asked to vote for our government but also how we vote for them.

A referendum has been called by this government to test whether we should retain MMP or change to something else.

The RMTU has joined a campaign to retain MMP. It doesn't believe there is a widespread demand to change the system and that the call is coming from a select band of National's right wing, wealthy and influential, supporters.

Victoria University's Dr Jon Johansson told the parliamentary committee setting up the referendum that it was unnecessary.



He said the referendum was an election promise from National and Prime Minister John Key has said it wouldn't hurt to kick the tires.

"Rather than kicking the tires we are putting the car up for sale," Dr Johansson said.

He said the proportional system was fairer than the previous first past the post model and resulted in far more diverse representation, better reflecting the make-up of the country.

He added that apart from representation, the stability of the system was at risk. If change is mooted from the referendum he predicted ongoing referenda to check each new model.

The group, Campaign for MMP, has begun amassing its arguments which readers will hear more of as the election date nears.


Meanwhile, you might like to listen to Dr Jon Johansson's four reasons to vote for MMP on YouTube which he presented to the 2011 NZUSA Conference on 27 January 2011. [<http://bit.ly/eaJdY1>]

Most important is that YOU get involved:

■ Talk to your family and friends - convince everyone you know to vote for MMP!

■ Distribute MMP leaflets through your workplace, school, clubs

■ Donate money to the Campaign for MMP

■ Join an MMP group near you to take part in local campaign activities.  www.campaignformmp.org.nz

New employment relations and holidays legislation

LAST year the government made changes to the Employment Relations Act (ERA) and the Holidays Act. The majority of changes come into effect on 1 April 2011. A broad range of unions are working to negotiate protections into their collective agreements to ensure their members will not be affected by these law changes.

The following changes will come into effect on 1 April, 2011:

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ACT

■ 90 day trial period

The voluntary 90 day trial period for new employees of businesses with fewer than 20 staff will be extended to cover all employers. Workers with a 90 day trial period clause in their agreement can be dismissed and cannot raise a personal grievance in relation to the dismissal.

■ Union access

Union access to workplaces will require the consent of the employer. Consent must not be unreasonably withheld. The employer must advise the union of its decision no later than the working day after the request was received. If the employer refuses it must provide written reasons. Union access clauses override these provisions and unions and employers are free to agree to access that is fairer than the new law will allow.

■ Communication during collective bargaining

Employers will now be able to bypass the union to talk about matters relevant to bargaining for a collective agreement directly with their staff. Some restrictions on what can be communicated remain however; the employer cannot undermine the bargaining role of the union or its own duty of good faith.

Some questions to ponder

- Why is government restricting union access to work sites?
 - Why is government encouraging direct employer/employee communication?
 - Why is government extending the 90-day trial period to workplaces of all sizes?
 - Why is government cutting the grounds on which workers can claim unfair dismissal or unfair disadvantage at work?
 - Why is government removing reinstatement as the primary remedy when a dismissal is deemed to be unfair?
 - Why is government allowing employers to further delay proceedings by not agreeing to mediation?
 - Why is government allowing the sale of the 4th week of statutory annual leave?
 - Why is government allowing an alternative day's holiday when working on public holiday?
 - Why is government requiring workers to get a doctor's certificate even for one day's absence?
- These questions and more are answered and argued on the CTU's website.

www.nzctu.org.nz

Privatisation an election issue

THE National government plans to head down the privatisation track, once again stripping New Zealand of its hard-won and taxpayer funded critical assets. RMTU members will recall the disaster of selling off rail and the subsequent asset stripping by greedy, selfish money manipulators (somewhat like John Key) to line their own pockets. The upshot is a rail system laid bare and requiring many more millions of dollars to bring it back.


Back in the 1980s and 1990s we were told it was to pay off debt. But the architects of those plans admit it was nothing of the sort.



This time round the government argues that the private sector is more efficient and government is best out of the way.

However, our debt is not as severe as the government makes out – and most of it is private debt, not government's.

The CTU is mounting a campaign to inform people of the true state of affairs which focusses on the message "Don't panic: There is a debt problem but we should not be panicked into short-sighted fixes.

One sure way to stop National's plan is to ensure they don't get into power. 

New legislation cont

■ Test of justification for dismissals

The test of justification for dismissal under section 103A of the ERA will be amended by replacing the word "would" with "could" so that the test will now be whether the employer's actions, and how the employer acted, were what a fair and reasonable employer could have done in all the circumstances, at the time the dismissal or action occurred. This is a much easier test for employers to meet. The Act also sets out the minimum requirements of a fair and reasonable process and reduces the importance of procedure in dismissal and disciplinary situations.

■ Reinstatement

Reinstatement will no longer be the

primary remedy available to employees, but will remain an available remedy.

■ Recommendations

Mediators and members of the Employment Relations Authority will be able to make recommendations to parties at their request.

Separately, the following change will come into effect from 1 July 2011:

■ Written Individual Employment Agreements

Employers must retain a signed copy of each employee's individual employment agreement or the current terms and conditions of employment. Employers must retain a copy of any intended agreement even if it has not been signed or agreed upon.

HOLIDAYS ACT

■ Average daily pay

The Act provides a new calculation for working out "average daily pay" by dividing gross earnings for the previous 52 weeks by the number of days worked during that period (to be used if it is not possible to work out "relevant daily pay")

■ Transfer of public holidays

The new law allows employers and employees to agree to transfer one or more public holidays, provided their agreement is in writing and the transfer is not intended to

reduce the requirement to pay penal rates on a public holiday.

■ Cashing out annual leave

An employee may request a portion of their annual leave to be paid out. This portion can be up to one week's annual holidays for cash. This entitlement is subject to special conditions and an employer may have a policy preventing such a payout. This could mean the only way for


a worker to get a pay increase would be to sell a week's leave.

■ Proof of sickness or injury

Employers will be able to require an employee to provide a medical certificate for an absence of any length (even one day) on sick leave, provided that if the employee has been absent for less than three consecutive calendar days the employer must meet the cost of obtaining the medical certificate.

You can read more about the new laws on the Department of Labour's website at: <http://ers.govt.nz/>

■ This information has been collated and written by the Tertiary Education Union (TEU) and edited and republished with their permission.

The RMTU is working with the TEU and the Council of Trade Unions to repeal these laws and replace them with fairer employment legislation. 

