

MARCH 2016

THE *Transport Worker*

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

**Early
morning rail
replacement**



TPPA
protests
throughout
the country



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: 2:30AM rail replacement in Upper Hutt. Photograph taken by Wellington LE, Brent Bevan. [inset] Auckland RMTU organiser Stu Johnstone joins the Queen Street march. See pages 14 & 15.

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Wayne Butson
General secretary
RMTU

Prepare for 2016!

WELCOME to the first issue of your Union magazine for 2016. I know you will find it, as always, a great read.

ANZAC day this year will be auspicious as it will commemorate 100 years since the erection of the ANZAC memorial flagpoles at Petone New Zealand and Hornsby NSW in 1916. The Petone pole was made of Australian hardwood and New Zealand Kauri to symbolise unity. The Australian flag is held at the Waiouru Army Museum. The whereabouts of the New Zealand flag is unknown. The Hornsby flagpole was demolished in 1959. I have been a member of the organising committee which has been working hard to put together a ceremony for this year's event which respects and befits the occasion. The RTBU, our rail sister union in Australia, has been kept informed and we are assured will be represented at the event in Petone. In 1925 the Minister of Railways, Gordon Coates, agreed to a proposal to name a steam locomotive 'in memory of those members of the New Zealand Railways who fell in the Great War'. The locomotive selected to carry the name was AB 608, built at Christchurch's Addington Railway Workshops in 1915 and now owned and operated by Steam Inc based at Paekakariki. I urge all members and their whanau to attend this year's Petone event and to show solidarity and honour toward our fallen rail brothers and sisters. For those of you who wish to read about the history of rail workers during WW2 then read Brendon Judd's excellent book *The Desert Railway*.

July 1 this year will see more than 400 of our members transfer from KiwiRail to Transdev Wellington all maintaining their terms and conditions of employment in reflection of the National-led Government's policy of introducing cost competition into the operation of all forms of public transport in all cities. This competition model sees the contracts go to the cheapest bidder for the operation of buses or trains. This means the company with the lowest operating costs (code speak for lowest wages as labour is invariably the largest part of company costs) wins the tender. We have knowledge and experience with Transdev Auckland but the managers appointed to run Wellington have been very quick to point out that each operation is a separate entity and there are no linkages with Auckland. We note however that the Auckland managing director is a board member of the Wellington operation. As always the terms and conditions of our Wellington members will be dependent upon their unity and solidarity. A group of RMTU delegates are currently in talks with Transdev Wellington to finalise the "same or more favourable" transfer package. Talks are robust and, to date, cordial.

We are locked in litigation with KiwiRail on the China workers' issue and intensive discussions around the ongoing life of the Class 30 NIMT electric locos. We are also

discussing the reliability of the Chinese DI locos and preliminary talks at a high level about the renewal of the MECA. We have some meaty legal issues to discuss with Port Chalmers and Tauranga. Port Chalmers appears to be ruthlessly targeting two of our key women delegates and we are solidly in support of their continued employment. Another major piece of work with KiwiRail is the Just Fair Culture (JFC) (see page 6) and the Hutt Workshops review. JFC workshops will be rolling out across the country during March and may herald an improved way of addressing employment issues by taking out the emotion or outcome revenge elements from investigations and disciplinarys. As most of you will know Hutt Workshops



has earthquake, asbestos, footprint and age of infrastructure challenges and KiwiRail and the RMTU have agreed to use high performance high engagement (HPHE) methodology as a

pilot study for its possible spread across all relationship matters between the Union, its members and KiwiRail. Already it is a huge time investment for both sides and we hope that the project will result in benefits to match.

There is no way that I could write a column at this time without recognising that at the same time as this magazine is printed and distributed all of us will be getting voting papers in our letterbox to enable us to choose a new flag or retain the existing. What a bloody waste of money, I say. How the hell can this be a good use of taxpayer funds when every day we hear via the news media of a lack of funding for other very worthy things (the Keytruda debate). I am no royalist or republic opponent but I will be voting to retain the status quo as we don't need a corporate logo as a country flag.

This year is going to be an action packed challenging year for us all, no matter where we are, what we are doing or where we are working. It is gratifying to know that by being members of a strong, democratic and well-resourced union you can be assured that with your continued unity and strong support the RMTU will be a powerful force in your workplace.

Kia kaha brothers and sisters. 🌐



Doug Blakie, RO Timaru, caught taking a power nap recently.

Valuable LE training being wasted

Dear Editor,

LEs take note – DAS is destroying us!

By now the DAS locomotive fuel saving system is in full swing throughout the company. For the pathetic sum of \$1400, the skills of locomotive engineering have been sold and are starting its demise.

From the time the flanged wheel was invented to run on rails and when it first ran over steel rails here in New Zealand over a century and a half ago, locomotive driving was a position for individuals who chose to aspire for perfection. Those early years being harsh for the loco man saw many struggles and over the past century and a half, the locomotive engineer of today benefits from those harsh times and struggles, the skills and techniques have been built on and passed down generation by generation to the new LE.

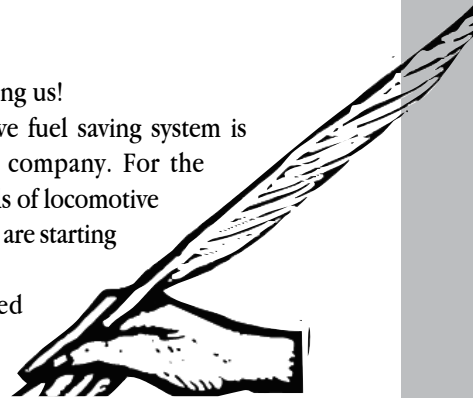
Locomotive engineering is no ordinary job, it is a profession built by experience and tradition over many decades.

It is these traditions and skills passed down that have paved the way to shorter training times with LEs adapting tools and skills to suit the demands of the employer and the job. These skills are being attacked constantly by systems. Outsiders (or non-locomotive people) simply think we are lever movers and haven't the slightest inclination as to the LE's roles and responsibilities.

Their cabs may look simple, with its four or five levers and a few buttons but the LE driving the train from A to B uses those few levers to yield finite control. That control is the fundamental basis of an LE's mindset. They do not 'just' move levers, they turn them with finite control into tools that give them infinite control with little exceptions. This is the difference between skill and system, after all it is the locomotive driver's hand on the brake valve that stops trains and not just a red light displayed on a signal.

DAS or the Driver Advisory System is a blatant attack on LE skills and traditions. It is the uneducated dictating the role and responsibilities of the LE – a professional who aspires to reach a high position in their profession. It is timely to mention that to reach that position and skill requires seizing every opportunity to learn, concentrating time, thought, energy and determination to gain a thorough insight into everything connected with the engine and train handling. Thus mastering and understanding every principal of the skills and techniques involved.

This DAS system is the thin edge of the wedge, a system installed to simplify and standardise or "dumb down" locomotive driving and a very foolish and dangerous idea. Already we see DAS and EnergyMiser systems around the world being



taken to task for a number of reasons, to highlight a few:

- Distraction
- Fatigue
- Overriding LE decision making
- Excessive in-train force
- Skill erosion
- Poor time keeping

These are but a few of the reasons for an international backlash to DAS and DAS equivalents. In the UK, DAS has been watered down so much that it is now optional and displays very little information. Railroads in Australia are discontinuing DAS on the basis of cost and the USA have appealed to the Federal Railroad Administration for an immediate halt on using such systems for fear of the above reasons.

The idea that a computer can override and/or perform better than a human is fighting a losing battle but some are harder learning than others.

DAS has been bought into and accepted in New Zealand without a mandate from LEs. Indeed, most are disgusted that their profession is thrown away for a meagre \$1400 payoff. This has been the single biggest change to locomotive engineering since the single manning of locomotives yet it has slipped through the door with relative ease.

Experiments have been done by external "distraction experts". These experts aren't LEs, they don't work the rosters in the conditions we do. They don't possess the knowledge passed down and learnt on operating a locomotive hauled train, they have no idea of the variables of our profession, yet their recommendations were accepted and we are lumped with a system that is set to put us in harm's way and to destroy all manner of skill and tradition – the same tradition and skills that saw New Zealand

LEs highly regarded world-

wide. Of course to the outsider, they have no idea of the medium to long term impact of such decisions but then why should they? They aren't LEs.

We are constantly told that we are "still the driver" and as such can "override the system at anytime" BUT an LE who overrides the system must NOT score below 75% on final performance score. This is a score based on fuel economy and not train handling as train handling and DAS do not work together nor does DAS even have any idea of train handling. So on one hand we are told we are in control but only for 25% of our journey, for the other 75% DAS must prevail! Not only that, the uneducated wish to raise the compliance to 85%. How this "still the driver" but 75% benchmark compliance system slipped through the cracks is beyond most of us, its simply farcical and an utter disgrace!

As an LE we are taught to read every train by its performance and feel. This is a job where judgement through teaching reigns supreme to the point where the hands are moving levers without even physically recognising such movements, this is due to the immense concentration and commitment to the machine and train which requires such control to correctly operate it between locations. DAS simply removes that skill. It has no recognition of train make up, locomotive performance or train characteristics. Although you may drive two 30 wagon trains on the same day with the same tonnage and length, the characteristics of both the train and locomotive will be different. This is something that cannot be taught over a powerpoint or in a boardroom, but in the seat of a locomotive.

With the removal of skill DAS invokes, this creates the dangerous situation where LEs become operators. They lose their edge and that instinct as they are simply following the 'worm' on the screen. This becomes especially dangerous for newly certified

LEs. They will only experience three to six months of driving

without

DAS post certification and then straight into it.

They will not have had time to develop the necessary skills putting them and others at serious risk. DAS becomes a distraction

in that regardless of what any consultant says, you are transfixed to the screen, either struggling to keep up with its poor train handling performance or fearful of not scoring the required points.

Train handling is non-existent. Excessive and encouraged use of dynamic brake everywhere creates contempt for the air brake, the one constant brake at the driver's disposal. This inevitable lack of understanding and practice will only result in disaster not to mention the eroding of train handling techniques and draw gear control and care.

With DAS shoved under our nose, we find ourselves in the position where we descend hills at 30 or 40km/h with a line speed of 80. Ascend gradients constantly going between N7&8 to keep it on the line as opposed to leaving it in 8 and letting the engine find its way. It overrides the LE's fair decision making with the tools at their disposal thus turning the job into a simple operation and creating fatigue through lack of brain stimulation. Again, a very dangerous environment for the uneducated to willingly create.


All these factors combined and many more spell a horrendous departure from the required skills of locomotive driving and create a dangerous situation where any person could be trained to operate 2000 tonne plus trains. God help them if the computer shuts down and they are left to think for themselves!

Unfortunately it is the same old story, the uneducated attacking a skill and profession they know nothing about and as usual the LE will be the scapegoat. Whether it is through intimidation or fear of the LE or jealousy or simply plain misunderstanding of the role and responsibilities will be your choice to decide. One thing is for sure, the monthly newsletters with outrageously inaccurate fuel savings claims don't fool the seasoned LE and won't hide the huge mistake and impact they have made on the future of locomotive operation in New Zealand.

