

THE Transport Worker

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Election issues

NEW ZEALANDERS will go to polls in the next few months. In this issue we outline some of the key points of difference between a Labour-led government and one that might have National at the helm.

For our Union members and their families many of the issues are clear – stick with a Labour-led coalition and a supportive worker environment or suffer under a National-led coalition and its stated policies to undermine workers' rights and conditions.

For RMTU members the Labour-led government has shown its hand in buying back rail and declaring it will make coastal shipping a priority.

If you value your work and conditions you will make this upcoming election a personal mission to ensure a Labour-led coalition continues.

Your Union stands firm in this commitment. Read the articles here and use them to help make up your minds and those of your family and friends.

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... and now we give you . . . KIWIRAIL

H EY PRESTO - and everything is back how it was. Well, almost. After 15 years in private ownership, New Zealand's railway system is back in the taxpayer's hands under the new name of KiwiRail.

"But it hasn't been returned in the same condition as it left us," said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson. "After being sold to asset-stripping specialists Faye-Richwhite - who lined their pockets and left the country - it was further diminished as it passed through more overseas owners. When it left public ownership in 1993 we had a workforce of around 6500 people. We now have a paltry 2428 workers. And don't forget the asset-stripping and the routes that were decommissioned."

Despite the depressing history Butson agrees with Prime Minister Helen Clark and Finance Minister Michael Cullen's view to look to its future.

"In the 21st century, just as in 1908, our rail system needs major investment so that it can play a growing role in our transport system," said Clark. "A modern and well resourced rail system will lessen the carbon footprint of our transport network, and therefore of our whole economy."

"The reasons are simple. Fuel efficiency for diesel-powered trains is four times better than using the road to carry the same load; and electric trains are ten times more fuel efficient. One locomotive can pull the equivalent freight of 65 trucks."

She also supported encouraging passengers to rail and off the roads in a grand plan that integrated all transport modes.

"By 2040 total freight transport movements in this country are expected to more than double. We

What we have been through



are looking to rail - and to coastal shipping which is also fuel efficient - to carry a lot of that extra load," she said.

"Confronted with the urgent need for major investments in rail infrastructure, the government had two fundamental questions to address. First, is it in New Zealand's interests to have a strong rail system? For the Labour-led government, the answer is an unequivocal 'yes'." said Cullen at the launch of KiwiRail. "And, if

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RMTU – NZ's Largest Specialist Transport Union

the government is going to have to pay for the investments in rail that we must have, are we willing to do so in a way that essentially subsidises the profits of a private overseas firm? This is not a short-term question.

"Toll had a monopoly right to the operation of the rail system through to 2070. It is a question whose answer would impact several generations of taxpayers.

And for the Labour-led government, the answer had to be 'no.' We refused to accept that New Zealand taxpayers should indefinitely subsidise a private, foreign operation and then not make sure that the investment would deliver social and economic returns for New Zealand."

He said that the government had been heartened by the enthusiastic public response to the buy-back of the rail system "especially those in provincial New Zealand" adding that while some of that enthusiasm has been criticised as nostalgic without seeing that a State Owned Enterprise is able to be a highly successful economic forces.

"The truth is that our SOEs are performing very well and I have every confidence that whatever the final structure of the new rail system it will be a huge success," he said.

Cullen then congratulated former PM Jim Bolger on accepting the role of chairman saying he made a major contribution to the



Wellington members show their strong support for KiwiRail and to the RMTU.



(l to r) John Foster (LE), Mike Gillum (LETL), John Sargent (regional rail manager) and Telai Sefesi (shunter) clad it KiwiRail gear for the launch.

success of the SOE story.

Services at KiwiRail will initially be unchanged. Bolger will be joined by Brian Corban, Mark Franklin, Ross Wilson (ex-RMTU GS), Brian Jackson, Linda Constable and Ross Martin on the Board and a Rail Development Group is due to present the government with recommendations for the future structure of the rail businesses in early August. One option is the formation of a single organisational structure with two divisions, KiwiRail and infrastructure manager ONTRACK, which took over

the 4 000 km network when it was bought back by the government for a nominal \$1 in 2003. Other options include the creation of an SOE and a separate Crown Entity.

Improvements for Auckland and Wellington commuter train services, an overhaul of the Tranz Scenic service and urgent repairs at the Wellington and Picton ferry terminals have been announced as part of the Government's initial investment in rail.

"New Zealand's rail network is now back in New Zealand's hands," Cullen said. "We will now be able to make the investments necessary to develop a world-class 21st century rail system for New Zealanders."



IN my opinion, 2008 will always be a very special year. It marks my 18th year of full time employment as an official for a rail union and the ninth year of my being general secretary of the RMTU. It notably also marks 100 years for the North Island Main Trunk, 100 years for the locomotive branch of the Union and the end of the NZ railways privatisation experience (or should that be experiment?) with the Government purchase of the rail business and the creation of KiwiRail. My 34 years with rail have been an unforgettable rollercoaster ride of joy and despair. During these years I got to know and work, for or with, a large number of people. Barry Crump wrote a bestseller entitled 'Bastards I have met' and I believe I could also author such a memoir. It may not be as riveting but it would certainly be true to the title. The fact that there was anything left for the Government to renationalise is a tribute to the Union and its members, who have come to work and done their job and their best despite the bullshit going on around them, and to a few passionate members of management. Whilst others were avidly at work ripping out the capital and the heart of the industry for their own ends. One day the book will be written which will tell the true story. It may even have a few entertaining bits like the stress and anguish every second Monday night during 2002 wondering if the bank would allow the payroll to run and the troops to be paid. We all knew, if the payroll stopped then it was all over. The Union received a lot of criticism about the nil wage movement that year but very few people know just how close things were to total collapse. I can confirm that you cannot get blood from a stone unless you want to be a well paid unemployed rail worker with no redundancy compensation.

Looking forward

That is now in the past. We look forward to a new future as KiwiRail. The first tasks confronting the incoming board will be to select a strong, charismatic CEO who will set the stage for the new direction of the SOE. The second will be to allocate the funds to begin the repair job on 15 years of rundown and neglect. Whilst ONTRACK has been massively investing in the track and infrastructure since its inception in 2003 the simple reality



Wayne Butson, general secretary

is that the industry will not be able to meet the needs or aspirations of the nation without new locomotives and wagons.