Legal update

Beware; there have been many warnings in the media over the last couple of years regarding the dangers of disciplinary action (and in some cases dismissal) by ill-considered postings on social networking sites such as Facebook, advises RMTU solicitors McBride, Davenport, James. Individuals often assume that their social networking profiles are private. They're not, they say.

A number of recent cases reveal not all workers are heeding that advice.

In one notable case an employee was eventually dismissed and the Authority found the dismissal justifiable.

Watch this space, we anticipate more and more of these cases.

Line closures creeping closer

Kiwirail has earmarked three more rail routes it calls "minor lines" for close investigation (read possible/likely closure) including Auckland-Whangarei, Gisborne-Napier and Masterton-Woodville (North Wairarapa). The Stratford-Okahukura is already mothballed. The RMTU sees these possible closures as critical decision-making which will affect jobs in the industry as well as pouring more and larger vehicles on to our roads. There is no doubt that Kiwirail has strong support from the National government. It is now time, says RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson, to shed complacency and look past the PM's grin and good humour. "We must fight these closures and muster public support," he said. "Don't be taken in by his beguiling grin."

AUCKLAND-WHANGAREI

LAST month Kiwirail assured Northland staff and key stakeholders that options for future rail operations in the region would be thoroughly investigated over the coming year before any decision is made to mothball the line. The reassurance, from chief executive Jim Quinn, was seen by many as a sure sign of the line's demise.

"We've heard similar words before and watched the fruit they bear turn into closures and redundancies," said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson. "To save a few dollars today Kiwirail and the National government are ignoring tomorrow's profits."

During his visit to Whangarei Quinn made it clear that, even if it became necessary to mothball the line, it did not automatically signal permanent closure, but gave a further window of time for future options to

be considered. He further emphasised that no designations would be relinquished in order to ensure long term protection of the transport corridors.

"Our preference would be to keep the line open, however we have to operate in a commercial manner so we need to find a way for it to pay its way," he said.

Some of the line's particular problems included six of the line's 13 tunnels incapable of taking the hi-cube containers. They would need to be modified.

However, many people he met expressed disappointment in the company's plans especially those involved in moving logs.

One man said: "I loaded 150,000 tonnes of logs onto rail in the last year, I would hate to see that go to road."



Quinn told councillors the cost of running the trains on the route was almost exactly the same as the service was earning (\$8 million to \$9 million) and that the route was "a barely used asset in terms of the amount of investment".

GISBORNE-NAPIER

A high powered meeting of council and business leaders from Gisborne to Napier recently met KiwiRail's CEO Jim Quinn to work out a way to save the Napier/Gisborne East Coast rail line.

While coming as no great surprise, the Government's announcement that the line could be mothballed or closed is a serious threat to Hawke's Bay's economy and safety on the country's roads. With the National government's backing, KiwiRail has recently released its "rail turn-around" plan which flags that, unless new anchor customers emerge, this and up to three other lines will be closed or mothballed by 2012.

These lines will be reviewed by KiwiRail in consultation with its communities and its customers, says Quinn.

The consequence would be almost

total reliance on road transport for freight between Napier and Gisborne on State Highway 2 (SH2) – a windy, narrow and hilly road. Coastal shipping is not viable other than for a few bulk products.

The Hawke's Bay Leaders' Group says that everything possible must be done to prevent closure of the line saying they:

- Have concerns about safety and overloading of the Napier to Gisborne highway (SH2) which already carries a high proportion of heavy traffic;
- Need to maintain choice and competition in land transport modes;
- Are worried about potential loss of economic development opportunities without the rail option; and
- Are concerned about Gisborne's increased isolation.

Briefs

■ Further south, Wairarapa residents are concerned about the Masterton-Woodville line. Pahiataua Railcar Society president Don Selby said Northern Wairarapa would be isolated from the rail network if that line was closed and it would also kill plans to run restored vintage railcars as a tourist venture.

■ In Taranaki, Stratford Mayor Neil Volzke said KiwiRail's announcement that the four lines had to be self-sufficient was ominous. The Stratford and Ohahukura has been closed since November. "I think we have to admit that the odds are stacked against it ever being used again. The trouble is that KiwiRail are not going to reopen the line unless there is a customer," he told the *Dominion Post*.

Coal wagon SNAFU

HAVE you heard how our latest Chinese-built coal wagons are doing? Not very well according to scribe Murray Dunlop, who relates a sad tale of poor design.

Last year the wagons arrived on New Zealand shores with a great fanfare. Designed to be operated from ground level with no ladders and a capacity of 18 tonnes – these things were the answers to all coal-carrying questions.

Murray writes that after loading the operator winds a mechanism which pulls a cover across the load to prevent loss from high winds or heavy rain water.

Because they are designed to be operated from ground level there is no way for an operator to gain entry to the interior or the top of the load.

“When the 18 tonne load is measured aboard the coal sits ‘heaped’ above (and in the centre of) the containers,” wrote Murray.

The heaped load, of course, is now higher than the sides of the container and the ground operated winding mechanism won’t work.”

“The issue is the way the covers are retracted back to enable them to be loaded,” said RMTU member Phil Bosworth. “When the cover is moved towards the end of the container it obstructs about one metre of the container making it difficult for the loader operator to load the coal right to the end of the box. There is also some obstruction at the opposite end of the box.”

KiwiRail’s answer: Ask the coal loaders (Ohai/Nightcaps mine workers and KiwiRail TXOs) to climb on top of the heaped coal and spread it out.

Of course, they refused on safety grounds!

So then the loaders were instructed to place only 15 tonnes of coal into the units at a



considerable financial loss to KiwiRail (estimated at \$150 per short-loaded container) who had an agreed and required tonnage of coal to be carried with Fonterra.

Curiously, the same wagons are being used to transport coal to Timaru without creating a problem with no complaints from the customer.

It now appears, says Murray, that these brand new and highly heralded coal wagons have been ‘banned’ from hauling coal and are, instead, now being used to cart ornamental stone and urea.

“This is a high price for workers at the coal face to pay for someone else’s design error.”

“One is left wondering,” said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson, “if the same problem would have occurred if the wagons had been built in New Zealand with expert tradesmen who not only know how to do their work but are also familiar with New Zealand conditions. There are so many reasons why it’s better to keep work in New Zealand for New Zealand workers beyond the short term gain of saving a few dollars.”



NZ’s ticking time bomb

James Sleep,
NZCTU youth convener

NEW ZEALAND has a ticking time bomb which will become a long term economic burden if left unaddressed by the National government. This bomb is youth unemployment.