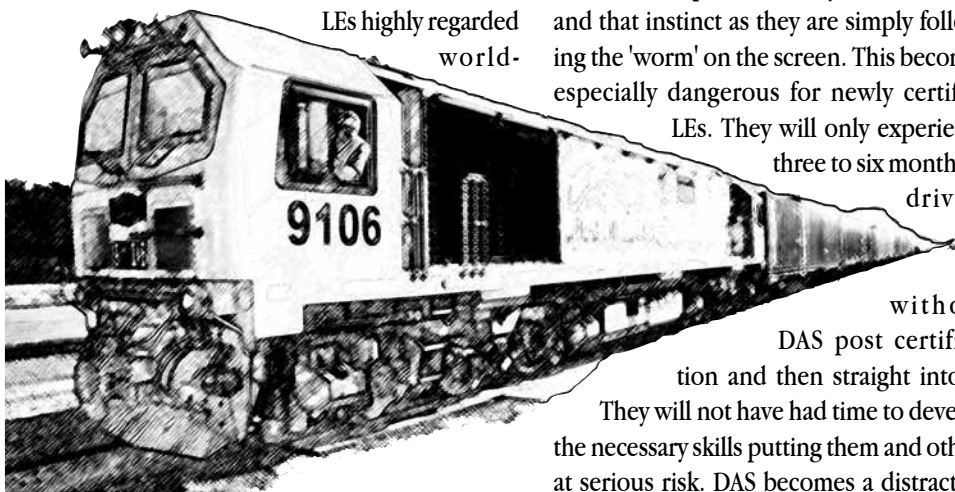
It is up to all LEs to stand up to this erosive system and continue to fight to keep alive our skills and traditions as passed down over 150 odd years.

If you don't feel safe using DAS, JUST SAY NO!

A passionate locomotive engineer.

(Name withheld) 

[letters continue on page 7]




New health and safety rep training to meet new Act

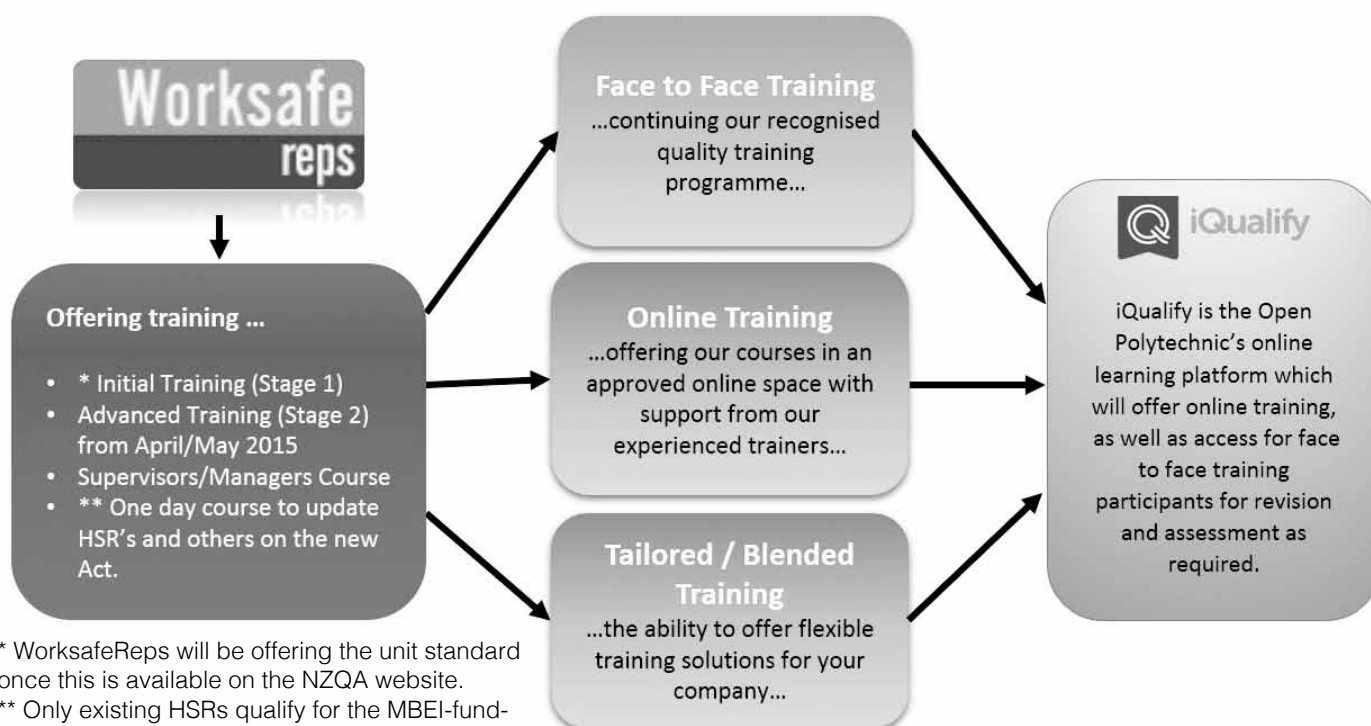
ON April 4 the Health and Safety At Work Act comes into effect. Health and safety representatives (HSR) will have additional functions and powers under the new legislation such as the right to stop people from doing unsafe

work and the ability to issue a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN).

New training has been developed by the CTU's Worksafe reps programme to equip HSRs with the skills required to carry out their new functions.

Existing and new HSRs are encouraged to sign up for the two-day initial training course to become accredited HSRs under the new health and safety framework. 

The framework is set out below.



* WorksafeReps will be offering the unit standard once this is available on the NZQA website.

** Only existing HSRs qualify for the MBEI-funded 'transition training'. From March 2016 all our courses will offer the required unit standard.

New breathing protection for rail tunnel workers

More than two years ago during November 2013, seven KiwiRail track workers were exposed to carbon monoxide gas whilst carrying out a rail recovery task in the Otira tunnel.

The incident drew the attention of Worksafe NZ who issued KiwiRail with three prohibition notices and 11 improvement notices.

KiwiRail was also charged under the Health and Safety Act for failing to ensure its employees were safe and not harmed while working in the tunnel.

One of the notices required workers to be given an emergency oxygen supply whilst working in the tunnel.

Workers currently use a Dragar mask and filter system for breathing protection.

The mask and filter provides the user with up to 20 minutes filtered air before the person must hold their breath whilst replacing the cartridge.


Following the November incident it became clear that the mask and filter was

not appropriate in an oxygen depleted and toxic environment.

The stress of changing over cartridges in an emergency situation was seen as impractical if not impossible.

Following a loco fire in the Otira tunnel last year, loco engineers operating in the tunnel were so concerned they demanded to be issued with emergency self contained self rescuers.

Members on the southern tunnels reference group have lobbied hard for the introduction of compressed air breathing apparatus (CABA) to be available.

In February the KRL executive agreed to a proposal to purchase new respiratory protection including CABA and self-contained self rescuers (commonly known as oxy-boxes) for people working in tunnels longer than 200 metres. A joint RMTU/KRL working group will work through the risk assessment process and report back to the regional tunnel groups and the KRL executive. 


Just Fair Culture training



RMTU delegates (l to r) Simon Hughes and Vaughan O'Shannessey.

THE joint RMTU/KiwiRail Just Fair Culture (JFC) programme has been rolled out across the country starting with six pilot workshops in the main centres.

The training was delivered to KiwiRail managers, union delegates and health and safety reps. The purpose of the programme is to improve the way safety incidents are responded to. Just Fair Culture is used in aviation, petrochemical and health care industries and is based on the notion that unsafe systems lead to unsafe behaviours. The goal is to identify and address unsafe systems first and respond to unsafe behaviours in a way that is fair and consistent.

The course is jointly facilitated by RMTU and KRL and includes exercises in natural justice, incident investigation and applying the just culture tool to rail case studies. 



ARE YOU A MEMBER?

NZ Harbours Superannuation Scheme



The NZ Harbours Superannuation Scheme is open to all port workers.



The Scheme has an external administrator and contributions are invested with five fund managers.

Download a copy of an Investment Statement and Application Form at:

www.harbourssuper.org.nz



Support for AFCO workers

LATE last year Port Napier RMTU members collected a range of Christmas essentials, including food and toys, for striking Wairoa meat workers and their families.

"Thanks to all our members and their donations we were able to send two large boxes of food stuff and a larger box of toys plus a cheque for \$300 from our local coffers," said branch secretary Dave Marden. "Our effort was greatly appreciated."

He added that the "KiwiRail boys took care of the postage".

The Meat Workers Union says it will survive the prolonged dispute with Affco New Zealand, which has resisted renewing an expired collective contract, despite



A few of the Napier Port RMTU members with some of the goodies bound for the meat workers in Wairoa.

legal costs and the inroads the company has made in signing workers to individual contracts.

They say this is a battle between a powerful family and company on one side and workers who are individually weak and without bargaining power.

Although workers have returned to work at Affco's Rangiora, Imlay and Manawatu sites, 250 union members at the Wairoa plant have refused to sign new contracts as a precondition of returning to work claiming its members have been disadvantaged in the past four years by Affco offering higher wages and conditions to those on individual contracts.

Affco says most of its workers are now on individual contracts.

RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson says it's "another case of union bashing implicitly sanctioned by the National led government and I for one am proud of the support our members have given the Wairoa workers".

Capital's rail privatised

RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson assured Wellington's Tranz Metro rail workers that "their jobs are secure, and their terms and conditions are secure" following the Greater Wellington Regional Council's announcement last year to privatise the system. Transdev Australasia was awarded a 15-year contract to operate commuter rail services in Wellington in partnership with South Korea's Hyundai Rotem beginning in July

2016. The passenger service covers the lower North Island, including the heavily-used Kapiti, Hutt Valley, Johnsonville and Wairarapa lines. The current operator of Wellington's passenger rail is Tranz Metro, a subsidiary of state-owned KiwiRail. Butson strongly criticised the council's action, saying "private rail operators often provide poorer service at a greater cost" by milking governments for subsidies. He said "privatisation just isn't needed. Wellington

metro rail services have been delivered by the national rail operator for more than 80 years". He added that rail would "be the poorer for the loss of work and our members are deeply saddened at the prospect of leaving the KiwiRail family". Transdev presently operates commuter rail services in New Zealand's largest city Auckland, as well as rail and bus services in 20 different countries.

- Labour News

LETTERS [CONT]

Dear Editor,
Tena koutou katoa,
Well by now many of you will probably have heard I will be leaving this fine company after 31 years, 21 days and eight hours or 11,343 days from Friday February 19 at 1600hrs.

It is with regret that I'm going to be leaving KiwiRail, the rail industry and the Union and will really miss working with some really dedicated and awesome people. However, I am also very keen, thankful and looking forward to what lies ahead for my wife and I into the future.

As I'm taking a break for a few months I

will be in touch when I return to continue as a full time RMTU member, otherwise would like to be an honorary member in the meantime.

With both my wife, Mary, and I working at rail for so long in Wellington Railway Station – from 1985 – then moving to Takapuna in 2001, SAP House in 2007 and on to Stanley Street in 2011, we have met some fantastic people, made heaps of friends, had lots of fun on and off the job. In my eyes, and above all, it is the people who make up this awesome company and Union that I will miss the most.

I have really enjoyed my job at rail over

the years from starting as a bright eyed but scared NZR telecommunications trainee technician to leaving as a senior ICT technical engineer. Throughout, the customer has always been my upper most focus and I have always endeavoured to provide them with the best support and outcome I could, sometimes to the annoyance of colleagues.

If I summed up my time it would be: 'He tangata, he tangata, he tangata' or 'It is the people, it is the people, it is the people'.

Nga mihi,
Darin Campbell
Auckland.

NZTA road bias opposed

ALLOWING heavier trucks to use our roads simply leads to a vicious cycle of relaxed restrictions on mass and size, is the conclusion arrived at in the RMTU's submission to the Government's discussion document on legislation to increase truck sizes.

The submission contends that every time authorities relax the mass and size restrictions on road vehicles it puts pressure on the road infrastructure, forcing a diversion of increased public resources into roading which opens the way for yet another round of relaxation of restrictions. It claims these relaxed restrictions are continually justified by the claim that the roading system is under-utilised and should be pushed to full capacity.