I attended the launch of the 100 years NIMT Parliamentary Special in Parliament and watched a screening of NZ archive footage including the original Parliamentary train to meet the American 'white fleet' in Auckland. Ironically most of the multiple unit, electric and diesel electric locomotives shown in that footage remains in frontline service today. It was widely agreed by those assembled that there is a lot of work to be done in getting rail up to speed. What, however was also apparent on the night was the huge support that rail and KiwiRail had from all those present and from the current coalition Government. It is clear that there is widespread community support for the Government's actions in creating KiwiRail. The Government deserves the support of rail and port workers.

Election time

Shortly after this is published we will all know when the general election will be held this year. In travelling around the country attending as many of the branch AGMs as I can, I have been surprised by the number of members who have criticised the current coalition Government for not having done enough for them or for the country, despite accepting that they have done far more for workers in the last nine years than the

previous National Government did in the pre-ceeding nine years. From 1999 onward this Labour led coalition government has delivered for rail workers. The Ministerial Inquiry into the H&S of Tranz Rail workers was a watershed turning point for the rail industry and foreshadowed a full time employer-funded Union H&S organiser, worksite H&S committees and a strong focus on H&S within the industry. The turnaround in the H&S of the industry has been staggering but there is always more to do. The loans to Tranz Rail to stall economic collapse in 2002, the formation of ONTRACK, the massive investment in public transport and the creation of KiwiRail are all demonstrable reasons as to why we must all vote for current coalition parties so that that support may continue. The National Party have said they will not sell KiwiRail during their first term in power which leaves the question of the future of the business. The current coalition has also shown its support for ports and the coastal shipping industry with their Sea Changes policy. There does however remain more to be done in regards to our nation's ports as they and we are being held to ransom by international shipping lines. An example is majority ratepayer owned Primeport Timaru where Maersk announced its withdrawal from the port. The Port Company management panicked and laid off 45 of our members and sold heavy fork hoists and container cranes. Meanwhile, Rail celebrates as it picks up the railage of boxes to either Lyttelton and/or Port Chalmers. Primeport then, no doubt, talks to Maersk and sharpens its pencil on costs (read into costs that it will be wage and condition slashes) and Maersk announces it will return to Timaru. Timaru must now purchase new forkhoists, container cranes and hire new workers. All at what cost to the community and the ratepayers? A national ports policy and rationalisation/hubbing must become a reality soon if we are to stem the waste of dollars.

Change? What change?

The media would have us believe that the mood of the country is that it is time for a change. But from what, to what, I ask? I believe that the changes we have had for the last nine years have all been positive and favour our members – and workers as a

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Helen Clark addressing the troops.



PM visits Hillside

THE Prime Minister's visit to Hillside in June allowed us to showcase our work at Hillside and the staff to listen to her speak. She covered a variety of topics, which showed what her Government has achieved in the area of apprenticeships, buying back rail and investment into rail. It was well received by staff. The highlight is that the Government sees rail as the way to go for a sustainable future in the transport industry. Later that evening a few of us went on to a Labour Party fund raiser.

Sitting Clare Curran, Helen Clark. Standing (l to r) Peter Smart (RMTU Hillside), Jackie and Grant



Donaldson (Hillside RMTU), Sonya and Les Ingram (Hillside RMTU)



(l to r) Pete Hodgson, Clare Curran Candidate for Labour Dunedin South, Chris Patchett and Helen Clark

(l to r) Grant Donaldson, Les Ingram, Clare Curran, Peter Smart.



GM's comment continued

whole. So is it to be more of the same positive worker change or is it to be toward a positive change for the monetarists? Those who think that John Key and Bill English can even understand, empathise or wish to further the interests of the 'Kiwi battler' are sorely misinformed. Any future National Government will

be the same as past National Governments; it will govern and legislate over the Kiwi battlers for the interests of the party donors who just happen to be the big money guys.

There is a famous saying, going back over 3000 years: 'Every time history repeats itself, the price goes up.' Should 2008 end with a National Party government in power with a

state-owned rail industry let us all hope and pray that 'history does not repeat itself'. I most certainly don't have the heart for us all to repeat the journey of the last 15 years.

Make your vote count and cast it for the party that has walked the talk for the last nine years – rather than those who have only talked the talk for the last nine months!

Unionism and good comradeship

Dear Editor

Having been an executive member of the RMTU Port Chalmers Branch for the last few years and vice president for the last two my perception of what is required – and the input expected from elected members – has changed tremendously. I guess I and fellow executive members have been spoilt to a degree with our previous and present president personally taking on a large chunk of the day-to-day administration and problems of the branch. Obviously, with contract negotiations taking place this year the input from others became necessary and I am sure all those involved had their eyes opened to the demand on their spare time, the stress and the hard work involved on behalf of fellow union members. After 18 weeks of on-and-off again negotiations I can vouch for the fact that we had all had enough and were extremely pleased with the final result achieved. In spite of some members' expectations not being met I personally found it rewarding and all worthwhile when, on completion of the ratification, a number of members had the good grace to shake the hand of all the negotiation team and thank them for their efforts.

As well as having a fair amount of input into the branch affairs this year I have also been on the receiving end of what unionism and good comradeship is all about. I have had an illness and a few weeks of hospitalisation away from home. The support I received from the branch and the support my wife received can only be described as overwhelming. I take my hat off to all fellow RMTU Port Chalmers members and say a huge thank you for your support.

Yours in comradeship
Bruce Walker

A closer look at the super fund

Dear Editor

Love them or hate them, the ASB television ads starring Goldstein and his rich boss 'Sir' are arguably the Speights' ads of the mid 2000s and one doesn't have to look very hard to question why. It seems so simple to make a reasonable return on a term deposit with a

reputable bank, as opposed to being gifted a hard earned net percentage loss on risky investments in a closely-managed superannuation fund.

For example; in purely round figures for the sake of the exercise, I am 58 yrs old and have been investing to the maximum company percentage subsidy allowable since our super fund's inception. I have always championed the Harbour's super fund and will continue to do so to our younger members. But this year's reported loss has got me thinking – and taking a slightly harder look than ever before. And I have been astonished at how blind I have previously been to a harsh and bitter irony that now exists for me and my peers – who I am sure, have long since been aware of that which I have simply not bothered to investigate, until now.

I am not referring to the obvious error in the annual report regarding the Death and Disability cover amount printed in the report. That was an unfortunate oversight and is easily remedied. But rather the fact that by remaining in the scheme for the next seven years (until retirement) I stand to lose a potential \$80,000 or more based on the following rationale; Current super savings of around \$216,000 if invested in Goldstein's ASB bank at the going rate of 9.20% for a fixed 1 year term would return just below \$20,000 pa. Multiply this by seven and add the percentage increase to the total equals \$140,000 (minus tax of course). However, my paltry \$7,560 combined employer subsidy and personal contributions times seven equals \$52,920 (less tax and fund expenses) making a difference of \$87,000 plus whatever the expenses turned out to be, that would represent as guaranteed an investment as anyone could hope for, offset by whatever % increase our fund managers can accrue for on our behalf, should there be any.