Over 70,000 young Kiwis are not in work, education or training – 19.4 percent of those between 15 and 24 are unemployed.

The National government have offered nothing to these young people and instead have put barriers in their way by cutting funding to apprenticeships, failing to adequately fund tertiary education, cutting community and polytechnic education funding, and axing two job creation initiatives.

New Zealand has been warned by the OECD about leaving behind a “lost generation” if the issue is not addressed. Instead of making it easier for employers to dismiss workers, thereby adding to the problem of job insecurity, the Government should be looking at how to widen access to education and training pathways, along with investing in job creation. At a local level, government should be working with employers and education providers to ensure young people with opportunities to learn new and needed skills.

The cavalier approach of this government to youth unemployment will come back to bite, and it will hurt.



Farewell Jacko

Long serving railwayman Adrian Jackson (AJ as he is widely known) was farewelled at a function held at Kaiwharawhara depot. Before working for ONTRACK, AJ had spent many years as an LE and was actually a mate of our GS Wayne Butson. He also worked with RMTU organiser Todd Valster. Wayne presented Adrian with a certificate of long service from the Union and told a couple of tame “stories”. AJ like so many other NZ rail workers is off to Oz but the draw card for him is family. Good luck AJ.

Rail and port back in action



RMTU'S GS Wayne Butson visited Christchurch shortly after their second earthquake – or massive after-shock – to check out Rail and Port workers and inspect the damage to their facilities.

He described the scene as "devastating" and "heart-rending" and foresaw years and years of New Zealand effort to bring the city back to normalcy.

"The devastating loss of life and displacement of people is on a scale that I have never before seen in this country and, to be frank, never thought I would see in my lifetime," he said.

He travelled to Christchurch to visit KiwiRail worksites and Lyttelton Port on 25 February and said that though what he saw was very unsettling, he very "impressed" with the spirit of Union members and others he met

"It was truly inspiring," he said. "The feeling of unity and community spirit warmed me to the core. These are the same as the essential values of trade unionism. The reason so many unionists feel safe and secure to be Union."

He was also complimentary of KiwiRail's instant and generous response to its workers.

Members of their Wellington-based team were at Christchurch International Airport waiting for a flight back to Wellington early on Tuesday afternoon when the earthquake struck.

"The walls in the airport lounge started twisting and turning," said one. "Bottles and glasses were flying everywhere. I looked outside and you could see cars being bounced up and down. It was really scary. While we were all Wellingtonians and used

to occasional earthquakes, we'd never seen anything like this. We now understand what our staff in Christchurch have been going through."

In the week following the quake all rail lines into Christchurch re-opened and rail services resumed. KiwiRail's first priority was focussed on repairing bridges and moving a derailed coal train preventing the

(r) Forces were so great the rail didn't bend but snapped like this one near Bridge 3

(below) Cracks in buildings and liquefaction everywhere.

(opposite page) Bridge and transport damage and cracks in the ground.



link with Port of Lyttelton being restored.

Chief executive Jim Quinn says staff were advised to concentrate on the safety and wellbeing of their families and property before work.

"It's been encouraging that many have been prepared to come back to work," he said. "But we totally understand those taking the time to deal with issues at home."

Rail links to Christchurch have been largely restored with Dunedin and Christchurch open and with repairs near Rangiora completed, the Picton/Christchurch is also

open. The line to the Port of Lyttelton remains closed due to damage to a bridge at Heathcote.

The earthquake also delayed Aratere's appointment with a Singapore shipyard until after Easter. She was originally scheduled to leave on 14 March for an extension designed to increase her capacity by approximately 30 percent as well as the fitting of a new bow section.

"Our experience after the earlier earthquake last September was that a lot of extra freight and passengers needed to move

across Cook Strait for sometime afterwards," said Interislander general manager Thomas Davis. The seabed at Lyttelton Port has shifted slightly but not enough to stop vital supplies from coming into port.

Chief executive Peter Davie told NZPA the navy had carried out an extensive survey of the seabed and found one place where it had moved, but it was not a "significant issue". The navy also tested the wharf piles while work continued above. Getting the wharf completely fixed would be a long process. 🌐

(l) Allan Cooper, mechanical engineer, (below) Apprentice mechanical engineer Rebecca Newton with Aubrey Wilkinson and (left below) Jim Kelly, Bronwyn Montague and Aubrey.



HILLSIDE: NOT GIVING UP



(l) Mike Ward, mechanical engineer. (r) Jim, Rebecca Hauck, shunt coordinator and Aubrey. (below) Auckland carriage nears completion.





Aubrey with Lisa McKinlay, apprentice mechanical engineer.



Mechanical engineers Hayden Taylor and Les Ingram with Aubrey.

WHILE Kiwirail and the National government appear to have little confidence in the ability of workers at New Zealand's railway workshops to tackle the big jobs, workers at Hillside in Dunedin show they are hale, hearty and absolutely ready for any work that comes their way.

Shattered by the recent decisions to send work to Korea and China, the workers here live in daily dread that their hard-won skills will be passed over and that the future of heavy industry in New Zealand is on a knife edge.

"It's not just the work today that concerns them but the future too," says RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson. "Will they be training any more apprentices? How many lives in Dunedin will be affected by the industry being run down? What about all those small companies who rely on Hillside for their work? The questions aren't kept within Hillside's walls but spread throughout the city."

In this series of photos Wayne is accompanied by RMTU vice president Aubrey Wilkinson.



(r-above) Kent Rickerby, apprentice mechanical engineer; (r) Tamati Rogerson mechanical engineer and (below) some of the foundry crew.





LATE last year Otaki Railway station was repainted, resigned and remodelled to appear just like Taihape Station in 1953.

The transformation took place to accommodate filming of a story around the Tangiwai rail disaster at 10:21pm on Christmas eve 1953. Of the 285 passengers on board, 151 died – New Zealand's worst railway accident and at the time, the world's eighth worst railway accident. Most of those aboard were heading home with Christmas presents making it doubly tragic.

This film follows the misfortunes of cricketer Bob Blair's fiancé who was one of the dead.

Many of the daylight filming was done around Otaki over two days while the disaster itself was recreated using model trains.

Philip Wagener, one of the drivers chosen to run the Ka949 (actually a relabeled Ka942) supplied by Mainline Steam, said he never thought such an opportunity would ever come his way.



Danny & Dennis pose in front of the locomotive

Recreating the Tangiwai disaster

Ben Mason, the art director for the film, said he was delighted with the footage taken.