In the meantime rail and shipping, with considerable spare capacity, are deliberately run down and allowed to deteriorate.

If resources are put into rail infrastructure it can potentially break the cycle of ramping up pressure on the roads by enabling a larger share of freight to move at lower social cost, said the report.

Rather than focus on improved roading Government should be focussed on the social cost of doing so. With 137 million additional tonnes of freight to be moved annually by 2042, the first question to be addressed is how to do this efficiently across the three modes: road, rail AND shipping. The real danger, it says, is allowing the strident roading lobby to succeed to the detriment of competing modes. What's good for the road transport industry is not necessarily good for New Zealand.

"The RMTU is utterly opposed to NZTA's bias towards roading," says RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson. "It almost as if the NZTA is acting as a lobbyist to its own organisation and ignoring alternative transport. It also reinforces the need for rail to have a reliable finance stream from the Land Transport Fund.

He adds that the RMTU is concerned that KiwiRail is so strapped for cash that some lines are in a state of 'managed decline' at a time when the road transport lobby is demanding more and bigger trucks on our roads.

"Today we heard that a number of lines



High and wide - Indian trucks reign free on their roads....

To cope with new truck heights they are apparently putting the onus on modifying overbridges squarely on the bridge owners – in our case, KiwiRail

like the Stillwater-Ngakawau, the Napier line and the Northland line are only being maintained to a standard that KiwiRail acknowledges will result in deterioration," he said.

The submission outlines some of the effects New Zealanders might notice if trucks are allowed to be larger and rail and shipping virtually ignored.

■ If the present road share of total freight remains unchanged, 125 million tonnes of the expected increase in freight will be carried by road. This would have severe negative effects on road safety and on road conditions – especially in terms of accidents, congestion, damage to the infrastructure, carbon emissions and pollutants, and noise.

■ Heavy vehicles cause radically greater damage in crashes than other road vehicles and account for 6-7% of vehicle-kilometres travelled on New Zealand roads, but for nearly 20% of road deaths.

■ Carbon emissions per tonne-kilometre are twice or more the figure for rail.

"The Ministry's discussion document appears to blame KiwiRail for bridges with insufficient clearance to cope with the new proposed truck heights," said Butson. "How absurd is this? There are 15-30 rail overbridge strikes per year under the existing rules so surely it must be clear that there is no scope for any increase in vehicle height? But it appears that 'all bridge owners would be notified in advance of any increase in the height limit' apparently putting the onus on modifying overbridges squarely on the bridge owners – in our case, KiwiRail. Yeah right, typical of this Government: dump part of the cost of increased truck heights onto the victims. No doubt their reasoning is that it won't show on their balance sheet."

Network in managed decline



RMTU rail network's Industrial Council members were very concerned to hear that their employer is so strapped for cash that some lines are in a state of 'managed decline' at a time when the road transport lobby is demanding more and bigger trucks on our roads.

At a meeting of the Industrial Council in late January to hear about proposed changes to the make-up of maintenance gangs the delegates were surprised to hear that a number of lines, for example Stillwater-Ngakawau, the Napier line and the Northland line are only being maintained to a standard that management acknowledged will result in deterioration.

We also heard that other lines, for example the Wellington to Auckland North Island Main Trunk Line and the Picton to Invercargill South Island Main Trunk Line

are only being cared for to a standard that will maintain their current state. Members will know that this is hardly good – our Union is of the view the national railway network should be improved.

Our beef isn't with management.

"It beggars belief that in a modern 21st century developed economy we have a railway system that is funded in a manner that loads cost on the operator whilst the trucking industry does not pay the price for the environmental damage and congestion it causes," says RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson. "KiwiRail pays for the upkeep of the rail network whilst the trucking companies certainly do not pay their fair share of the cost of maintaining our road network or for the impact of the pollution and traffic congestion they are responsible for. And that's a decision that is taken in the

Beehive, not at Wellington Railway Station."

To add insult to this injury, he adds, the National-led Government is considering allowing more and bigger trucks on New Zealand roads, according to a recent Ministry of Transport discussion document.

"A forward thinking administration would be investing in rail for the 21st century and beyond, rather than considering increasing the size and number of diesel belching dinosaurs like trucks," he said. "But then we live in a country governed by a party that minimises the impact of climate change, has no idea what to do about the economy other than stick with the broken neo-liberal model, and is prepared to sell our sovereignty for the dubious so called benefits of a trade deal – the TPPA – that an increasing number of us don't want." 🌐



FOCUS GROUP

All experienced RMTU delegates and former delegates - Southern Tunnels Focus Group:

(l to r) John Bannerman, former delegate, currently field production manager Greymouth, Ian Walker RMTU branch secretary, Canterbury Rail, Geoff Young, former delegate and currently manager train control, Mike Williams, RMTU southern rail rep, National Management Committee and Don Bates, RMTU delegate, Dunedin. 🌐

The new employment order



By Eddie Dickson, Life member.

A worker at the union meeting demands emphasis be given to keeping maintenance work in-house and that the union opposes contracting out. Later that day the same worker uses an Internet search engine to locate parts for the family car and finds them, ex Asia, for 30% less than local prices. He completes the transaction.

Today, jobs that were once protected by distance, borders or law are open to the international market – and markets love the lowest cost source. We buy our books and plan and organise our holidays online but still seek income and job protection.

A number of social experts believe the Google search engine life style will soon be the platform that many of us will have to join to get work. Just as you seek to pay the least for the car part so labour hirers will choose on your labour sale price.

The future employer could well be a labour hire agency and workers could have several agencies looking after their interests – each, meanwhile, taking a cut of your hourly rate.

In the UK, building workers with trade skills who lost their jobs now get work as self-employed contractors moving from one job to another humping their tools over their shoulder. They are nicknamed 'Lump Labour'.

In New Zealand, The Future of Work Commission, organised by the New Zealand Labour Party is grappling with possible

workplace scenarios seeking to give shape to what the future will hold. [www.future-ofwork.nz]

The global market place, reflected in free trade, will open opportunities for labour somewhere. Who or where is still yet to be determined, but if no legal constraints or standards are in place the cheapest labour with the necessary skill set will get the contract.

Those supporting global free trade have already done part of their work with the removal of labour law constraints, including the removal or erosion of union representational rights. We are told the advantage of free trade will result in a measurable increase in global gross domestic product - but who will get your share?

Another view of the free trade world market place, USA style, is explained by Naomi Klein in book and film – The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism. [<http://bit.ly/1bDAeeq>]

Doomsday

If this doomsday framework is part of any reality then the challenge for labour is to win legislation that will protect workers engaged in the free market. That is, many of you reading this and the next generation who may well become self-employed lump labour or permanent casuals with no minimum hours. There will be full time (semi) permanent employment and work for skilled employees, but the proportion of the workforce thus engaged will shrink. Another research booklet, The Technological Revolution, quotes a management company indicating that by 2020 non-permanent workers will make up nearly half of all US workers with 11% of these working for on-demand platforms. [www.progressiveeconomy.eu/]

To date there does not seem to be any specific worker protection proposals emanating from the establishment. There is some discussion on a need to focus on employment via the establishment of workplace cooperatives. Others say the 'uber'isation of the workplace will allow workers with specific skill sets to become service providers to several employers/

companies. Some see the introduction of a minimum income for all citizens offset against earnings from work or other sources as a possibility. Others propose a turnover tax on financial transactions.

An elite few have grabbed jobs as CEOs and pay themselves so much that they will have plenty tucked away for a rainy day. Land owning farmers should be gainers from these free trade opportunities as will other asset owners.

The victims of these changes in the market place will not be those who control capital or hold political influence, it will be those who cannot adapt to the next reality and/or rely on a steady income to maintain a family unit.

We have seen old work methods replaced with improved technology: Electronics replacing mechanical processes; cleaner and greener workplaces; and creative web-based initiatives. The downside to these new technologies is that the supply line and work distribution opportunities may ignore local citizens and national boundaries.

So what will be the future protections for workers?

There are plenty of people giving these challenges their attention despite the free marketeers painting them as loonies, lefties or Neanderthals. The TPPA supporters sell it as free trade for our benefit but many believe it is one more step towards international corporate control.

Labour laws of the future (which will require a Government prepared to take on the corporates) will need to encompass the casual and non-permanent nature of work. It will need the ability to utilise current technology to link minimum income protection programmes to balance casual or less than full time employment. The immediate payment of wages could be automated and recorded which would enable records to be checked as well as tax payments, holiday pay and KiwiSaver payments identified, stored and automated.

If the State moves to a system of cash transfer to support families working these 'modern' work hour/day systems then modern electronics can manage the processes.

The 90 day rule will need to go as a

Is this the most important book of 2015?

PostCapitalism: A guide to our future.

By Paul Mason.

Reviewed by John Kerr
South Island organiser.

LABOUR MP Grant Robertson recently attended a conference in Paris on the future of work and the Party is running a two day talkfest on the topic in Auckland in March. The RMTU will be there.

What has prompted their interest?

Last year British journalist Paul Mason published what many hailed as the most important book of 2015: *PostCapitalism – A guide to our future*. It is part of a growing body of work analysing the changes we are living through and the implications they may have for us, our children and our grandchildren.

Mason argues that capitalism is a complex and adaptive system that has lost its capacity to adapt because of information technology. This is a big claim: That the social and economic system we all live and work in is busted because of information technology.

He says the current form of capitalism, applied neo-liberalism, is broken. As union members we've all experienced one of the two main features of neo-liberalism – its hostility to organised labour. Starting in Japan in the late seventies and then in Thatcher's Britain and Reagan's America, there was a deliberate, and largely successful, attempt to smash the power of workers and their unions.

In New Zealand we had the Employment Contracts Act which had the effect of reducing union membership down to one



in five of the workforce.

The result is that wages in the developed world have largely stagnated since the late seventies as workers' bargaining power reduced. Now we have high employment, and low wage economies. You can't run an Uber cab company or a coffee bar franchise with strong worker rights as such enterprises depend on cheap labour.

The other outstanding feature is the enormous expansion of credit to fuel consumption. Debt, both private and public, has been used to smooth out the ever more frequent boom-bust cycle. The next crisis is only a matter of time and will probably be triggered by geo-politics in the Middle East

or Eastern Europe. Every time the response of central banks has been to print money and expand credit. When the inevitable crunch comes ordinary people pay the price. For example, the dot-com bubble saw workers' pension schemes closed and since 2008 we've seen austerity rolling back the welfare state. The Greek debacle last year was a preview of how the next expansion of credit will be paid for: by raiding our personal bank accounts.

So why doesn't the system adapt and change like it has in the past?

Mason cites the work of two economists, the American Joseph Schumpeter and the Soviet (but non-Marxist) Nikolai Kondra-

casual will be a casual forever unless the law determines that all registered workers are permanent workers with permanent worker rights irrespective of the number of different employers or wage payers involved.

The law will need to address workers'

rights to ACC if there are several actual employers involved. If you are working via a labour hire company, who will be responsible for ACC, holiday pay, or sick leave? If you are on the books for someone who hires you out for their benefit, should they also

be deemed in law as your employer?

Those who represent workers will need to address these and the many other issues which will arise with the change in work. The old thinking will not fit the future reality. Keep up with the debate. 🌐

◀ tieff, who identified capitalism's 50 year 'long waves' – four of which have occurred in the past 200 or so years. These waves are characterised by technological innovation triggering growth and expansion, followed by stagnation, then a slump before new technologies spark the next upswing.

Our members work in industries created by the technology of the second wave – railways and steamships.