You may ask, yes but what about the Death and disability cover etc? Yes, there is a risk there at first, but at my age, with again seven years to go, it will only

increase by a maximum of around \$52,000 from this year and will continue to decrease in risk as the gap between me and retirement closes, to the point where in the final year or two will be that year's contributions, providing that we actually manage to hang on to those contributions as opposed to this past year where we not only lost them all, but more besides. One is left to ask the questions: Why would I bother? and Could the fund managers possibly accrue an additional \$90,000 each over and above contributions in seven years? Or is that an unfair question to ask? I guess the answer to that is probably, that's just the way it is, but I think it is an interesting anomaly.

The reality is that the whole debate is purely academic but the irony remains, that the very scheme which is designed to return the best possible financial outcome for folks in their retirement, is actually penalising them in the years immediately leading into it. Yes, superannuation is a good and wonderful thing and, these days, more and more a necessity for our younger generation. But instead of the sentiments espoused in the old song lyrics of 'With a little bit of luck, they'll grow up and start supporting you!' It seems to me that us older guys are very much subsidising the younger generation in order for the Harbour's super scheme to actually exist. Ironic.

John Lydiate
Dunedin

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New Trustee for super fund

Hal Upton is the latest trustee to join the board of the Harbour Superannuation Fund. Hal is Dockmaster at the Port of Lyttelton, a member of the Lyttelton branch executive and a former branch president. He replaces Centreport's John Murfitt who retired after 20 years' sterling service as a trustee. Although still a novice in the role, Hal has good-humouredly dealt with a steady stream of inquiries from branch members about the recent performance of the fund.



[response from the New Zealand Harbours Superannuation Plan

The Trustees have received a copy of Mr Lydiate's letter and are interested in his comments.

As already mentioned in the 2008 Annual Report the Trustees are disappointed in the investment performance of the Plan and they take no pleasure in announcing a negative result. This is despite the fact that the result compared well with similar schemes.

The important issues that the Trustees wish to stress are:

Over the past five years the average annual gross return has been 10.4% against average annual inflation (CPI) of 2.7%. This is a real average annual gross return of 7.7%. Better than cash over the same period.

Peak annual gross returns (before tax and general expenses) have been some 20% and 17% (2006 and 2004).

Going forward it is most unlikely that any trading bank will commit to a seven year term deposit at 9.2% pa. In this respect it must be noted that the Reserve Bank has indicated that it is likely to reduce the Official Cash Rate over coming months and any such downward movement will reduce retail deposit rates.

It is also unlikely that the Plan will experience only zero or negative returns over the next seven years. However, a periodic low or negative return can be expected and is factored into the investment strategy adopted by the Trustees.

An important and pertinent issue raised by Mr Lydiate relates to the potential impact that a low or a negative return may have on members nearing retirement. The Trustees are conscious of this issue and are exploring the possibility of introducing a cash only type investment option.

Such an option will need to be carefully designed and work is currently being done on this. Any implementation will need to be carefully communicated and explained to members. Cash rates will fluctuate over time and will not always offer better returns when compared to a balanced portfolio. Over the past five years cash has given an average annual gross return of 7.6% whereas a balanced portfolio (shares, property, bonds and cash) has given an average annual gross return of 10.2%.

In addition each member's financial circumstances will be different and, therefore, need different investment requirements and strategies. In this respect it will be most important that individual members seek independent financial advice before making decisions.

The error regarding the Death and Disability insurance cover is noted with regret and concern. However, this error was in the member's benefit statement and not the Annual Report. The administration manager has acknowledged this error and corrected benefit statements are being provided to all members concerned.]

Resignations

Dear Editor,
Please accept this letter of resignation as of Friday 18 April 2008.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the RMTU and, in particular, Jarrod Oliver and the Taieri Gorge negotiating team, for their work on my behalf over the last few years.
Sincerely
David Dobson

Dear Editor,
After enjoying many years in the locomotive branch of the railways I have succumbed to the temptation of retirement and superannuation.

I have had a wonderful life with the railways and have seen many changes



Wayne Butson and Fred Hamer

over the years – one of the most controversial being the decreases in crew levels from three to one. Management styles have also undergone a lot of change as we have ventured from NZGR to NZR Corporation, NZ Rail, Tranz Rail, Toll Rail and now KiwiRail. After going full cycle I'm sure our

rail network will flourish and now progress for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

Throughout all this I have been most grateful to have had the security of our Union (under various guises – EFCA, LEA, CURE and RMTU) to not only maintain but improve our conditions. These people are the unsung heroes of our workplace as they work tirelessly on our behalf – not only to increase wages, but to advance safety and general conditions. Like many of our members I have been privileged over the years to contribute in any areas I can.

It is my sincere wish that railway staff always get in behind the Union and support their efforts for the benefit of all.

After some 53 years as a Union member I now tender my resignation. I have had a great time and have many great memories to enjoy. To Wayne and the team – I wish you all the best for a successful future.

Sincerely
Fred Hamer

Dear Editor,
I retired recently and tender my resignation from the RMTU. Thank you and members of head office for their help and support over the years, and I wish the membership of the RMTU all the best for the future.

Sincerely
Kevin Tasker

Dear Editor,
It is with regret that I am handing in my notice to KiwiRail and must resign my membership of the RMTU.

The reasons for leaving KiwiRail is that I am no longer prepared to put up with the petty, vindictive and dictatorial style of management in Napier.

I have enjoyed being an LEA, CURE and RMTU member since 28 August 1978 and have felt privileged to be a Union delegate and support my peers.

I wish the Union and my workmates well for the future and trust that KiwiRail will herald the dawn of a better management style.

I do however, look forward to meeting up with other kiwis in the rail industry of Western Australia.

Grant Julian
Napier depot

Government priority for sea freight

INTEGRATING freight movements by ship with delivery to and from ports was vital if ships are to carry 30 per cent of inter-regional freight by 2040, said minister of Transport Safety, Harry Duynhoven during an address to the RMTU's Ports Forum in June 4 and 5.

"We know that New Zealand has been under-utilising sea transport as part of its domestic network," he said. "Sea transport is now seen as an environmentally-friendly, energy-efficient and cost-effective alternative for moving freight around the country."

He confirmed that many submissions to the draft strategy had focussed on port-related ownership, infra-structural investment and service alignment issues adding that due to the level interest "this policy area will receive priority over the next three years".