"We shot the heck out of the loco and train, getting some amazing footage. The traveling shots on Forest Lakes bend were beautiful and very worthwhile. We then had some amazing scenes with the loco parked up at Otaki [Taihape] station, with various shots of the loco departing with all of the beautiful red carriages trailing off into the distance,"



Archive photos from 1953



CURRENT
PHOTOGRAPHS:
Daniel Garland

he said. "The locomotive is like a huge breathing animal, it's amazing to watch."

While Mainline Steam provided the loco, the carriages were provided by Steam Incorporated and Steam Rail (Fielding).

Ben expects the film to be screened on TVNZ's channel One sometime this year. 🇳🇿



Mexican stand-off

NZ unions supporting workers' rights

MEXICAN workers' rights were the focus of the February 17 demonstration outside the Mexican Embassy in Wellington as part of the International Week of Action to improve worker's rights throughout the world.

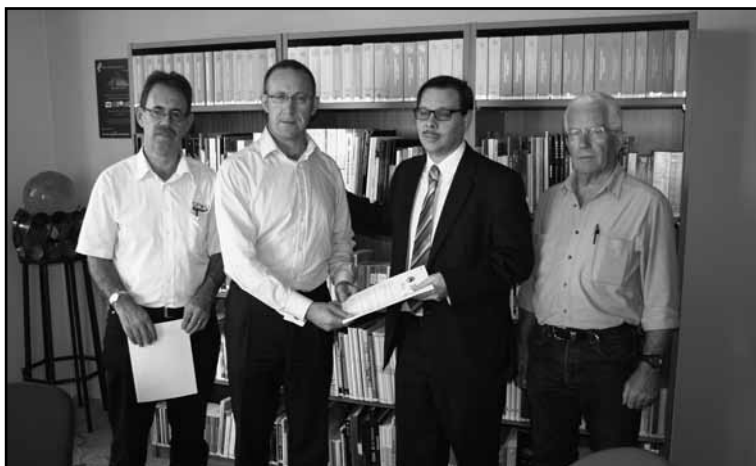
Representatives from the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU), Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ), Service and Food Workers' Union (SFWU), National Distribution Union (NDU), Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) and Financial Sector (Finsec) unions attended the rally and presented a letter to the Charge D'Affaires at the Embassy urging the Mexican government to recognise workers' rights and comply with UN ILO Convention on Freedom of Association.

They also called for trade union rights to be recognised.

EPMU national secretary and Labour Party president Andrew Little, EPMU organiser Paul Tolich and Green Party MP Keith Locke spoke to the 50 people gathered outside the embassy.

The Mexican Embassy was chosen to highlight the plight of members of the Grupo México's Pasta de Conchos coal miners where, on February 19, 2006 an explosion at the mine killed 65 workers. Almost five years later, the bodies of 63 of them remain buried and the Mexican government has failed to investigate or prosecute those responsible. Since 2006 the Mexican government has escalated its illegal and violent attacks on the Mexican Miners' Union, after it demanded justice for the "industrial homicide" at Pasta de Conchos and the recovery of the miners' bodies.

The Mexican Miners' Union is not alone; the few other genuinely independent trade unions seeking to improve the lives of Mexican workers have also found themselves increasingly under fire.



Jim Ryall (SFWU), Andrew Little (EPMU), Mexican Ambassador and John Whiting (MUNZ).



There is a huge catalogue of outrageous treatment of union officials – both paid and unpaid – which include:

- Setting fire to union activists' houses.
- Families of activists being threatened.
- Attempted bribery followed by violence.
- Use of federal security forces to occupy factories.
- Deploying police and military force in violent attacks on workers resulting in the deaths of four union activists and injury to many more. Those responsible have not been brought to justice.

The Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador offices were ransacked and members have received death threats.

In October 2009 a veteran trade union leader of the Unión General Obrera, Campesina y Popular (UGOCP), Margarito Montes Parra, was shot with 14 other people, including most of his family.

A three year long strike crushed by over 2,000 militarised police using tear gas and

batons arresting some and injuring many others.

The Mexican Government has used employment legislation to impede workers from gaining access to free and independent trade union representation but supports employer-dominated unions, known as "protection" unions (or "yellow" unions in New Zealand). Intimidation and violence is used against those wishing to set up independent trade unions.

Further attacks on workers' rights include legislation making it almost impossible for unions to legally take strike action. As a result many Mexican workplaces are covered by 'company' unions that largely serve government and corporate interests and fail to deliver any real returns to their members. Independent democratic unions deliver real benefits to their members


and it is these that have been targeted by the Mexican government and its supporters.

The message delivered to the Embassy called on the Mexican government to:

■ Hold employer and government officials accountable for the Pasta de Conchos mine explosion that killed 65 miners on February 19, 2006.

■ Abolish systemic violations of workers' freedom of association, including employer-dominated "protection contracts" and interference in union elections.

■ End the use of force—by the state or private parties—to repress workers' legitimate demands for democratic unions, better wages and working conditions, and good health and safety conditions.

■ End the campaign of political persecution against the Mexican miners' union and the Mexican electrical workers' union. 

■ To listen to Andrew Little's speech: <http://www.youtube.com/user/NZRMTU>

Public Vs. Private funding

PUBLIC sector growth in all western, first world countries is not only increasing but is also driving the private sector, said visiting academic David Hall (pictured) recently at a PSA-hosted discussion for union leaders. He didn't have to point out, but his informed audience could easily see, that the national government's focus in New Zealand was almost the exact opposite.

David Hall, from Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) at the University of Greenwich researches the privatisation of public services around the world with special focus on water, energy, waste management and healthcare.

Hall is a vocal and powerful voice in support of the public service.

"Public spending has increased over the last 150 years in all countries and that there is a recognised direct link between public spending and economic and social development," he said. He then pointed out that public spending is now at an historical high of 40% of gross domestic product in OECD countries and rising in developing countries.

It is the public sector, he said, which de-

velops infrastructure such as roads, electricity generation and sewage systems, schools and education. "In fact no private company has ever built a sewage system. There is no money in it, yet it is vital for public health."



In fact he says studies have shown that health and education services are provided more efficiently and effectively by the public sector than the market can provide. In the UK the poorest 20% of the population receive an equitable education which is worth the equivalent to almost as much as their entire monetary income. "It is this access to education that will benefit them and the country."

Hall also noted that public spending was used by many countries to counter the recession.