In Mason's view it was workers' resistance to technological innovations that started each wave. The default response of the bosses to a downturn is to cut wages and attack terms and conditions. When workers, through being organised, successfully resisted this, capitalists were forced to innovate and invest in new technologies.

But this time because organised labour has been largely smashed under neo-liberal capitalism there is little resistance to the bosses inclined to go down the low road of low wages, long hours and precarious work.

One view of our children's future is bleak indeed: stagnant growth and state-level bankruptcy; austerity until death but with an upgraded iPhone every few years. The asset-rich few live off their wealth while the poor stagnate as recurring debt crises and climate change makes life more and more miserable.

Mason however, is a glass half-full kind of guy.

His says information technology offers a way out of this bleak future saying that more and more of what we consume can be produced for nothing and this fact alone is destroying the price mechanism which capitalism depends upon and will usher in new ways of producing and a new economy based on collaboration and sharing rather than scarcity.

It's a big claim and one that's hard to swallow but does contain some interesting ideas.

One is that many goods are now purely "information goods" and can be reproduced by simply pressing keys on our keyboard. For example, there is no physical reason why everyone on the planet cannot own every iTunes song in existence. The 1963 Beatles hit Love Me Do sits on a server in California, we can all own it and play it simultaneously, which wasn't the case even with mass production of vinyl records. In other words, these information goods are 'non-rival', unlike a pint of beer or a ciga-

rette. With information goods there is no such scarcity, and mainstream economics depends on scarcity. The only thing that determines the price of an iTunes song is a construct called 'intellectual property' and the lawyers who will sue you if you 'steal it'. No wonder the TPPA is so big on this and Kim Dot Com is on the FBI's most wanted list.

Information galore

More and more goods are information goods. There is huge amounts of information technology in the engineering and production of material goods. The components of a jet engine are tested 'virtually' on a computer screen hundreds of millions of times before they are produced. The same applies to trains and vacuum cleaners.

The cost of doing this is falling to near zero and goods are produced for nothing can be shared free of cost. This is a phenomenon that is just beginning. Before it went bust Encyclopaedia Britannica had 14,000 authors, most of them dead. Wikipedia employs 208 people, has 26 million registered to contribute and edit, is free and makes no money. The fact it's free and makes no money means no one else in that space can either.

Wikipedia, Linux and Apache are all examples of the type of free, collaboratively-produced goods that we, and our economy, is increasingly dependent on.

The advent of 3-D printing will mean more and more physical goods will become cheaper and more abundant.

Allied to this is the possibility that more and more jobs can be automated. A 2013 study by the Oxford Martin School concluded that 47% of all jobs in the US were susceptible to automation right then. Administration and sales were deemed the most vulnerable followed by transport and logistics – think driverless straddles and trains. Jobs depending on a high level of personal interaction – like nursing - or creativity are safest.

The fact that the credit system is broken and organised labour has been smashed means that the bosses can't, or won't, adapt by investing on the scale that is technologically feasible. It will be cheaper and easier to slash wages and extend working hours.

The impact of information goods, together with the explosion of cheap abun-

dant digital telephony that makes these goods more and more accessible, is, according to Mason, a one in 500 year event, on a par with the invention of the printing press.

So, neo-liberalism is clapped out, destined to suffer deeper and more frequent debt crises; information technology is destroying the price mechanism; and more and more of us are precariously employed on low wages but are connected and networked through our smartphones.

In human terms, this is a profound change in a very short time. It is already destroying hierarchies based on the factory and office system and seeing the emergence of new social types, these precariously employed, financially insecure, but networked individuals are those in Istanbul, Athens and Cairo who found it easier to riot than to join a union.

Many of our members are the last of the old well paid unionised workers: at work, in the social club, at a union meeting and on the terraces of the sports ground they are the same essential person – work and family is the centre of their identity.

By contrast, the new social types live parallel and fragmentary lives at work, online and often have multiple personas.

This makes them dangerous and revolutionary in the context of the times we live.

Even in highly controlled China there were 600 million mobile internet connections in 2012. And if you think that doesn't mean trouble for the system think again: in 2014 30,000 shoe workers in Yue Yuen, Shenzhen, went on strike using group texting and micro blogging to co-ordinate their actions. One female worker was quoted as saying: "Our foreman is a tough guy, but when I meet him on the internet cafe I am not afraid of him. He has no right to control me there. He is an internet user but so am I."

It will be interesting to see what Grant Robertson and the Labour Party have to say about the future of work. Will they touch on these changes? There is lots about what Mason says that is debatable – he says it is designed to be challenged – the question is have the Labour leadership read it? 🌐

John Kerr joined Quentin Findlay from PlainsFM to discuss the book. Readers can listen to their discussion here:

<http://bit.ly/1QWrzBJ>

Brutal insight to fishing world

Fishers and Plunderers: Theft, Slavery and Violence at Sea

By Alistair Couper, Hance D Smith and Bruno Ciceri.

Reviewer: Dave Marden,
NMC North Island ports rep.

FISHING – hopefully that got your attention? Last year I was sent this book via our Transport Worker publishers to review. This was a first. Generally, not the type of book or subject I read, however, it has enlightened me to invest more interest in the concerns of the global fishing industry and, in particular, the way thousands of fishermen throughout the world are treated, mainly from out of south-east Asia and the Ukraine.

To be blunt, the book reveals the atrocious conditions and the plight of people who invariably start with a debt incurred to buy their way onto a vessel and end up far worse off – and provides updated information on fish stocks.

Beatings, starvation, drugs, 22 hour days, dangerous conditions, extortion, imprisonment, slavery and death by violence, injury, sickness (with no aid), and drownings are common place. These situations are endured on a daily basis – months and years in fact including young children. The despondency these fish workers deal with can have its ultimate price too, as suicide is indicated as the only way out in working conditions that are appalling to put it mildly. The contents at times are disturbing.

The book is divided into sections that cover everything from a worldwide perspective on fishing stocks, or the lack thereof, by-catch, piracy, drug couriers, cruelty, coastal and high seas fishing, international fishing zones, economics, and local fishing. A well referenced book, the factual detail, the amount of data gathering and interviews add real substance to this well presented book. The time and effort that has gone

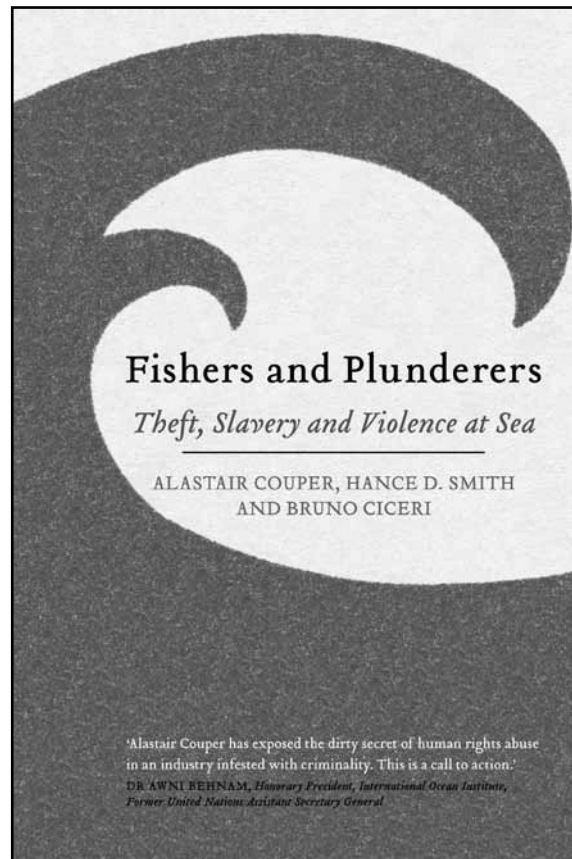
into scribing and producing this paperback is mind boggling.

Sure, in Aotearoa we have heard the circumstances some foreign fishers have faced when in our ports, such as unpaid wages, away from families for long periods of time, terrible living and working conditions on vessels akin to a prison. Where fishers are left to fend for themselves and Kiwis often fronting up with food and money to help them get by when trapped by owners who abandon them and their vessels. New Zealand deserves its special mention in this book. It acknowledges the effort of some of our legal brains and university and union groups, who have helped these crews fishing in our waters. The downside, in part, is quota fished by foreign crews, because they are cheaper. Remember back in the 1990s, either a Russian or Ukrainian fishing boat, the Komtek 2, was stuck at Napier Port, unable to leave for months due to a debt on the vessel. The crew were left to fend for themselves while the owners or contractors discarded them. The trawler was eventually sold and the crews were then sent home, guessing and more than likely, penniless. However, through local generosity, at least they were fed.


Internationally the book also recognises the efforts of the ITF.

Statistically and diagrammatically the book provides an easy understandable picture, whether it be about vessels, net types, fishing patterns, international articles, etc and all well presented via the index. It is full of information that can be isolated if reading or looking for something specific. It is relevant up to 2014. The number of acronyms however became a little cloudy if one had to remember them all which meant at times there was some skim reading as a consequence.

The stand out parts of this book are how this global multi-billion dollar business gives very little to help those at the



bottom end of the food chain and maximises exploitation. It is fair to say there are those who do take care of their fisher folk but sadly contrasted with slavery, torture, brutality, murder, fraud, abandonment, false contracts, human trafficking, piracy, drug running, poaching and corruption - all part of something that is widespread, more so in the Asian region. Thailand particularly is a country where many fish workers are tricked into a life of slavery and human trafficking is rife. Often passports are taken from crew members when they are conscripted onto the boat, then, bound by the debt which got them a position on a vessel, they are not allowed ashore and if they escape, they have no identity documents and are either beaten by police and returned to the vessel, or become refugees, forced to hide on remote Islands throughout Asia and unable to return home!

This is a worthwhile read. It is an eye opener: brutal at times in its facts, deeply insightful into the world of fishing and fishers, shedding light on an inhumane global industry and highlighting over-fishing and waste. And all triggered by greed. 

From nuclear-free to TPPA

Bill Rosenberg
CTU economist and policy director.

THE signing of the TPPA in Auckland on 4 February brought out massive demonstrations for a TPPA-free New Zealand. Organisers estimated 15,000 in Auckland alone, along with civil disobedience blocking roads. In addition there were actions in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, and Raglan (a mass jump from the footbridge in a chain bomb!). They in turn were supported by protests in most of the other TPPA countries as well as 250,000 people in Germany on the streets protesting at the TPPA's sister agreement between the US and the European Union, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). For a day, New Zealand was the centre of a world-wide movement for a better future – and we did ourselves proud.

It had been preceded the previous weekend by actions in several centres who couldn't manage the 4 February – or whose activists wanted to go to Auckland. The following weekend, RMTU's Alby Barr from Whangarei branch organised a rally in Paihia, at which several politicians spoke against the agreement.

The Government and business groups were clearly put on the back foot by the scale and discipline of the actions. They launched attacks by insulting the TPP-freers saying they didn't know what they were talking about and were misled. Some of the media joined in. But the number of informed voices of opposition continues to mount. The government is launching a road show to 'sell' the deal. Submissions have been called by 11 March for the Parliamentary "examination" of the agreement – though it has no power to change it. Then legislation will be introduced for debate.

Meanwhile opposition in the US continues and the TPPA is a major election issue. There is no guarantee that the US Congress will pass it. There is more work to do to stop the TPPA: the deal is not yet done.

Politicians, journalists and commentators who cannot understand why the TPPA marks the end of bipartisan support for similar international commerce agreements have missed the crucial point.

This is a nuclear-free moment in New Zealand's history. It is a turning point. When New Zealand went nuclear-free in the 1980s with huge public support, it broke a previously bipartisan policy towards the US. The forces resisting change took to scare mongering to try to turn back the tide.