He said most port policy issues hadn't had much attention since the Post Companies Act was passed in 1988.

"It's high time it was revisited to ensure it meets today's needs."

The Sea-freight Development Unit, established by the Ministry of Transport as a liaison between government and the sea freight industry, was also focussing on workforce initiative, he said, adding: "A revitalised domestic sea freight industry will need more skilled people. The New Zealand workforce engaged in domestic sea freight is ageing with one third over 60 years old," he said.

He said that proposals for improvements to port and harbour safety legislation would be going to Cabinet as part of a wider package of amendments to the Maritime Transport Act 1994 which would establish functions, duties and powers to "lock in" consistent safety management at harbours throughout the country that were previously administered on a voluntary basis.

ONTRACK at fault

THE family of a railway worker killed in Huntly last year has received \$277,000 from rail operator ONTRACK.

The company had admitted it failed to take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of Sean-Edward Bryand Smith, 25, and was fined \$36,000 in Hamilton District Court, the Waikato Times reported.

Mr Smith was killed in June last year while working on a crane, loading a train.

A passing train hit the crane and Mr Smith was knocked into the train's path.

Judge Melanie Harland said ONTRACK had a good safety record but on that particular day "for reasons unknown" a job plan identifying potential hazards had not been done.

Lawyer for ONTRACK, Gerard Curry, suggested human error was to blame but Judge Harland said that should be accounted for in a dangerous environment.

"Where such an environment exists, it is my view that there need to be effective back-up procedures in place to ensure that non-compliance (with safety procedures) is immediately detected."

It was the first time an explanation had been offered to Mr Smith's partner Rachel Rowling, 27.

"Nothing will ever make right the fact my partner and father of my child was killed in a work-related accident which never should have happened had the safety procedures been carried out," Ms Rowling said. "Ultimately a life is something that can never be replaced. My daughter and I are now faced with trying to start our lives over without our very much loved Sean."

Since the accident ONTRACK has made reparations to Mr Smith's estate and Ms Rowling totalling \$277,000.

Container air analysis

STRANGE things can sometimes be removed from containers but what concerns port workers are those things that can't be seen.

According to the promoters of a new gas-detection system, 20% of shipping containers harbour residual concentrations of hazardous chemical vapours. Syft Technologies claim their gadget can detect these gasses by poking a probe through the door seal of containers before they are opened thus ensuring they stay there until they can be dealt to and workers remain safe and healthy.

The system was offered recently to the Lyttelton Port Company but because they don't unpack containers, they suggested the promotion be taken to the companies responsible for that work.

No report yet how they have reacted.

However, workers at Port Nelson, who had their claim that fumigation of export logs had caused a rise in motor neurone disease rejected, would not see the detection of hidden gasses as someone else's problem.

Lyttelton RMTU branch secretary Con Jackson says however, that methyl bromide is also

seen as a problem by port workers because the fumigant is released into the atmosphere where they work more than any contamination of container contents.

"They want to be certain they are not being exposed to this virulent poisonous gas in their workplace," he said. "The introduction of technology to recapture the gas after fumigation is taking too long."

A recapture system, mandatory in some Australian states, was under "trial" at the Port of Nelson, yet some Australian states had already made it mandatory. "We seem determined to reinvent the wheel, while we continue to pump hundreds of tonnes of methyl bromide into the atmosphere each year," he said adding that methyl bromide is also highly destructive of the ozone layer – far more than the CFCs that were banned years ago. "Yet our use of it is increasing. Recapture would make fumigation safer for port workers and the atmosphere safer for all New Zealanders."

"While container workers are keen to quickly identify potentially hazardous gasses they are equally keen that the technology is tried and proven," said Con.

Napier dispute basis of Forum discussion

AN analysis of the Napier waterfront dispute revealed to delegates at the 8th Ports Forum the importance of inter-union solidarity. The Forum was in Wellington on June 4 and 5.

The events of the Napier dispute that erupted late last year, were outlined by RMTU industrial organiser Todd Valster and Napier delegate Dave Marden. They explained the Union was negotiating the collective agreement when the port company awarded its stevedoring work to a new company, threatening to throw many MUNZ members out of work. The company took legal action to try to force its crane drivers, members of the RMTU, to train the new workers. The Union won the case on safety grounds. When picketing began, there was a strong show of solidarity and unity between the two unions. That, combined with national and international union support, led to a successful settlement.

Conference opening

The Minister of Transport Safety Harry Duynhoven opened the conference with an explanation of the Government's recently-released coastal shipping strategy, Sea Change. He said sea and rail transport would make a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Under the NZ Transport Strategy, the target was to double coastal shipping's share of inter-regional freight to 30 per cent by 2040 and to increase rail's share from 18% to 25%. The Government had committed \$36 million to revitalise coastal shipping over the next four years.

Port of Lyttelton

Lyttelton chief executive Peter Davie gave a presentation on the port and its services. He predicted increasing cargo volumes, larger ships and the development of hubbing would put increasing pressure on ports. If port companies were commercially operated, rationalisation would already have happened, he said, but parochial local body ownership stood in the way. Eventually, lower returns would force the issue. Draught depth and proximity to cargo were likely to be the long term determinants of which ports survived.



(l to r) Con Jackson Lyttelton secretary, Darren Hughes Labour MP, Ruth Blakeley SI Ports Rep NMC and Aubrey Wilkinson NI Ports Rep NMC

Free trade agreement

In a debate on the merits of the China Free Trade Agreement, the Statistics Minister and MP for Otaki, Darren Hughes, spoke in favour of it saying NZ would have an initial competitive advantage by being the first OECD country to complete such a deal. Most of our imports from China, our fourth biggest trading partner, were already free of tariff barriers so a flood of imports was unlikely, he said. The agreement was more about expanding exports to China, currently running at \$2 billion a year. The deal would help New Zealand investors to move into China.

Russel Norman, co-leader and trade spokesman for the Green Party, opposed the FTA, saying it was not just about tariffs. It was not a 'free' trade deal, but a deal to bind the hands of Government. "We are not opposed to trade but we are opposed to restricting the right of democratically elected governments to regulate," he said adding that the manufacturing sector was struggling under a high-dollar monetary policy. The tax system had been encouraging the housing bubble and now fuel costs were driving up inflation. Rail and shipping were much more efficient than road transport and it was important to put a price on greenhouse emissions so the taxpayer was not subsidising the trucking industry.

Maritime NZ

Lynn Irving, health and safety co-ordinator with Maritime NZ updated delegates on the activities of the Operations Afloat committee. She circulated a proposed ship safety survey, to be completed by a surveyor for each vessel on first arrival in New Zealand before working commences.