"The [global financial] crisis was not caused by government deficits yet public spending is used to manage it. The world's public sector has spent the equivalent of all of the revenue of the private sector from the last 30 years to bail out the banks and the institutions that caused it. That ongoing public sector spending is being used to combat further recession and unemployment. The

message is very clear: now is not the time to be making cuts to public sector spending."

Four points from his report make compelling arguments for public spending:

Public spending on healthcare and housing and other services protect people from illness and ensures cities develop without slums.

Public spending on ageing populations is still affordable.

Universal pensions, like we have in New Zealand, ensures that women have equal access although they might not have had the same earning opportunities and eliminate old age poverty.

State assets are usually sold for less than their true value thus giving the new private owners considerable gain at the people's expense.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) also featured in the discussion with Hall pointing out how such projects can be more expensive than direct government borrowing. He said PPPs "suck up public spending for decades and make Government budgets much less flexible in the future". He added that PPPs are a way for private companies to ensure that public spending comes directly to them for decades.

■ David Hall's presentation may be seen on YouTube at:

<http://www.youtube.com/nzpsa>

Drug & alcohol policy - update

FOR KiwiRail (KR) and RMTU, and the single Multi Employer Collective Agreement (MECA), there is a willingness to align policies, including the drug & alcohol policy within KR group.

Within the MECA, a number of old clauses were replaced with a more extensive sets of clauses focussing on the parties (KR and RMTU):

- Working together to make sure members and management clearly understand their rights and responsibilities,
- Reaffirming support for – and availability of – rehabilitation,
- Providing reassurance for KR customers that KR workers will not be impaired by drugs and alcohol while on

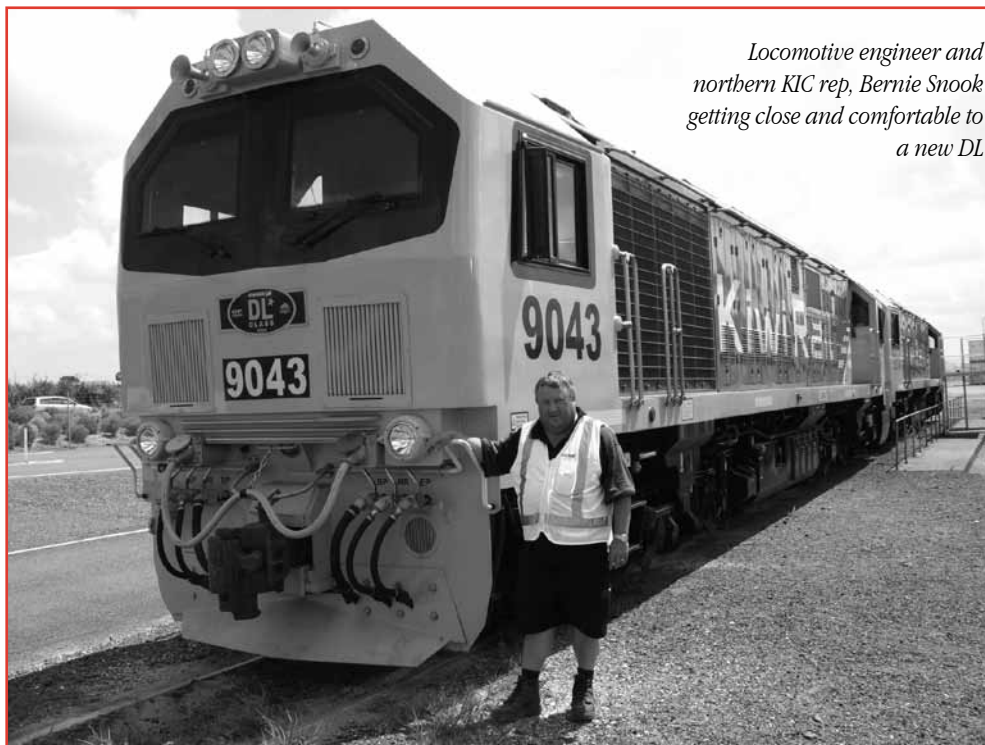
their sites, and

- That the Union, signalling that rehabilitation may be only available for one, post-incident test and only for those directly involved.

KR will discuss the merits of rehabilitation, understanding that it may not always be appropriate. An outstanding issue from KR, which has been described as customer needs, continues to be worked on by the combined RMTU/KR D&A working party. KR believe that to satisfy 'customer needs' on customer sites, that KR workers need to accept that they would have to come under the customers' D&A policies and testing regimes. The RMTU working party reps disagree, saying there is no employ-

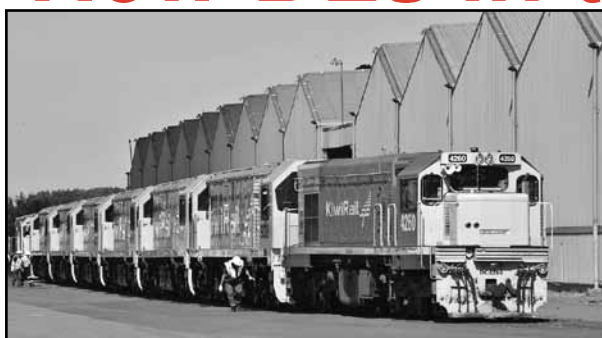
ment relationship between the customer and the KR worker and that KR policy has been delivering the desired results. Since late 2010, this working party was to visit one of the major KR customers – Solid Energy (and the relevant union delegates from EPMU) – but due to the Pike River tragedy and the Christchurch earthquakes, this meeting has been deferred twice.

Ports – including Nelson and Centre Port – are proposing random testing. CPL have deferred introducing it until after the MUNZ executive conference in May. D&A policies will also be on the agenda for the RMTU's next Ports Forum in May 2011.



Locomotive engineer and northern KIC rep, Bernie Snook getting close and comfortable to a new DL

New DLs in town



DLs being towed - not for the last time we think!



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

More value for money with insurances.

Only for current RMTU members.

Take out Life Cover with Sovereign and you will receive:

- 20% extra life cover free for two years
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Cass kids' Christmas treat

LATE last year the Christchurch-based voluntary organisation of Kiwirail employees, the Linwood Loco Social Club, took to the rails for its annual children's picnic. Around 80 - 90 children attended the event along with their parents and friends, on a train trip to Cass where all the children received a present from Santa and enjoyed the usual range of activities including horse rides, races, lolly scrambles and more. The highlight for many was the train trip itself and the club is very grateful to Kiwirail for its support.