David Lange wrote in his memoirs: "The sum of the advice I received from the ministry was that pursuing our nuclear-free policy would lead to a breakdown in New Zealand's relationship with the United States. It could have severe economic consequences if the United States took action against New Zealand's trade."

This echoed the blustering of opposing political and business leaders.

What did happen? Relationships changed. But the net damage was ruffled feathers. Instead it was 'nuclear-free' that became bipartisan policy because it made sense for New Zealand in a changed world.

That is how we should see this TPPA moment. All opposition political parties plus the Maori Party now firmly oppose it, along with a broad spectrum of society.

The TPPA is an agreement from the 20th century, not one for the 21st. It attempts to entrench the free-market trickle-down policies of the 1980s and 1990s. That is why conservative parties support it. It prevents future elected governments from making progressive change.

This is symbolised by National entrenching in the TPPA its policy of allowing investors from any country to buy our houses, no matter how much it pushes up prices. It has embedded its own government procurement policy. And so on.

These are the remnants of ideology from New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s, Reaganism in the US and Thatcherism in the UK. Agreements like the TPPA continue them when electors and international experience have rejected them. They ignore the most important issues of today.

These policies favoured the rich at the expense of the majority, creating a huge increase in inequality. Inequality is one of the top issues concerning people in New Zealand and internationally. Yet the TPPA is likely to increase income inequality according to at least one economic evaluation. It will increase inequality of power through provisions that allow overseas investors to sue governments for huge sums in unaccountable offshore tribunals of corporate lawyers if their profits are threatened.

The free-market policies directly led to the Global Financial Crisis that began in 2008 at enormous cost to the great majority of people. It was the latest and largest of a series of similar crises. Yet the TPPA does not help in the uncompleted task of reining in the banks and the rest of the financial sector. Worse, it

removes tools that would control the international market and rapidly spread the crisis. It is inconsistent with liberalising the financial system and the ability to create "toxic" products across borders.

Does it deal with the future: climate change? No. It removes the ability the TPPA provides for governments to underwrite climate change. The environment is an ineffectual window-dress for public concerns, the labour market.

And what is the pay-off? A 0.9 percent increase commissioned by the government, a decrease of less than one percent over time: 0.9 percent.

It is as if your employer says: "I'll give you a 0.9 percent increase on condition I have a lot more power from now on."

Even this tiny amount of power for economists. A few may welcome it, but inequality.

Proponents will claim it will bring greater international competitiveness. New Zealand's recent economic argument. Others (including the CTU) will say it will just intensify the commodification of commodities. The bottom line: the theory of economic development that cause to worry does not work.

Against concerns that it will strip sovereignty, the commentators say: In the 1980s, the loss of sovereignty in previous WTO and with China. What is the loss of more sovereignty now?

At what point do we say the end point is a central government with more power than a town council?

This is a turning point. The old guard complain it is. But New Zealanders wise enough to see the lessons leading up to the 1980s since the 1980s leads to the numbers of citizens in New Zealand who are taking on the TPPA.

The TPPA is the worst of all worlds: unsustainable, insecure and prone to

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Protesting around the country

PHOTOGRAPH: Pati Solomona Tyrell, FAFSWAG



PHOTOGRAPH: Pati Solomona Tyrell, FAFSWAG



AUCKLAND RAIL

WELCOME back to those who had a break over Christmas and welcome to 2016. There are a lot of challenges around New Zealand right now with TPPA, a proposal for larger trucks and busses to be allowed on our roads and the financial constraints for KiwiRail – but to our fellow RMTU members in Christchurch, we do hope the quake on Sunday Feb 14 has not diminished your love for the city

and that your families are safe and sound.

The announcement of funding for the City Rail Link (CRL) a few weeks back was celebrated by many, none more than Julie Anne Genter from the Green Party who has fought and campaigned on this issue for a number of years.

The biggest issue to many in our branch are the assaults and abusive behaviour many of our train managers, ticket inspectors and LE members face. We are holding a stop

work meeting on Tuesday February 16 to send a message to Auckland Transport, Transdev and the NZ Police that we expect more from all of them. The integrated ticket system has been an abject failure by turning our network into an honour system and allowing people to ride the trains without any form of real recrimination for their fare evasion and anti-social behaviour. We urge our Wellington members to learn from the mistakes made in Auckland and fight for a better system when it comes your way. 🚆

WAIKATO RAIL

SADLY, 2016 hasn't started well at the coal face. For those who worked through the holiday period you will have experienced staff shortages, an excess of track faults, heats, late running trains and little or no appreciation.

I note our CEO's comments in the company's pathetic newsletter, when questioned by the Transport Select Committee in Parliament as to how the staff are coping with changes and job losses in the company, he responded that they are taking it quite well. Perhaps he was fed so much crap by his middle management that he lives in another world because wherever he is, it isn't in ours. Most of the guys with more than 20 years service are talking about how this was like rail prior to privatisation. Morale is at an all time low and there is no pride in the job. I urge our CEO to spend some time with the workers to see what they do and expose the lies and deceit of middle management.

We see yet another review of our I&A brothers. Review being a soft and gutless word for redundancy. What a comical time for more redundancies. With all their consultants and analysts, have they not yet figured out that since the last mauling of track workers the track condition has deteriorated? I guess they will just slap another 'Permanent Speed Board' up to reduce the line speed to save on maintenance in lieu of a skilled worker. What a way to treat your infrastructure – the backbone of our business.

Heat restrictions own the summer with more heats, fewer distressing gangs and less

distressing which means increased train delays. Some heat restrictions are over 30 kms long. Not only that, but some spokesper-

son from the glasshouse claimed the derailment in the loop at National Park, which saw six wagons on their side, was caused by a heat buckle. I wonder how much risk there is of a heat buckle within the several 20 or 30km length heat restrictions? Not only that but our track inspectors are having trouble with communicating with TC for track time – quite a common issue facing the track gangs and grease trucks. The end result has seen blanket 40km restrictions placed over entire sections of track – also good for business!

The new Gators, the ill-fated replacement for the yard utes, have been falling apart. Possibly due to the terrible yard underfoot and/or poor and unsuitable design. Either way, they have been yet another poor decision made by some noddy who didn't listen to the staff who said they weren't a good idea. These machines are costing the company thousands to fix and maintain. Another quality investment! Were these another quality Chinese import?

Staff shortages in the yard have been overcome by loyal workers looking after their mates. Their loyalty and commitment should be rewarded. Poor underfoot conditions continue to get worse, especially by this stupid rule about blowing down train pipes which blasts over the whole yard. Another keyboard warrior rule! If you walked throughout the buildings in our area you would see all this H&S stuff all over the walls – posters, pictures, catch phrases – but then you step out into the yard and its like stepping into the wild west! This subject

has been raised several times. We are fed up and want something done!

More trains running down the NIMT has resulted in longer shift times for LEs heading south as they all try and slot in around each other. Our LEs continue to bust, become fatigued and be abused by these new ideas and interpretations by a couple of roosters within the roster centre. What is the point of having a roster with jobs on it. Most of the time you turn up for work, your shift has changed without warning. All this bollocks about crew resource management, fatigue, getting quality sleep, etc. What a load of crap!

It is with huge sadness that we farewell Mike Moffat, the last operational staff member in Taumarunui. Mike served Taumarunui and railways loyally for over 30 years and his gentle giant nature will be sorely missed. So too will be the hole left behind for NIMT cover between Taumarunui and Te Kuiti when LEs need rescuing or assistance. Another zero harm commitment. Yeah right!

This year will see our collective agreement up for negotiation. This is going to be a struggle so let's all remember to be united and stand together. The job and conditions you enjoy today were created by many years of hard fought battles by united men and women. We must look after ourselves here. The present bunch of leaders certainly don't seem to care nor does this anti-rail and road-obsessed National Government!

Workers Memorial Day is also in April. Keep a look out for posters with the time and location for the memorial.

Until next time, remember to take your time and stay safe out there. If you have the slightest of doubts that something or some situation isn't safe then just say no! 🚆

TARANAKI RAIL

FIRSTLY, sorry brothers and sisters for the silence from the Taranaki of late. The last six months have been a turbulent time for us with the loss of five locomotive engineers, six shunters and now we're facing more losses to our track gang, signal technicians and CT site.

Times are changing in the Naki. Tonage is changing: where we were once predominantly milk, milk products and

meat now we're moving a lot of logs, pipes and a lot more gas.

This milk season is likely to be the shortest one I've ever encountered. With half the amount of milk coming up from the Manawatu combined with the low pay out, farmers are drying off earlier which is dropping our train requirements.

On the upside we have had two new team leaders down at Whareroa who have been doing an excellent job. The Whareroa shunters have taken Stratford's workload on

board and are now shunting Eltham.

The locomotive engineers have taken the hit on the chin with the job losses and shocking rosters and are looking forward to better things.

Both sites have been injury free for over 1100 days each which is remarkable and comes back to each of us looking out for one another and not turning our backs on hazards.

It's sad to see Stratford finally closed but the memories will always live on. 🌐

PORT NAPIER

I was out fishing in Hawke's Bay, enjoying a rostered day off, soaking up that famous Hawke's Bay sun with three other keen fishermen. Although we all had vastly different occupations (a policeman, a ship planner, a chef, and a KiwiRail yardman from Manawatu), there was a common bond on the boat – we were all shift workers. This led to the inevitable discussion of the pros and cons of shift work.

Christmas Eve, Christmas day, Boxing day, New Year's Eve and New Year's day are usually shared with friends and family. For many New Zealanders these days are the source of many fond memories we all hold for life and are a part of the Kiwi fabric of life we value so dearly.

However, the rail and maritime industries generally never stop and in fact cannot afford to stop such are the demands placed on these essential services.

To ensure that this happens, there is a large team of dedicated union members across our great country who work late into Christmas Eve, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's day – night shift, day shift and afternoon shift alike.

To work these shifts, requires a fair amount of cooperation, sacrifice, understanding and discipline from family, friends and the union members concerned:

- Cooperation from family to ensure you get the correct amount of rest.
- Sacrifice from family that you can't travel out of town to visit family and friends.
- Understanding from friends that you can't go to that BBQ, picnic or fishing

trip being planned.

■ Discipline from the workers concerned that

you can't have that beer or two, even though the weather is hot and the beer is cold.

All these activities are taken for granted by most of the population who have little or no understanding of the daily sacrifices these hard working dedicated union members make.

While chatting over a coffee during a smoko break during a graveyard shift, a couple of the crew were about to go on annual leave – their "turn" had finally come – and there was genuine excitement in their voices as they outlined the upcoming prospect of catching up with whanau in another city and the simple joy of just going home to see mum.

Napier Port will shortly see a strong seasonal upswing in business for four to five months. The last nine months of planning

and implementation are about to be tested.

It appears the two new harbour cranes have now shaken off their new plant gremlins, extra seasonal staff are trained and rearing to go and the new building with its sparkling cafeteria is about to be tested to the limits.

Napier Port RMTU members are proud of our safety record over the last five years. As tougher and more stringent health and safety measures come into play, all members bar none are determined to retain and improve on this safety record.

So don't forget that annual leave is an essential part of working life and enables us to recharge our batteries in preparation to ensure we can safely navigate this incredibly stressful period for all. It also provides the opportunity to relax and unwind with family and friends when the seasonal mayhem finally subsides.

P.S. We caught enough fish for three dinner tables, so all in all a great day. 🌐



Where many-an-RMTU meeting was held – the old operations building now shrink wrapped to stop any of the nasties escaping. Built circa 1970.