Bargaining co-ordination

Delegates discussed the lack of coordination of bargaining during recent and current negotiations at a number of ports. One concern was that ports struggling to retain business could pressure members to accept inferior conditions to save jobs. It was suggested advocates could coordinate their bargaining activities more. It was agreed that the NMC should be asked to research the creation of a guideline reference document of minimum conditions for use in port negotiations. Hopefully a draft would be available for consideration at National Conference.

Harbours super

Three of the fund trustees, Peter Clemens, Hal Upton and Drew McFarlane reported that the unaudited return for the financial year showed a 3 to 4 per cent loss. This was

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AGMs



Wellington Rail Branch members exercising democracy with a vote at their AGM



New Wellington auto express delegate, Renee Christie.



Changing of the guard – Mani Raumati (left) welcomes Howard Phillips to the role of branch secretary of Wellington Rail Branch. Mani held the position for the last six years and was a strong active leader. Mani was thanked by many at the AGM including a powerful speech by Bill Tamaki. The Wellington Rail Branch and RMTU wish Mani well in his new endeavours and pledges support for Howard in his new role.

Wellington Rail Branch

not a bad result in view of the 36% exposure to global equities, which had fallen 14%. The year's losses had been recovered in the first two months of the current year. Only 82 of the 580 members had joined the Kiwisaver component of the fund, suggesting the advantages of Kiwisaver might not be well understood. The fund had lost no money in the spate of finance sector defaults.

Methyl bromide

Gordon Hosking of STIMBR, Alan Perry a consultant to Genera and Steffan Brownning of Soil and Health took part in a panel discussion on methyl bromide fumigation. Gordon presented information that showed the use of methyl bromide had increased, in spite of its destructive effect on the ozone layer, to about 200 tonnes a

year with 70 per cent of its use on forestry products. The gas could be recaptured after fumigation, but this had never been applied to log fumigation, which would be a critical advancement. An alternative for some situations was posphine, which could be used on ships in transit but was slower acting. In a sometimes heated discussion, the panelists debated the issues and answered questions from delegates.

AGMs



(inset) Kasia Kurene addressing the Hutt Branch AGM and giving the chairperson's report..

Hutt Workshops Branch



Hazel Armstrong, lawyer, speaks to her book "Blood on the coal" a story on the Brunner mine disaster and the evolution of ACC



Cabinet minister Trevor Mallard.



National party candidate Paul Quinn. Some will remember him as a Tranz Link manager.



Rimutaka Labour candidate Chris Hipkins.



Wayne Butson giving his annual address to Hutt members.

Political parties answer our question - well some of them.....

.... the RMTU posed four questions for our political parties to answer. Labour, the Greens and the Maori Party replied - National and New Zealand First did not.

NZ has a skilled tradesperson shortage. What role do you see railway workshops playing in training new tradespersons?

LABOUR: Rail workshops are already utilised as a training ground for apprentices with 30 apprentices currently employed across the KiwiRail and United Group workshop operations. A further 14-16 positions are currently being recruited. The injection of capital into rail and the proposed utilisation of New Zealand workshops to build, maintain and refit new and existing rolling stock has resulted in significant potential to further develop this training scheme. The technical skills and training provided within the rail workshop environment are relevant and useful beyond the rail sector and provide trainees with skills to operate where there is an existing skill shortage in New Zealand.

GREENS: It's crucial that rail transport plays a major role in our future transport infrastructure. For that to happen, we need to support our railway workshops to provide a base of skilled and experienced engineers and tradespeople who will help rebuild our trains and tracks.

MAORI PARTY: We will promote and support more apprenticeships and industry training in all fields through partnerships with strategic institutions and industries, including railway workshops.

Does your party support the creation of KiwiRail and the return of Rail to public owner-

ship, and if not, what do you plan to do with KiwiRail?

LABOUR: Unequivocally yes. We believe that rail is a vital component of our transport network. It was sold off by National and neglected throughout the 90s and only given the attention it deserves by this Labour-led Government. The Minister of Finance has already set out a short-term agenda for investment into rail and Cabinet is about to consider further major investment to rail over the next few years.

GREENS: The Greens have campaigned vigorously to get rail back in public ownership and are committed to keeping it that way. Rail now needs to be revitalised and reconfigured to meet the needs of the 21st century. Significant investment needs to take place in the ailing infrastructure to move more freight and more people – providing security of mobility as the impacts of climate change and high oil prices kick in.

MAORI PARTY: Yes, rail is a key public asset that will become increasingly valuable to the nation as the price of oil continues to rise, and as the nation strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To address these we support the establishment of a properly integrated rail system. Maori have been particularly hard hit by the privatisation and sale of New Zealand's assets, through the sale of industries and workplaces which employed huge numbers of Maori. We advocate for a greater emphasis on sustainable, equitable and participatory solutions for Aotearoa with assets retained for the benefit of all who call Aotearoa home.

What would you do, if anything, to promote the expansion of public-owned transport sectors?

LABOUR: Buying the rail operational business enables the government to implement an integrated transport strategy and to invest in the business to further rail's potential to contribute to the economy in a much more meaningful way through movement of people and freight. We also bought back 80 percent of the shareholding of Air New Zealand because of the importance of a national carrier to our economy and our ability to network between our regions. The purchase of rail and Air New Zealand were opposed by the National Party.

GREENS: Our focus is on outcomes for public transport and we support the best ownership-structure in each mode to deliver these. In the case of rail, we believe this is through public ownership. For other modes, we're open to re-evaluating questions of ownership if we're unable to deliver a modern, efficient, and sustainable public transport system.

MAORI PARTY: The number one priority of the Maori Party for infrastructure investment and development is public transport. We have supported legislation to increase the funding and promotion of public transport, and support the full integration and electrification of our rail system. The possibility of having longer, heavier and more efficient trains so that more freight could be taken off the road and put on rail is a positive step towards achieving less greenhouse gas emissions and responding to the peak oil crisis.

What measures do you plan take to promote coastal shipping services?

LABOUR: We recognise that the restoration of coastal shipping as being as important as rail and road networks. This is why the action plan is set out in Sea Change - the domestic sea freight strategy published in May 2008 - is considered to be an important initiative of this Government. Apart from the four specific and immediate steps detailed in Sea Change, the longer term policy of this Government is to also look at supply chain policy issues, especially in relation to ports. And \$36 million has been earmarked over the next four years to help develop coastal shipping. This was also opposed by the National Party.

GREENS: We support the Sea Change strategy and will work with urgency to implement it. We will also ensure that adequate labour standards on international vessels in New

Zealand waters are maintained, irrespective of the flag under which the ship operates.