The weather at Cass was more akin to the equator than the North Pole which was great for everyone except perhaps Santa.

The Club has been in existence for



(l to r) Colin Sweeney, LE; S Claus, children's liaison manager and Brian Armstrong, train manager. A future LE below.

some 40 years and is open to all. It provides a

social interface for rail employees from all divisions and levels and their families and is of particular benefit to those working 24/7 whose social and family lives can be compromised by inhospitable work hours.



\$1,500 AD&D

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

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



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Jack Hingaia's Christmas

Transport Worker: What did you do on Xmas Day?

Jack Hingaia: My wife and I went up to Auckland, and helped out at the Auckland City Mission as volunteers to help with the Christmas day lunch.

TW: How long have you been helping out on Christmas day?

JH: I have been helping since the 1990s and Peggy, my wife, for the last four years.



TW: What happens on the day.

JH: We arrive at 7am and help set up the tables and chairs, as there are usually about 3,500 people of all different nationalities who will attend – and any other jobs that need to be done. We usually finish after cleaning up at about 5pm.

TW: What else do the volunteers do?


JH: Some cook, some wait at the tables which are set out in pods of 30 covers each, some are elves and help Santa by getting everyone's name and age so that Santa can give everyone an appropriate present and some put up balloons and streamers and decorate the Christmas tree.

TW: How do you feel at the end of the day?

JH: Tired but satisfied that in our own small way we have helped out a lot of people who would not have had a good Christmas.

TW: What do you want to say to your fellow union members?

JH: It is very satisfying to help those less fortunate than me on such a special day, and if any of you wish to help, there are local groups near you who do the same in your area on Christmas day, and who could do with a hand.

Think about it. 

Training centres up and running

No time is wasted at the newly-built Mae Sot skills training centre. As soon as the first building was completed local organiser Min Lwin moved in the sewing machines and began training.

Just before Christmas UnionAID received the exciting news that funding for the occupational training centre has been granted under the government's new Sustainable Development Fund enabling us to proceed with phase 2 of the project in March.



Young Burmese migrants already picking up useful skill thanks to NZ donors.

provide food and accommodation for the staff and 350 trainees for a full year.

These trainees are mainly young Burmese migrant women who will learn industrial knitting and sewing and will move on to work in the hundreds of clothing factories along the Thai-Burma border taking advantage of their cheap labour.

While many of these factories are sweatshops, the FTUB see this employment as a far better option than being forced into prostitution in Bangkok or trafficked off to other Asian cities.

UnionAID's 2011 priorities

- The FTUB Mae Sot Project - as described above.
- The Tamil Nadu Labour Union Project.
- A Pacific Project focussed on skills development and with possibly a health/education component.
- Burma Young Community Leaders Project and the third intake of six students due in New Zealand in June 2011.



Become a Kiwi Solidarity member

Your regular donations mean that UnionAid can guarantee funding to its projects. A small amount each month makes a real difference to people's lives. Sign up for monthly donations now.

UnionAID

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email: unionaid@nzctu.org.nz

Your union charity spending your dollars wisely

RMTU's new KiwiSaver Scheme

ALL RMTU members can now join.

RAIL workers and their families 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 has a KiwiSaver scheme the NZ Harbours KiwiSaver Scheme which is sponsored by the Rail & Maritime Transport Union. Until recently the Kiwi Saver Scheme was only open to employees of Port Companies. After taking legal advice and amending the Prospectus, the Trustees of the Plan have opened the membership of the KiwiSaver Scheme to "employees and associated persons of employers associated with the Rail & Maritime Transport Union" being the sponsor of the Plan.

The Scheme is administered by Melville Jessup Weaver (MJW) who also pro-

vides the Trustees with investment advice. The member and employer contributions are invested between three Fund Managers:-

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

Top-rated scheme

At the last Trustees' meeting which was held at the beginning of February, the Trustees received advice from Melville Jessup Weaver that the KiwiSaver Scheme had a positive before tax return over the December quarter of 2.5% and had outperformed all Balanced KiwiSaver funds in the MJW survey over a one year period by more than 3% and over a three year period by more than 1% each year.

One of the key advantages of opening up membership of the KiwiSaver scheme to employers associated with the Union means that the NZ Harbours KiwiSaver Scheme can now offer its products to employees and families of those employers and not just to port workers.

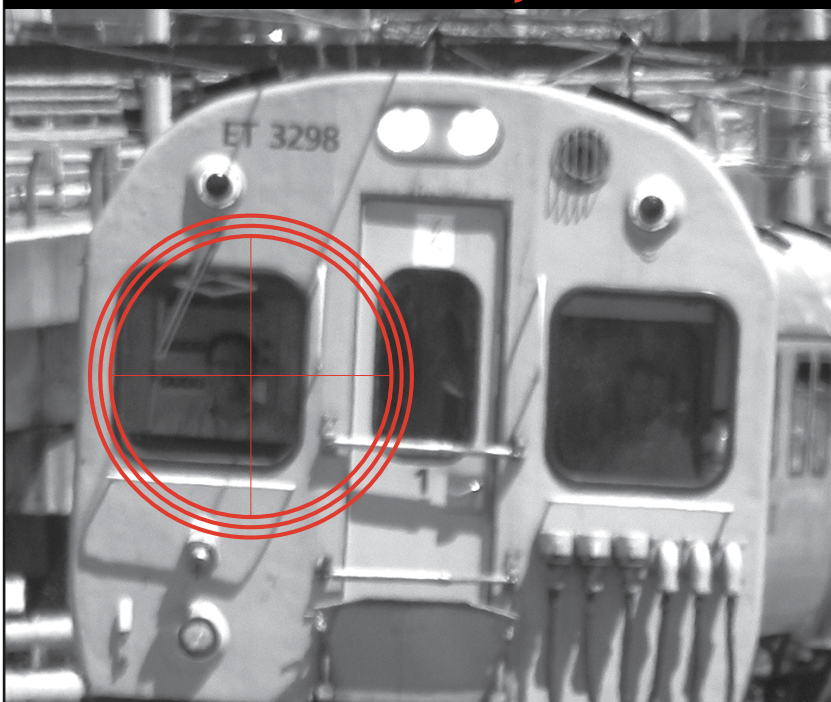
The NZ Harbours KiwiSaver Scheme operates in similar fashion to all others; you get the most out of it if you and your employer make regular contributions at a minimum rate of 2% of your taxable earnings. You can download a copy of the investment statement and application form for the KiwiSaver Scheme from the Plan's website at:

www.harbourssuper.org.nz



New Zealand Harbours Superannuation Plan

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

Disability support workers finally recognised

DISABILITY support workers throughout the country are welcoming a Court of Appeal judgment that requires they be paid the minimum wage for providing 24-hour support for people with disabilities and in community mental health facilities

The Court of Appeal has ruled that disability support workers are working when doing overnight sleepover shifts and should be paid the adult minimum wage for every hour of the shift.