PALMERSTON NORTH RAIL

PALMERSTON NORTH has started this year with disappointment with the track workers to be reduced by 12 members. The RMTU went into negotiation and presented some alternative options to try and save these jobs but the management at KiwiRail seem determined to pursue their own course. My heart goes out to those staff members and their families that have been affected by this part of the restructure. We do not agree with KiwiRail's stand on this issue.

To put it simply, if a farmer wants more corn to harvest he plants more corn. If a truck driver wants to move more freight he gets more trucks.

Even Mother Nature knows if you want more honey you need more bees. So I put

the same infrastructure, trucks and tools but with a substantial reduction in brothers and sisters with boots on the ground? It doesn't add up.

The positive aspect to this is that the RMTU IS STRONGER TOGETHER and the RMTU will do its best to assist any members who are affected by this change wherever possible. It also means that the RMTU will still be striving to make sure that all safety standards are maintained and/or are improved so that members feel secure in there working environment.

RMTU UNITY and SOLIDARITY means that after downsizing the track workers there are thousands of eyes watching to see that our staff aren't being replaced by outside contractors. We are watching that

it to you, how can KiwiRail fix more track and fix it faster with

our team, as it will be, is not understaffed.

We would also like to thank and recognise the members, delegates and H&S reps who have shown support so far through this year. Your effort is noted. Being a department representative can be a thankless task sometimes but we would like to say thank you and show our gratitude for serving the Palmerston North branch.

There have been disputes and misunderstandings around rosters and safe work practises and the RMTU is working diligently to resolve these with an amicable and fair outcome for all members involved.

We would take this opportunity to say farewell to Reuben Brown. Reuben retired at the end of last year. We always found Reuben to be a good descent bloke, a real gentleman and pleasant to be around with a genuine warm greeting. The RMTU wishes you well. May your retirement be everything that you hope it would be. 🌐

HUTT WORKSHOP

HAPPY NEW YEAR from the 'shops': Here we are again with a new year in full swing. Members in KiwiRail will recall the HPHE update toward the end of 2015. We have got things off to a flying start, and in that spirit the branch continues to conduct its affairs in an open and transparent manner. Even the LCC dealings have greatly improved with all parties understanding the benefits of not only good communication, but full and frank discussions. This is something absolutely core to KiwiRail's survival and we hope that all employees, from the top down, get on board with this and make sound decisions (by consensus) that all can accept. We hope to bring you a HPHE update in the next edition as the communications of progress are jointly controlled therefore it's appropriate to await the formal update, and comment on that in due course.

The first 2016 issue of *The Express* announced that the implementation of the Just and Fair Culture (process) is taking a step nearer with training dates and places being scheduled for dissemination in early February. We will be watching with great interest to see how well turns out to be

and what real improvement it brings given that it's key

proponent (Matt Ballard) has been absent from the company for some time. We have assumed that many of the overdue HR documents have not been reviewed due to the enormous effort required to get the J&F process (policy?) correct.

For those who will be in town on ANZAC day, reserve your early morning and muster at Petone to be part of the commemorations there. (Further details on page 2 or watch out for an update in *The Express* and *The Activist*)

Our Plant 1 strengthening and recladding adjacent to the traverser pit has been completed and the teams can now breathe a sigh of relief and get their full work-spaces back. This should also allow us to resurrect our significant continuous improvement pro-

gramme which had been greatly impacted by both the strengthening and the asbestos issues. Again I must acknowledge the great professionalism and attitude by all involved during 2015 – a year of great upheaval and compression of space to accommodate the contractors and their equipment.

To finish with I have been asked to keep this period's update brief as several 'issues' are in progress at the moment and we've been asked to avoid names to protect the guilty otherwise we may prejudice the maintenance of 'law' – 2016 promises to be a year of change. Until next time, work hard and work safe. 🌐





Looking down the midway as plants 4 and 5 are demolished. The end of an era. The space is now being used to accommodate the outgoing Ganz Mavag EMUs and various locomotives.



Armistice Day 2015 with production managers Peter Venn and Warren Mueller laying a wreath.



Laid-up motive power awaiting sale or return to service with all sorts of liveries.

NELSON PORT

HELLO and happy new year to all. It has been quite some time since sunny Nelson has appeared in the pages of Transport Worker, that being said we still keep up to date on all the goings on around the country and are always fully supportive of all our brothers and sisters out there fighting the fight for decent and fair wages and conditions for the people that keep the country moving at all hours and all weathers.

Things are starting to ramp up at the port with the fruit season fast approaching, log gangs back in the bush, Nelson pine back up to full speed and the constant stream of wine from the vineyards - all keeping us on our toes in both Nelson and Picton.

March sees the RMTU team going in for a consultative meeting with the aim of

heads of late.

There has also been some new blood join the team as delegates this year and

getting some progress on some outstanding issues and tidying up a few loop holes that have raised their

they are looking forward to some delegate training so they can get stuck into the role and increase the membership and presence of the RMTU down on the docks here in Nelson and Picton (stronger together).

Stay safe out there. 🌐



WEST COAST RAIL

THE year starts off with the news of the last underground coal mine here going into mothballs due to the low international coking coal price. This is very worrying news as it is KiwiRail's main customer in the Buller region and leaves a very uncertain future. We can only hope the export prices come back up again before more damage is done to the local economy. This comes on top of Oceania Gold and Cape Foul Wind Cement (Holcim) being in the wind-up stages and this revenue stream ceasing in the very near future.

The irony is that we are hearing Solid Energy are going to reinstate the night shift at Ngakawau – although we don't know when – due to being 50,000 tonnes of coal behind. I don't know if it is due to KiwiRail but that sum would almost be the amount of coal KiwiRail has failed to deliver with on-going coal train cancellation since September 2015. KiwiRail's big rush to downsize Westport and move it to Greymouth has been a managerial failure of some magnitude from day one and is something

that KiwiRail will now have to live with. The non-availability of Greymouth LEs and locos to run four coal trains a day five days a week must be a major concern.

The new Westport roster has two relief links which were our last mainline trains, 850/843. This work has gone to Greymouth. Westport becomes a load only depot, we also lose a weeks annual leave! They have thought of everything, haven't they!

Westport LEs are constantly asked to Greymouth, so with these two new relief links we now believe Westport LEs will be required to cover Greymouth on a regular basis so with a three hour round trip in a fleet car and the 11 hour limit for LE shifts it will be a very interesting exercise.

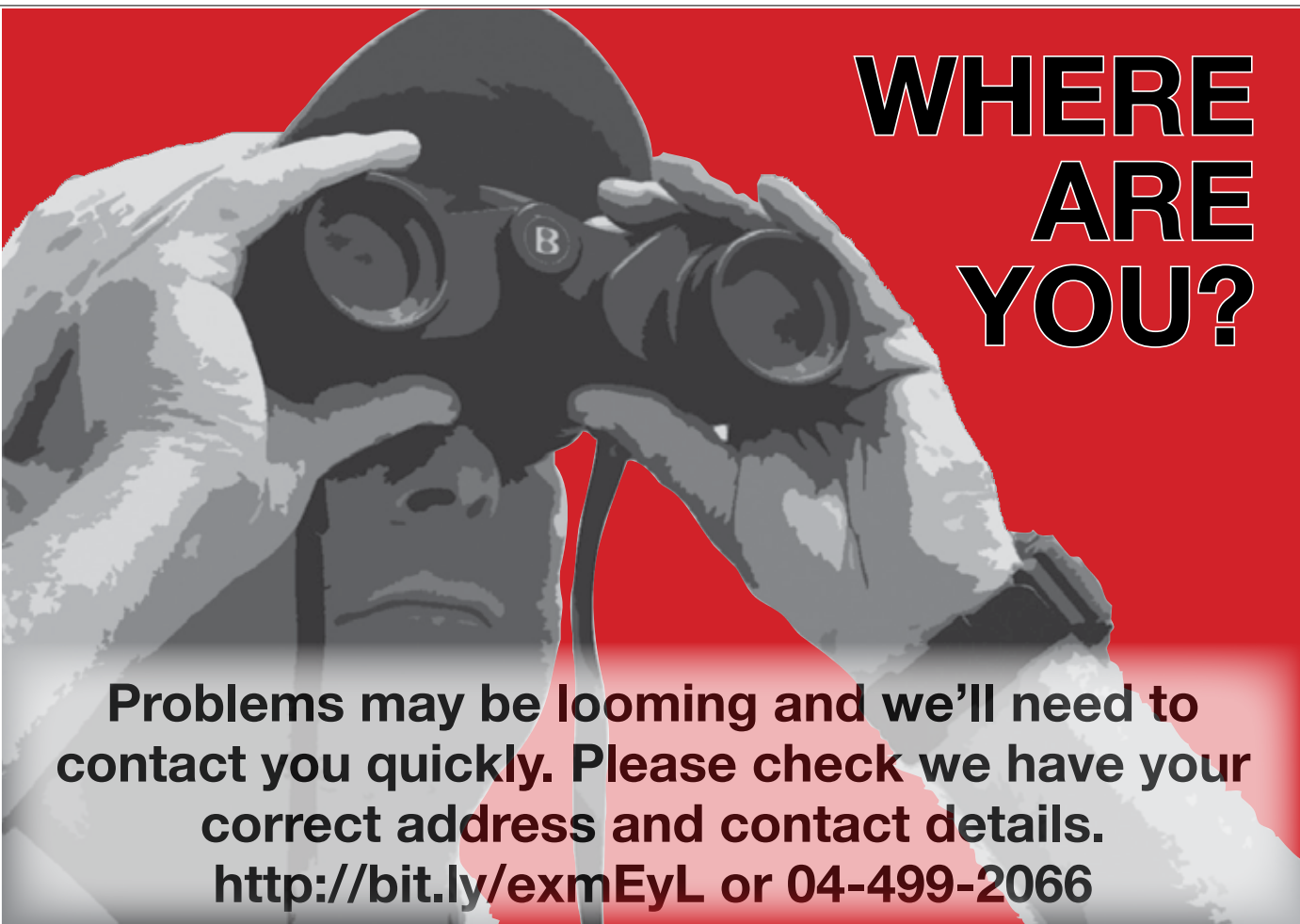
The other reason for Solid Energy reinstating the night shift could be that their move of going to two shifts a day, five days a week, hasn't worked due to Solid Energy not being able to produce enough coal for four coal trains daily at Ngakawau on two shifts and fill the reclaim as well. A third possible reason is that this is just a temporary measure to fill a spot 60,000 tonne order.

The rumour mill at the Ngakawau

weighbridge is that Solid Energy has three interested buyers. Some of the Solid Energy staff we know are already talking now about shifting from Westport (just closing up there houses as they can't sell them) and are investigating work opportunities elsewhere which must be a bad sign for Solid Energy's future.

In other news there is a once a month health and safety meeting on the West Coast. These are important to identify H&S issues and to bring them to the attention of the committee so due process can occur and the problem dealt with. It is very frustrating when an issue has been tabled, talked about, entered in the H&S minutes, and – talked about again in the next meeting. Some issues have been on the agenda for over a year. There is far too much talk and not enough action. Moving a reported hazard issue off the hazard board into the hazard register or the health and safety minutes is no help in getting the problem solved.

We have had some visits from a manager charged with improving productivity and rosters which have come under the spotlight following the "leaving no stone unturned" policy in trying to cut costs.



WHERE ARE YOU?

Problems may be looming and we'll need to contact you quickly. Please check we have your correct address and contact details.

<http://bit.ly/exmEyL> or 04-499-2066

There is talk of getting four or five hour shifts for certain jobs, in particular on the weekend where penal rates are involved. Who wants to give a weekend up for four hours work? No one here that's for sure. The members' view is that the boss can shove it. Management just have to accept that due to the nature of the business, that down time will occur because of the intermittent work loadings and they stop trying to reinvent the wheel as this is a feature of running a railway and has been since the 19th century. Perhaps his salary would be better spent on a good sales representative to get some more tonnage on the network.