MAORI PARTY: Yes, as part of our Energy Efficiency Strategy and response to peak oil, the Maori Party will support and promote transport options which are more energy efficient and which keep the cost of household goods and consumables to a minimum.

What is your policy on public ownership of ports and possible rationalisation or hubbing?

LABOUR: We are still at an early stage of scoping this work and do not have particular views. With global supply chains becoming more complex, major international shipping carriers are changing the way they operate. The Sea Change strategy responds by signalling the likely need for 'feeder' regional

cargoes to hub ports in time for an international vessel's fixed day sailing.

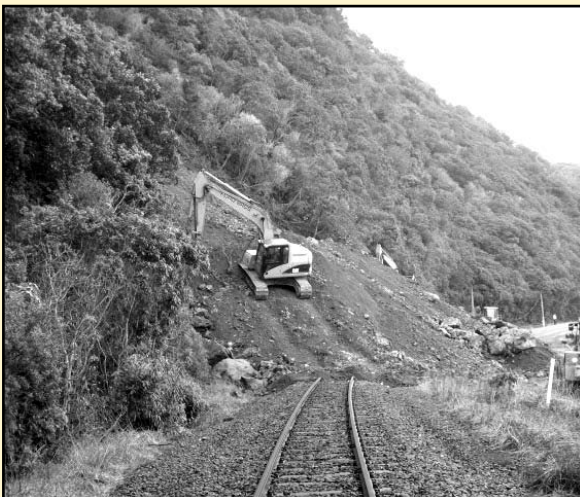
GREENS: We stand firmly against the private/foreign ownership of strategic New Zealand assets, like our ports. For them to work well, however, we will need to rationalise our current port system to get the best results for New Zealand. The creation of "hub and spoke" networks, as described in the 'Sea Change' strategy, is one reform the Greens would support.

MAORI PARTY: We support public-iwi partnerships in the ownership and management of national assets. While some rationalisation or hubbing may be necessary to enhance energy efficiency and to reduce carbon emissions, it will be important to ensure the needs and rights of workers are considered. The Maori Party supports the Employment Relations Act, and any amendments to make it more worker and family friendly.

Slips and washouts

Too much weather in August certainly took its toll on NZ, rail was no exception. This shows how important effective communication is in emergency situations, without it – disaster!

Waiau River washout.



Main north line, 177km



TOC goes to KIC

CLEARLY there were going to be issues if we just replaced Toll with KiwiRail for the Toll Operations Council (TOC) so the opportunity was taken to rename the Council – KiwiRail Industrial Council (KIC).

The TOC terms of reference for the new KIC were reviewed and updated taking into account the CT operations staying with KiwiRail and Toll retaining Toll TranzLink.

There are some other key changes for the new KiwiRail Industrial Council, from the former TOC terms of reference, which are outlined below.

The KIC will be the formal discussion group for matters involving passenger, shunting, terminals, CT terminals, locomotive running and associated activities therein.

It will effectively be an ongoing joint working party between KiwiRail and the Rail & Maritime Transport Union.

The general purposes of KIC will include:

- ◆ Building an appropriate framework for the future;
- ◆ Enhancing discussion and consultation at local level;
- ◆ Providing leadership and direction necessary for local committees developing, trialling and implementing agreed outcomes;
- ◆ Counselling on how local projects (modelled on the national 'big picture') can be jointly developed, trialled and implemented;
- ◆ Ensuring the maximum possible local participation in any debate and project work;
- ◆ All relevant code, training and rule reviews and updates;
- ◆ Providing a joint (RMTU/KiwiRail) national overview of the 'big picture';
- ◆ Sharing information, data and ideas at all levels as appropriate;
- ◆ Dealing with the 'exceptions', local quirks;
- ◆ Developing agreed educative programmes to enhance safety and understanding;
- ◆ Develop and set facility and equipment basic standards (eg lighting, underfoot conditions, loco cab conditions, etc);
- ◆ Provide a national overview and proc-

esses for the development, trial and introduction of new technology and work processes;

- ◆ Issues incorporated into or arising from the KiwiRail New Zealand Operating Plan (or further issues which may arise from the Council) should be vetted, debated, amended or endorsed at KIC level;
- ◆ Review of Tunnel Committee reports;
- ◆ Review Technical Committee reports; and
- ◆ Overview of local H&S action team minutes and escalation point for unresolved issues.

The KIC configuration is:

- ❖ Managers representing Kiwi Rail/passenger
- ❖ Manager representing mechanical
- ❖ a rep each from loco and terminal at RMTU Northern, Central and Southern
- ❖ RMTU 1 CT Site rep - nationally
- ❖ RMTU 2 Passenger reps - TMW and Scenic
- ❖ RMTU 2 industrial officers/organisers or NMC representatives

The chairperson will rotate between KiwiRail senior management and RMTU officials. All RMTU reps are elected.

The KIC and Ontrack Industrial Council (OIC) will meet at least annually to discuss and deal with interoperability issues.

Local Industrial Committees (LICs) will replace the Local Consultative Committees. Clearer guidelines for the new LICs include naming each depot/terminal which will have a LIC and listing the secondary terminals/depots.

Local industrial committees will be established at Westfield, Mt Maunganui, Te Rapa, Palmerston North, Wellington, Mid-



UG engineers Mike Duggan and Jim Finlayson gave an update on the current programme and addressed excessive cab vibration.



Doug Blakie, Southern Terminals rep, holds a model of one of the new container rolling stock – 100 of which will be built in China for the Auckland to Tauranga route.

dleton and Dunedin.

Secondary terminals are Whangarei, Taranaki (New Plymouth, Stratford, Whare-roa), Napier, Kawerau, Kinleith, Picton, West Coast, Timaru and Invercargill

LIC membership will ensure adequate representation of the occupations in each terminal, plus one union/employee representative from each secondary terminal within their area.

The KIC terms of reference were agreed and signed off July 15 and can be viewed on the RMTU website:

www.rmtunion.org.nz/publications

PARLIAMENTARY STE



£1000 bet on completion

THIS year marks the centenary of the completion of the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) line, a milestone being marked by a number of events, the first being the re-creation of a historic train that took politicians to Auckland to meet an American naval fleet.

One politician wagered it wouldn't be finished in time; an engineer wagered it would. The bet was for £1000.

The politician was Public Works Minister William Hall-Jones and the engineer Frederick William Furkert, the man responsible for bringing together two railheads – one advancing from the south, the other from the north.