The legal action was launched by the Service and Food Workers Union (SFWU) and the Public Service Association (PSA) in 2007. These unions have thousands of members working sleepover shifts providing 24-hour support for adults with disabilities and in community mental health facilities.

"This is an important issue of justice for members of both unions," says PSA National Secretary Richard Wagstaff. "Now this judgment is out, it is time for the Government

to fund the sector so that providers can comply with their legal obligations to pay the minimum wage,"

A great day

"This is a great day for disability support workers throughout the country," says John Ryall National Secretary SFWU. "Disability support work is complex and comes with serious responsibility. Up until now disability support workers pay rates have been linked to the chronically low levels of government funding for the sector not the level of skill and responsibility of the work."

The case before the Court of Appeal involves disability support worker Phil Dickson who is a member of the SFWU.

Mr Dickson works at a residential house in Horowhenua that is home to four men with intellectual disabilities who need 24-hour support. He works 9 hour overnight sleepover shifts for which he is paid an allowance of \$34. This amounts to \$3.77 an

hour, a third of the adult minimum wage of \$12.75 an hour set by the government.

Like others in the sector Mr Dickson is allowed to sleep during overnight sleepover shifts but workers are responsible for the health and safety of residents and need to deal with incidents as they arise.

"I need to be readily available to attend to any incidents and support residents during these shifts," says Mr Dickson.

PSA member and disability support worker Vincent Harding agrees.

"I'm paid less than \$5 an hour when I work sleepover shifts. You can't get a babysitter for that price, yet I'm responsible for five men with intellectual disabilities and behavioural issues during sleepover shifts. If you're going to legislate on a minimum wage that has to be applied. So it's the Government's responsibility to fund my employers adequately so they can pay me a legal wage." 🇳🇿

Early childhood cuts won't heal

HUNDREDS of people at early childhood centres around the country donned green t-shirts on February 1 to protest against the government's cuts to early childhood education. The Day of Action was organised by NZEI Te Riu Roa which represents early childhood teachers, and was used to launch a community petition against the funding cuts.

The cuts were announced in last year's Budget and take \$295 million dollars out of early childhood education over the next few years. The changes affect 93,000 children in 2,000 kindergartens and early childhood centres around the country - just over half the number of children enrolled nationwide.

The impact on families and centres is just starting to be realised and there will be longer-term effects to follow.



An NZEI survey of 26 community-based early childhood centres in Christchurch found that the average funding being lost was \$43,000.

The result is that families are paying the cost as centres are forced to put up their fees.

A recent survey by the Labour Party found that 89% of the services losing funding will have to increase their charges, with

the fee hikes ranging anywhere from \$2-\$80 per child a week.

"This is going to put huge pressure on already stretched family budgets," says NZEI National Executive member Hayley Whitaker. "Many parents now have to weigh up whether they can afford to continue working or whether they can keep their children enrolled."

NZEI's petition calls for the funding cuts to be reversed and for the government to commit to a plan to invest 1% of GDP on early childhood education as recommended by UNICEF.

NZEI is urging parents, grandparents and people in all communities to get behind the petition and send a strong message to the government that our youngest children are worth more. 🇳🇿

■ You can download copies of the petition at www.nzei.org.nz

BAY OF PLENTY PORT BRANCH



Weina Thompson, casual stevadore



Robin Bamford, casual stevadore



(below) Trent Kingi, crosshire from NZL, and Dion Wharemate casual stevadore



(l) Casual stevadores Aaron McVeigh and Danny Willis



BRANCH NOTES BRIEFS

Waikato Rail

The branch has had a quiet start to 2011. The main issues of contention are the Tait radios and the lack of resolution for the Union members who attended the Day of Action last year.

Bay of Plenty Rail

The branch is organising the staff train trip to Auckland on March 26. Should be a good day out.

Bay of Plenty Port

The Mount Cossi Club, the Orica and the Champion collective agreements have all

been settled.

A delegation from the RMTU and MUNZ met with C3 to discuss their plan to introduce random testing in the workplace. Both unions are strongly opposed to the introduction as C3 currently has a very robust D&A programme.

There have been strong rumours circulating around the cranes at Sulphur Point regarding the training and hiring of crane drivers. However, after some discussion with Port of Tauranga management, we discovered that the rumour was indeed a rumour!

Hawkes Bay Rail

As some of you may know there have been

problems at the Napier depot with the actions of the manager. It was decided by the members to classify the manager as an H&S risk. As we have not had a response from Kiwirail it looks as though Union members will follow steps outlined in the H&S Act to minimise, isolate or eliminate the hazard.

Napier Port

Due to a shortage of crane drivers, the branch negotiated a variation to the Gottwald collective agreement to allow named relievers to operate the cranes when required.

The branch will shortly be calling for claims for the renewal of the Port of Napier collective agreement as the term expires on September 30, 2011.

HELLO from sunny Timaru. It's been a while since the last report and not a lot has changed. We are still handling large volumes of tonnage through our container terminal as well as large CT traffic at Temuka. A few weeks ago our two CT lads and our CT lady put out over 700 containers in a week. They are a great team and work well with our terminal staff and team leaders. Many thanks.

Our networks brothers have also been very busy with the problems associated with the summer months and have worked long hours with heat restrictions and de-

TIMARU BRANCH

railments.

Last weekend we had yet another derailment on No2 Rd at Temuka. Track conditions at such a crucial site should be top class not 'she'll be right'.

Talk around the smoko room has been mainly about the upcoming elections in November and the possible results. Also the Rugby World Cup and the Halberg Awards splitting rugby and football apart. Our branch has been very stable with no increase in numbers and members are as

happy as can be given the current financial climate. They are waiting for a positive wage result mid year after being hammered by the current business climate and costs hitting new highs.

The yard guys have been very busy working long hours to enable staff to take annual and sick leave. It takes team work to cover this time and thanks go to all staff for the solid effort.