Over on the track side of things we're absorbing the proposal not to fill the vacancy in the Westport gang as part of the so-called standardisation project. What a

joke. At the time of writing we don't have the final decision but the view is that having a three man gang will severely compromise safety in the Buller Gorge as it will limit our ability to get skilled men to an emergency. We've been raking over the Buller Gorge safety plan in the ROM and aside from the fact that this is outdated in some critical respects we can't see how a three man gang can provide the required cover. We expect

there will be a justified revolt amongst LEs and track workers.

On a positive note the TransAlpine passenger service is having a great season with good loadings and after a long spell of not doing so Greymouth locomotive engineers are back driving the Alpine for part of the trip and are enjoying a bit of passenger running.

KEEP SAFE OUT THERE. 🇳🇿



(l) Track worker Trevor Grant and trainee track worker Graeme Daily.

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Since the launch of Nest's partnership with RMTU, we've fielded an overwhelming response from members. This is great for members and great for RMTU as Nest is committed to supporting RMTU with \$200 donated for every member who gets a Nest mortgage.

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The answer is **ABSOLUTELY YES.**

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Text "RMTU" to 8808 and an adviser will call you back.



Contact Jeff Kerwin Nest's dedicated RMTU liaison
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jeff@nesthomeloans.co.nz | www.nesthomeloans.co.nz

LYTTELTON PORT

SITTING down to write these branch notes has prompted me to reflect upon what has been a very eventful 12 months since I became secretary of the branch. What follows departs from the norm as it written from a personal as well as a branch perspective.

I was elected acting branch secretary at our joint Port/Rail branch annual meeting in December 2014 during the middle of an industrial dispute with Lyttelton Port Company. I was formally appointed to the role in February 2015. I had been working for LPC less than a year and was as surprised as some of our members to have been asked whether I was interested in taking on the role by our out-going secretary, Libi Carr, and South Island organiser, John Kerr. As we were rapidly descending into a full-blown dispute with LPC, they were very mindful of the need of a planned succession and getting someone who could be effective from day one.

What got me into this predicament? Attending meetings regularly, speaking up,

asking questions and volunteering to do stuff (there's a lesson in there somewhere),

something I was used to doing from my previous union involvement. Unions rely on activists as much as they do on worker solidarity and my experience with unions as different as the Automotive Industry Workers Union and the Teachers' Union in Germany had taught me the importance of not only being organised, but of building organisation.

With protracted pay talks about to break down and with strike action looming, the necessity of communicating quickly and effectively with members got me thinking about setting up a text group communication system using members' cell phone numbers from our existing data base. As events unfolded, the value of our ability to communicate in real time with members became apparent to all. Many of those who had initially resisted giving us their cell phone numbers later came to me and asked to be included. Today I have some 200 of our 215 members in the text group and although we still use traditional notices

on the notice board, texting has become our primary means of communication. Members can opt out, but very few do.

A key RMTU claim during 2014-15 bargaining with LPC had been the establishment of a works council. Rail members will need no further explanation of this, the rail sector being one of the few in New Zealand with an established system of works councils. But in the NZ port sector this is not the case. In Germany I had experienced first-hand how effective these councils can be in providing an avenue of constructive engagement between workers and management.

Although the model eventually agreed upon with LPC was not exactly what I have previously experienced, the Area Operational Forums (AOF) have now successfully been established in the container terminal, the workshop and at City Depot where the managers responsible see the benefit of engaging with their workforce in this manner. Other departments remain a challenge and a goal for 2016. The success in setting up these AOFs has been, in no small measure, due to the manner in which LPC industrial relations manager, Sally Williams (who like

\$1,500 AD&D

All members of RMTU are now covered by a \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children. 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 reply on line at ailnz.co.nz/request to have an AIL representative deliver your certificate of coverage and explain the additional insurance coverage available. This is very important to you and your family.

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



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A.M. Best, one of the oldest and most respected insurance ratings companies, has rated American Income Life as A+ (Superior) for overall Financial Strength (as of 6/15).

me took on her role during the recent dispute), has engaged with the RMTU in rebuilding the relationship between the Union and employer over the last year.

The container terminal AOF has been a sensational success with RMTU member Tony Simpson rising to the challenge and showing us all how to effectively chair and stick to a timetable in meetings. So much so that he has now been poached by LPC as the new port services manager. We congratulate you Tony and look forward to working constructively with you in the future. This situation is instructive in that LPC have now realised that one of the benefits to them is that they can use the forums as a means of talent spotting.

Our members have benefitted from the more positive relationship with the employer. A big achievement over the past 12 months is that we have successfully negotiated two collective agreements with minimal difficulty. The first, at City Depot in Woolston, was a great success that delivered an average 17% wage increase

to members. The second, for logistics officers, was another good result providing for above inflation wage increases over a two year term.

As well as this we have successfully got LPC to undertake a trades pay rates review for workshop staff through the workshop AOF and we are all hopeful this will yield a positive result and give us the facts we need to get our guys a pay rise.

The middle of 2015 saw me attending a protracted series of consultation meetings around the proposed restructure of the foremen's role in the container terminal. At that time the company was proposing the introduction of a new supervisor's role. Due to the foremen's resistance this has now been withdrawn and at their suggestion a modified foremen's role and position description is currently being negotiated directly between the foremen and LPC. This process is ongoing and an indication of future changes that we might expect to see in operations at Lyttelton.

One of the consequences of the more

active engagement between the Union and employer is that there are now many more meetings that I am being invited to. It used to be the case that we only engaged when we were in a fight. I now increasingly find myself expected to be two places at once as I continue to work six shifts per fortnight as a part-time cargo handler. I enjoy working at the port and will continue to do so for as long I can as it gives my first-hand experience of day-to-day operations and keeps me close to the members and in touch with their concerns. It is a challenge fitting everything in though when the bosses tend to work Monday to Friday nine to five and my other job requires me to be available 24/7.

As well as working at the port I moved to Lyttelton in early 2015 and I enjoy living in this vibrant little community where I often bump into co-workers and RMTU members around town, especially at the Saturday market.

Members are the lifeblood of any union and we have been successful in recruiting new members to counter the natural attri-

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.

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


tion due to retirement. After an influx of new members post-dispute, membership has stabilised at 210 – 220 and at the time of writing stands at 215.

Health and safety has been a big issue at LPC for all the wrong reasons in the past. Things are improving however, and at the time of writing we are on the point of signing our employee participation agreement. This will cement in H&S reps' rights and responsibilities and is a symbolic as well as material step forward. A big thank you

to national H&S organiser Karen Fletcher and our lawyer Hazel Armstrong for their assistance with this.

On the horizon in coming weeks is the new inland port facility at Rolleston and how we organise workers there. At a time when LPC seems to be seeking alliances with other New Zealand ports to try and counter the dominance of Tauranga, the strategic importance of Rolleston is self-evident.

In conclusion, our branch is increas-

ingly busy but much of this is positive work that is yielding good results for our members. That's not to say there isn't work to be done to make things better. Our permanent relievers are struggling with lower than predicted container volumes meaning work has dried up for many; health and safety remains an area where we must be constantly vigilant; and the overall instability in the industry is a concern. The RMTU remains strong however, and will continue to be so in 2016. 

CANTERBURY RAIL

THE long saga of post-earthquake Christchurch continues with the demolition of the Linwood Depot (see photo). Neville Duggan sent the writer some excellent photos of this sad event. It is a reminder of what we've lost and how our members in maintenance and servicing are still working in very difficult conditions to keep the trains running.

On a more positive note the Scenic Journeys services, both Coastal and Alpine, at long last appear to be having a bumper season after years in the doldrums. The earthquakes were the culprit and we argued with management that it would eventually come right as tourist numbers recovered. It seems that this has finally happened and our members are doing what they do best on these trains – providing excellent service.

Everywhere we look KiwiRail seems to be trying to strip cost out of the railway, and this is not always being done with an eye on the long term impact on things that make the difference to productivity, like morale and good will. It seems the South Island has escaped the worst of the so called standardisation in I & E but anyone with two eyes in their head can see that the front line staff are stretched

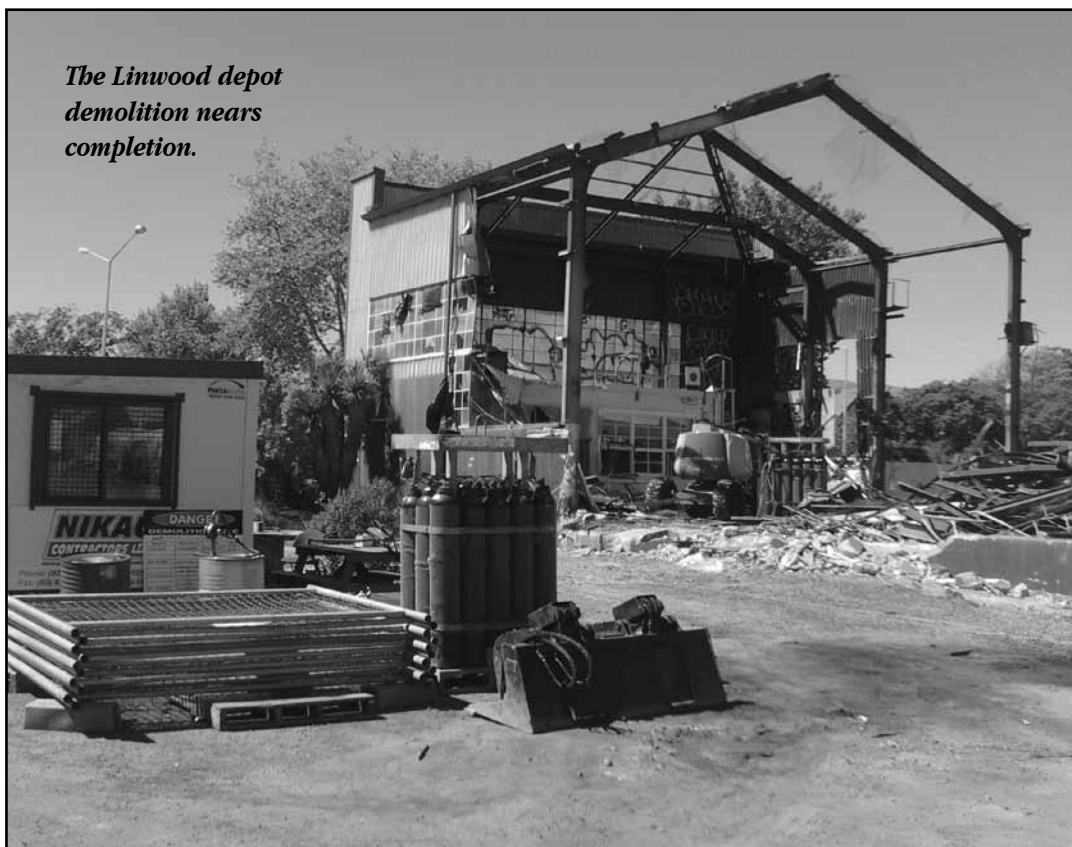
too thin. Last year we had a manager from the North Island review our rosters at Middleton yard. He had some hare brained ideas about short shifts and rostering members at fewer than 80 hours per fortnight. This was swiftly nipped in the bud by telling management that nobody would be working overtime if they tried that.

The impact of low coal prices on Solid Energy is well known and the effect this has had on the number of coal trains. Equally as concerning is the lower than forecast volumes of general freight and commodities that are being shifted. None of this is of our doing, but rather, bigger global

political and economic factors are at play – everything from the Saudis increasing oil production to compete with US fracking and the subsequent impact on coal prices, to the slowdown of the Chinese economy. It does seem that management expect members to pay the price for this however.