TEAM SPECIAL



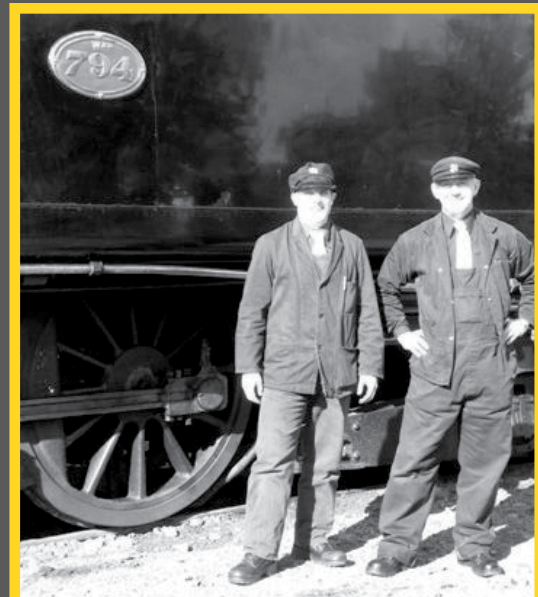
on of the Main Trunk Line

On 8 August 1908, the Parliament Special, carrying 44 members of Parliament and a further 150 friends and supporters, pulled into central Auckland around 6.30 in the evening.

Furkert won his bet by laying temporary tracks through a section of the central North Island to connect the two railheads enabling the politicians to greet the visiting United States naval fleet.

The journey was made three months before the NIMT was officially opened by Prime Minister Sir Joseph Ward with the traditional "last spike" ceremony.

Continued on the next page



On August 6 - 8 the trip was recreated with a replica "Parliament Special" pulling into Britomart 100 years to the day that its predecessor arrived.

MPs along with ONTRACK guests and representatives of central North Island local authorities, covered the same ground, but over three rather than two days.

In 1908, people travelled between Wellington and Auckland by either train to New Plymouth and steam ship to Onehunga - or train supplemented by coach trips through the central North Island.

Hall-Jones initially planned to transport the politicians between the two railheads by coach. But the plan had to be abandoned when it became apparent that there wouldn't be enough coaches to carry all the passengers.

That led Furkert to speculate that the entire journey could be completed by rail. By May 1908, the only gap in the line was between the incomplete Makatote Viaduct and Ohakune.

Hall Jones jumped at the idea – and provided an incentive in the form of his

wager. The viaduct could be completed by August, but not the heavy earthworks needed for the railway line.

Furkert's solution was to build a temporary line between Horopito and the Taonui Viaduct. Winter snow almost derailed the plan. But the weather cleared in time to enable the rails to meet on 3 August at Maunganui o te Ao.

The Special left Wellington's Thorndon station at 10pm on 7 August and travelled initially on what is now the Johnsonville Line, owned then by the Wellington Manawatu Railway Company.

A Railways Department engine took them to Waiouru where a Public Works Department locomotive took over and pulled the train to Horopito. There, it was replaced by three smaller, lighter locomotives for the trip across the temporary track.

From Makatote, the Public Works Department took over again, hauling the train to



(l to r) John Trewavas, Jim Oliver and Steve Brabender.

Steve is NZ's youngest trained steam driver

Taumarunui where it was met by a Railways Department A class express locomotive for the journey to Auckland.

The completion of the NIMT was a major landmark in New Zealand's history. It fuelled economic development and population growth in the North Island, and confirmed Auckland and Wellington's status as the country's leading cities.

Most New Zealanders saw the NIMT as a shining symbol of progress, heralding a golden age of rail transport in the first half of the 20th century.

Know your rights

RECENTLY the RMTU National Office and the Hutt Branch found themselves working together on a case involving the Parental Leave Act.

Hutt shops member, Charisa Lockley and husband Jason (both RMTU members) gave birth to Daisy Lockley on April 7 by emergency caesarean. There were serious medical complications for both mother and daughter.

Normally, having a child is a 'memorable' experience but what Charisa and Jason went through was far from that. In fact there were times throughout Charisa's labour that the medical practitioners doubted either Charisa or Daisy would make it. Even then, Daisy spent five weeks in the Special Care Baby Unit at Hutt Hospital.

Thankfully both are now well and happy but what, you may ask, does this have to do with employment matters and this magazine?

Charisa applied for special paid sick leave,



Charisa and Daisy

as her entitlement under her collective agreement, with United Group Rail (UGR).

Amazingly, this was denied by her managers at Hutt, including the new human resources manager.

The RMTU then requested the company reconsider its decision. It was denied a second time. They said that Charisa was already receiving parental leave entitlements therefore CA provisions did not apply, which included special paid sick leave.

It was not until the RMTU reminded UGR of section 71p of the Parental Leave Act which stated that non-statutory entitlements do not affect parental leave entitlements.

In light of this new information UGR reconsidered Charisa's request and paid her for all of those days she applied for special paid sick leave.

The RMTU would like to commend Charisa and Jason for consistently standing up for what they believed she was entitled to under her CEA agreement with UGR.

We wish Charisa, Jason and Daisy the best – despite all the challenges presented in both labour departments!

Shame on UGR!

Workers' rights at stake



By Helen Kelly
President, CTU

THIS year's election is an important one for you and all Kiwi workers. It will decide what sort of change New Zealand workers can expect over the next few years.

The CTU isn't affiliated to any political party and we will work with anyone that supports our goals - but we also weren't born yesterday; we know the difference a government can make to the lives of working people. Take the minimum wage for example - up just 87 cents in National's nine years, and up \$5 under nine years of Labour-led governments.

The last 20 years has seen considerable changes in New Zealand politics that have had a big impact on Kiwi workers and their families. Workers know that governments can make a big difference to their working lives, and we expect a government that will support working people and their families and stand

up for people like us.

Workers have had some big gains in the last nine years. Things like cheaper doctor's visits and prescriptions, more holidays, time and a half for working public holidays, 14 weeks paid parental leave, Working For Families, improvements in the minimum wage, KiwiSaver, KiwiBank, the rebuilding of key public services, repurchase of national assets like the railways, 1000s of extra teachers, nurses and police, 20 hours free early childhood education, interest free student loans and state house income related rents.

National opposed every single one of these things when they were introduced. All National has to offer so far is privatisation and removing our work rights.

National's privatisation plans will be felt in lots of ways. In ACC for example, John Key has said it is "almost certainly likely" that Aussie insurance firms would be allowed to run worker compo. In education there will be more money for private schools while in health, charges for doctor's visits and prescriptions will go up. And then there is KiwiBank, which deputy leader Bill English said National would eventually sell.

And as workers feel the pinch through increased living costs, National has delivered an employment policy that reduces job security and makes it harder for workers to lift their wages.