Don't forget 'let's be safe out there'.



Maritime security officer Steve Snow standing by the port security van when it was 'straight'.

PORT LYTTELTON BRANCH

Port Lyttelton branch has initiated for the renewal of their collective agreement.



Cruise ships in port

WELL here we go full steam ahead into another year and once again not quite sure what it will bring us. With a number of things on the horizon leading to uncertainty including a national election and the TAP (Turn Around Plan) implementation to the fore.

In our area we had a number of projects planned for the Christmas break which is unusual at this time of year. With them came a number of minor issues with staffing levels, planning, materials etc. What it also highlighted was the need for staff to be aware of what they are entitled to before agreeing to work during holiday periods. As we saw this year, due to the statutory days being on a Saturday and Sunday, there was the possibility of working for normal rate on some of these days, or only being paid rate and a half if called out on Christmas day. If you aren't sure what you're entitled to, ask your local delegate before agreeing to work. It's hard to do anything about it once you have agreed.

Another major issue this year with the implementation of the TAP is with contractors. I know this is a hot topic around a number of the depots and yards at the moment and it is something the RMTU and the Company are working through, but

CANTERBURY RAIL BRANCH

staff also need to be aware that they can influence what happens with contractors. What we all need to be aware of is that contractors are waiting for any opportunity to get into our industry. They know there's money to be spent and they want as much of it as they can get. What we need to do is just get out there and do our jobs and do them well. Show them WE are the BEST and ONLY OPTION when it comes to doing rail work. We can't afford to be starting late, finishing early or just cruising through the day. All this does is make it look more attractive to management to give the work to contractors. We all need to stand up and fight for our jobs. We also need to be out there reporting any issues, incidents, rule breaches and poor workmanship from any contractors working in our corridor so that management see they aren't up to doing our work to the standards we require. The more we do this the better it will be for us all.

We have recently had one of our RCOs dismissed after being involved in an accident. He was found to have been in breach of a couple of operating rules. The branch believed this was totally unjustified and

completely out of order. This was a major incident but given the worker's length of service (34 years) and unblemished record – plus other factors that should have been taken into consideration – we believe there were a number of ways this could have, and should have, been dealt with. Taking away a man's livelihood, in our opinion, was not a fair and just solution. It was heartening to see all of his work mates band together to support him and this will be ongoing until this situation is sorted.

It shows again how we have to be extremely careful performing our daily duties. We know management are happy to ignore people working outside the rules and guidelines when it suits them. If it goes wrong they will very quickly forget about that and as we have seen they will use the book to punish you.

In finishing, I think it is important that we all think about this situation and consider whether it is worth losing your job just so you can get it done quicker or whether we are better to work by the book and ensure we aren't putting ourselves in precarious situations if something goes wrong.

PORT TARANAKI BRANCH

TARANAKI PORT workers had two words on their lips recently and they weren't "more money" but rather "water" and "spout" as several ominous 'water spouts' were spotted off the coast and heading towards them.

Port Taranaki security guard Robin Maindonald told the Taranaki Daily News that he'd seen so many at once as he snapped a series of photos including the two here.

Taranaki Weather Service spokesman told the paper they were funnel clouds and not tornadoes. "It's a whirlwind extending from the surface of the sea to the clouds," he said.



OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

THIS is the Year of the Rabbit. Very timely seeing that the company has seen fit to award another round of contracts to the Chinese assuring them of prosperity but which would have provided guaranteed work for our local workshops and confidence into the future.

This scribe remembers a glossy advert distributed some years ago featuring the new DL class locomotive, that was designed and to be built at Hillside workshops. Nothing came of that, now we have the Chinese prospering and the members at Hillside not at peace. Yes, the government has put some money into the company, but to use John Key's words: 'Which international pixie actually provided the finance and what strings were attached? We may never know.

As to the prosperity bit, we are about to enter the pay parity exercise where the remuneration paid for our jobs is compared with the outside sector. It will be interesting to see the result. Will we lose highly skilled trades to the outside world as a result? Some trades, such as electricians, are highly sought after and pay up to \$15 an hour over our top rates as base rate. This scribe has just heard of a heavy diesel apprentice starting for a mining company in Otago at \$27/hour.

We live and die by the clock. That is, the time taken to deliver clients' freight, on time, every time. This is the current company mantra and is apparent by the

number of promotional clocks (Chinese of course) which have appeared around the offices. Shortages are appearing in key areas such as drivers. A recent address to management by one of our major clients, revealed that he was astounded that his freight, due to be delivered the following morning from despatch in the deep south, got as far as Timaru where it ground to a halt for 8 hours due to lack of drivers. Yes, there was sickness and the local roster was reduced by two. It highlights the problem of shortages. There has been much ado in print about the success of a recent driver's school and another intake announced, as well as the controversy in the press recently with the company wanting to employ more £10 Poms.

When we were New Zealand Government Railways (40 years ago) there was an annual draft of school leavers taken on. These were in all sections including works, mechanical, loco, admin etc. These days we have reduced operations and in some cases got rid of entire sections. But – and it is a big but (not a Butson) – there have been no plans put in place for succession and no pool of talent to call upon. Look at the anniversary list of the company magazine. How many 30 and 40 year anniversaries do you see? They are getting larger. We are an ageing workforce and in the key area of loco drivers the policy of not double manning

and reduced recruitment are starting to hit home. Knee-jerk reactions to training and recruitment are not wanted as currently being practised.

Now that we are all Kiwirail, there still appears to be a them and us. There is still competition between groups. Even the mundane effort of trying to find information is awkward. We have computers, but they can't think for you. Kiwirail operations are reasonably covered, but try finding stuff from Ontrack and it has either disappeared, been relocated or assimilated into someone else's system (and bears no resemblance to what it should). Not only that but if we have a major incident (like a collapsed over-bridge) will we have a three-ring circus or a professional approach?

In Kiwirail Network a new initiative in safety has been introduced under the Talk-safe banner, a seemingly innocent form. But it is construed by some as 'dob-a-mate'. As this scribe is a member of the local health and safety committee, I can reiterate that it is no such thing. Once the stats are collected the forms will be destroyed. No names are recorded. From the forms returned so far it is pleasing to see that members are now looking at all aspects of their work.

Finally, it is a little disconcerting when you see a large delegation of what you take for managers, visiting or inspecting your area; and not taking the time to introduce themselves to the staff. A little respect may buy some esteem and even co-operation.