Locally, we've been supporting the campaign against the sale of Christchurch City Council assets. The aim is to make this an issue in this year's local body elections. It's a classic case of neo-liberalism in action: flogging off publicly-owned assets that generate an income and keep rates down so the buyers can cream the profits instead of ratepayers. As RMTU members our big concern is if the Council sells Lyttelton Port,

The Linwood depot demolition nears completion.



◀ a step that would inevitably have a negative effect on health and safety.

The other big issue we've been campaigning on is the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement. There was a well-attended rally in Christchurch as part of the wider national campaign in early February. We all know that even if John Key's Government has signed the deal the fight isn't over and we have to keep the pressure on to ensure the opposition to the TTPA translates into votes at next year's general election.

We are all looking forward to this year's wage round. Will we be under attack or will management see sense? 🇳🇿



Christchurch LEs Stu Watson and Kyle Swainson at Otira.

PORT TIMARU

AS predicted in the last issue of The Transport Worker our branch has successfully concluded bargaining with Quality Marshalling Ltd (QM) in Timaru.

Members met in early December to vote on the three year deal which delivers a 2% increase in year one followed by 2.5% in each of years two and three. The proposed collective agreement was ratified unanimously.

We've been busy over the summer season as the Kotahi (Fonterra and Silver Fern Farms)-Maersk-Port of Tauranga alliance means there is plenty of cargo moving through our port.

Prime Port as the landlord and provider of marine services have taken on some extra staff on a casual or part time basis – some of whom formerly worked for them and who took jobs with QM. This is all well and good but the fragmentation of labour on the waterfront, some of which is being done by the same people wearing different employers' hats, is only designed to do one thing – drive down costs and that means wages and terms and conditions.

Fortunately by sticking together and bargaining collectively we've managed to secure deals with both Prime Port and QM that have given us above inflation wage increases and will most likely continue to do so, if price rises are as predicted, over the next year and two years respectively.

Relationships with the employers are generally good at the level we deal with them – despite the restructure at Prime Port few faces have changed for example – any issues we have are generally the result of the bigger picture.

And the bigger picture isn't a pretty one: a port industry that is in a state of chaos as unbridled competition means there will be far more losers than winners. We all know the solution, a national ports strategy that brings some rationality to planning in this most strategic of industries – and bringing that about will take a change of Government. 🇳🇿



(Above l to r) Renee Bower and Nicki Rose working hard in the Timaru freight centre, and

(below) Bill Oliver, service person at Timaru Port.



TIMARU RAIL

THE Timaru area have been busy, with tonnage figures high and a new contract with McCains signed to cart between Timaru and Lyttelton. Continuing problems with track and point in our yard have resulted in several derailed trains. This puts added pressure on our brothers in I & E – it's already a busy time for them with heat restrictions etc.

We have a staff member finishing off his RCO training very soon. Well done to Shanon Edwards on his success in training and no doubt owes his minder Jim Bartlett a beer or two – lol.

We also welcome to our depot Adam de Castro – an export from Westport to our loco team. Adam has fitted in well and his wit and humour is very welcome. Also Bernard Fox joined our team as a rail operator from Christchurch.

There is an expectation in our yard of some news on the pay and progression for terminal yard staff but meanwhile things have been very quiet on the KIC front. Any information about this process would be very welcome. 🇳🇿



*Shannon Edwards, Grant Gooding and Jim Bartlett.
Looking for a third seat?*

PORT CHALMERS

GREETINGS all from the south. Another year is upon us and it is already going by fast. In December 2015 we held our annual Port Chalmers branch RMTU Christmas party once again. It was good to see members getting together to have a good time.

Business as usual on the Port front. The season is moving along at a steady pace. The cruise boat season is over half way through with the last vessel calling on April 11.

Our thoughts are with our MUA brothers and sisters in Australia as they continue to fight being forced out of work by foreign crews. Keep up the good fight! 🇳🇿

Father Christmas gets mobbed at the Port Chalmers party.



OTAGO RAIL

GREETINGS from the sunny south. Many of you will be glad to be back to work, recovering from a hectic holiday. Well done for enjoying your time off.

You will all be pleased to learn that the railroad company you left, for your well-earned break, did not change while you

were away. It would appear that the powers to be are still looking for ways to save money the company doesn't have,

and are now going to close another branch line on the network. Cook Strait.

Those of you who have worked for this company for a number of years will have heard the cry for more capital year after year. Well, taking the rail capacity from Cook Strait is an example of our govern-

ment's short sightedness. The sooner they change the financing model and fund the below ground part of rail out of the overall transport budget, the better off the whole country will be.

The loco team are still seeing a high number of locomotive failures, and the fitting team are trying their best to keep our ageing fleet going. The catch cry seems to be 'We need that loco for the next service', so the small jobs have to wait to be fixed.

Looks like just one or two extra locos

in service might take some pressure off all concerned.

The freight side now have their new operations manager, who looks just like our old one but with much less enthusiasm. Which means we have a new, more enthusiastic manager for the southern area. We all hope this keeps the rail ship on an even keel and things slowly, as is always the case with rail, improve.

We also have lost one of our team; Kane has gone off to see the rest of the world and we wish him well on his journey.

Kevin Martin has also seen fit to leave us for something called retirement. The branch wish him and his good wife all the best for their retirement.

The roster looker Atta has been and looked at the loco roster and in his perfect world we are over staffed, but as they, in the past, have been told the same thing and now we are not going to let anyone go, just not replace those that retire.

The shunt roster is next, we await the results.

The new RCOs are all doing well and look to have made an improvement on the way their roster works, hope the roster looker Atta sees it that way.

We also note there has been some progress on the condition of the ground in E yard with contractors doing work on the drains and resurfacing. Which means that some of the larger pot holes have

been fixed.

The track team are working their way through another hot summer, but it does appear that they may have got the heat restrictions in the right places. Not too many disruptions so far.

We note that work lights have been installed in the Caversham Tunnel, and new rail out the south end. Is this a sign of things happening?

The new signalling system out to Taieri and Mosgiel is proving it's worth with the mis 59s slowing to a trickle.

Let's look forward to great year, and be careful out there. 🚂

SOUTHLAND

It goes without saying that probably the most significant event to happen around here in a while was the retirement of the operation's branch manager, Bob Woodcock. The southern regional manager wrote some rather generous comments regarding Bob in the Weekly Express prior to Christmas. Those comments did not reflect our dealings with Mr Woodcock.

For example, I quote from the branch notes dated 22-3-91:

"The attitude of Mr B Woodcock, rail centre manager, was discussed in recent dealings with branch and members. Letter to be sent to service operations manager Mr B Smith Dunedin, outlining problems and cautioning him that future repetition from rail centre manager, branch will become more militant with the possibility of stop work meetings and withdrawing of goodwill. In the past the branch has had a reasonably good relationship with managers."

A report from the loco delegate at the 2001 AGM also reads: "Hopeful of a new boss after talks with Craig Stapleton."

The details behind this obscure little inclusion in the branch notes was that the entire operations team in Invercargill, bar one, signed a letter setting out concerns about Mr Woodcock.

We understand that the resulting out-

come was that Mr Woodcock spent the following Monday getting some "advice" on managerial skills.

Unfortunately it didn't last.

There would be few, if any ops members in Invercargill who have not been on the receiving end of unacceptable language from him.

Despite this, we all could hold our heads high, because we were professional enough to get the job done, efficiently and safely, in spite of his attitude and without the recognition that was well publicised from other depots on a regular basis.

Christmas shout you say? Not down here.

It sounds ridiculous, but we even had to have an argument just to get a pair of boots. LEs would refuse to go out on trains and cop the screaming and the threats that would follow as a result.

We would just tell him to give his boss a ring. That usually did the trick, and we would get our boots.

Needless to say, we are not disappointed to see him go, and I'll bet that management aren't disappointed either, given the concerns we have raised time and again, even though they wouldn't publicly admit to it.

Moving on.

LE team leader Lawrie Knipe has agreed to step into the role of ops manager until his retirement at the end of the year. What

a difference a change of personnel makes. Like night versus day. As a result of Lawrie's appointment the LE roster has been tweaked to better represent the requirements of the ROM.

The rail ops roster has been reviewed and staff are awaiting the outcome of that.

What we all don't understand is that with the push to remove costs out of the business, how come we have had a KiwiRail manager appointed over the Dunedin and Invercargill operations depots? That's got to be a \$100k plus cost, and, what on earth are the two ops managers going to do now?

Southport, the company that runs the export terminal out of Bluff, which is 30 odd kms from Invercargill, are busy building an inland port which may bring more work into the terminal.

We are still reasonably busy with the usual customers, Fonterra milk powder to Port Chalmers, and coal from Nightcaps to Clandeboyne.

Alliance group, which is the local meat works, is sending their products to port, Freight Haulage which carries the aluminium out of the Tiwai Point smelter, Dongwha from Maitai, an MDF plant, plus Toll and Mainfreight.

Autumn is in the air which means a change in season, a low season roster and the famed Bluff oyster season is just around the corner.

So bugger off all of you that dis our climate. We'll take the oysters any day. 🚂

Union women and leadership training

By Ruth Blakeley
NMC women's representative.

THE Helen Kelly Women in Union Leadership Training took place between November three and five last year. This training was the first of what we hope are many events organised by the RMTU's women's committee.

The training was in Wellington with 16 women members participating. The intention of the programme was to assist the participants to develop their skills in union leadership, negotiation and advocacy.

The programme was facilitated by Jen O'Donnell-Pirisi. Jen is a union sister from Australia. I met Jen at the Women in Male Dominated Industries training which is run biennially in Australia. Jen organised this training when she was the Victorian Trades Hall Council women's officer. Myself and several other RMTU women had previously attended this training and found meeting and working with sisters from the male dominated industries to be very inspiring and encouraging.

In addition to the following topics, our role as union members, organising other women members, empowering their participation, keeping our network active and some very powerful work around violence and the impact that has on us, we also heard from great guest speakers.

We were filled with respect for Christine Bartlett, an aged care worker. She organised a petition to Parliament seeking fair pay for the mainly women who do this important work. That petition has led to great things. Now there is a government inquiry into pay equity for New Zealand women workers.

The presentation on the RMTU 'JUST SAY NO' to dangerous work campaign by Karen Fletcher was well received by the

participants.

We also heard from Maryan Street, former MP and currently the KiwiRail employee relations manager. Maryan pledged ongoing support for RMTU women. The RMTU women have been well supported by KiwiRail both at this training and at the inaugural conference held in May 2015. We appreciate the support and we look forward

We sincerely hope that we will be able to offer this training on a regular basis.

A big thanks to those branch secretaries who partially funded women delegates as there was no dedicated national office budget. Things like this just wouldn't happen without your support.

And a huge thank you to the Women's Steering Committee for getting behind and



to the port employers making similar commitments.

In addition to her presentation, Suzanne McNabb, (TEU) also lent us some of her great union posters which we used to remind ourselves of the ongoing struggles for justice for women workers.

Simone Dixon, RMTU delegate (Auckland branch) and Kiwi Rail Scenic Journeys train manager who attended the training said: "I am sure all our women RMTU members here in Auckland branch will benefit from this course, as this is a powerful way to keep all women sitting on the edge of their seats, to become engaged in RMTU business and women's issues. This course is a must do!"



raising extra money to make it an awesome event.

We thank Jen for her fantastic facilitation. We wish her the strength and courage to continue her recovery from a life threatening encounter a few days after her return to Australia.

Kia kaha and arohanui Jen. 🌐