Their work rights plans include the return

of the Fire at Will Bill - taking away the right to appeal against being unfairly sacked in the first 90 days, this time for workers in small businesses. It could affect up to 200,000 of us each year.

National's policy will put pressure on vulnerable workers to sell their fourth week's annual leave and allow the boss to offer employment agreements with only three weeks holiday.

National would dismantle collective bargaining provisions by allowing for collective agreements to be set up by non union members, and unions will need employer agreement to access workplaces.

And National hasn't said what will happen to our rights to KiwiSaver employer and government contributions. Many think they will go.

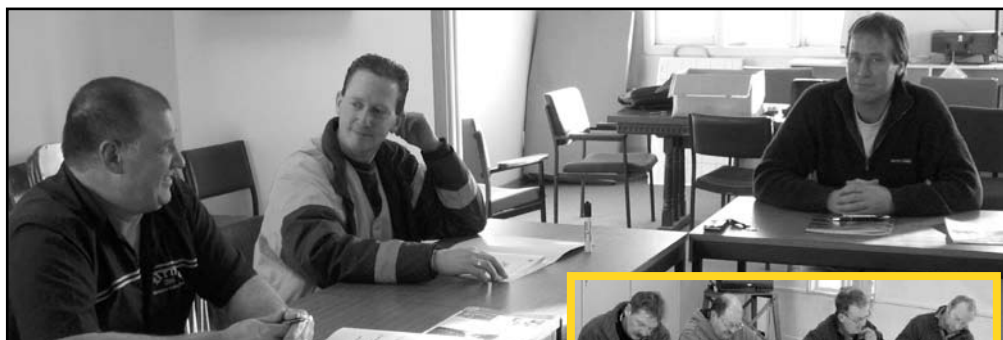
Work rights are some of the most important rights we have. It's our work rights that keep our jobs secure and our workplaces safe, and it's our work rights that help us get higher wages and win better conditions.

So there is a lot at stake for workers this election. We have one chance to keep the gains we've earned, and keep up the progress. Or put it all at risk.

Make sure you and your friends and family are enrolled to vote, and get involved in the campaign that the RMTU and other unions through the CTU are running this year.

Delegate training

South Island NMC rep, Tim Spence.



Employment Relations Education Leave (EREL) is an important feature within the Employment Relations Act – a feature we don't want 'tinkered' with. Trained active delegates are the backbone of our union. Pictured are delegates being trained recently from the Otago branches



CTU CRITIQUE

National's employment policy

ON the bright side, National's employment policy emphasis on workers and employers bargaining in good faith, is at least a step back from the extremes of its 1990s 'Work rights' framework, and the Employment Relations Act. National has also dropped their previous policy of removing the ability for workers experiencing stress to have protections under Health and Safety law. They have not yet foreshadowed a repeal of the youth rates gains (which they voted against) or recent flexible working arrangements provisions (which also voted against).

The CTU has called for cross party support for the social partnership model, which, with its problem-solving culture, is acknowledged as a big contributor to the economic success of several comparable small countries, and National's support for this is welcomed.

However, genuine social partners don't take the ground out from each other. Social partnership cannot exist without basic human rights protections, including the right of workers to join independent trade unions and bargain collectively.

Workers reacted negatively to National's plan last time to remove the right of new workers to a fair hearing from their employer, and will do so again. And, critically, National has no plan on how to lift wages in New Zealand; rather their policies will do the exact opposite. In the 1990s, it was low paid workers who bore the brunt of National's workplace reforms, and history looks set to repeat if they are elected.

Specifically, National's policy (24 July 2008) says:

■ National believes employment law should treat employees and employers fairly, expand opportunities for those having difficulty getting work, increase flexibility, and let businesses grow.

We say National's rhetoric on workplaces doesn't match the reality. Taking away rights

does not create job opportunities. Our employment law already treats employers and employees fairly. There are much better ways to promote employment opportunities for long-term unemployed or disadvantaged groups of workers, by investing in skills development.

■ We will introduce a 90-day trial period for new staff, by agreement between the employer and employee, in businesses with fewer than 20 people. This will give those having difficulty getting work – like young, inexperienced people or new immigrants – a better chance at a job.

We say the Employment Relations Act already allows for probationary employment, but what it doesn't allow for is probationary employment where you have no rights as an employee. National is proposing to specifically legalise unfair behaviour for small businesses. Their new second class of worker – with less rights than those in larger firms – would cover the 30 per cent of workers work in small businesses, and could effect up to 200,000 workers annually. We do not oppose employers having the right to dismiss poor performing workers. But we do oppose the removal of the right for a worker to appeal against unjustified dismissal.

■ We will have safeguards for workers. Good-faith provisions will still apply, as will rights to sick leave, holidays, and health and safety provisions. Rules of natural justice and human rights legislation will apply. Mediation will be available in disputes, and employers won't be able to hire and fire the same employee every 90 days.

We say recourse to the Human Rights Commission does not give a worker grounds for reinstatement or recovering lost wages. A personal grievance does, with reinstatement being the primary remedy. Under National's proposal, an employer need give no reason

for firing a worker.

■ Continue to allow union access to workplaces with an employer's consent, which cannot be unreasonably withheld.

We say, a union has access provided they exercise it reasonably. It is for the employer to challenge access rather than the union to get permission for it. Employers will use this provision to control union access and bully employees seeking to talk to the union at work. This provision is likely to breach International Labour Organisation conventions.

■ Restore workers' rights to bargain collectively without having to belong to a union.

We say it is unclear how workers bargain collectively without a collective? Collective bargaining without a collective was a fundamental component of the old Employment Contracts Act and allowed in-house or bosses' unions to put in place non-union collective agreements that didn't help lift wages, but instead locked workers out of genuine collective bargaining to lift them. Collective bargaining is a critical way of addressing wages, training, and standards across industries, and rights for workers to be covered by genuine collective agreements need strengthening, not watering down.

■ Appoint a working party to review the Holidays Act, especially the issue of 'relevant daily pay'.

We say the purpose of National's review appears just to be a way of reducing the pay workers get for a statutory holiday. National is threatening to turn the clock back.

■ Keep four weeks annual leave, but allow employees to request trade of the fourth week for cash. This can be only at the employee's request and cannot be raised in negotiations for an agreement.

We say National opposed legislation for the fourth week of annual leave for all workers, but rather than having a plan to lift wages and holidays, their approach is to force low paid workers to choose between a minimum wage job and 4 weeks leave, or a minimum wage job with three weeks leave plus a payment which may or may not be the equivalent value of the additional week. Three weeks leave will again become the norm under National.

■ **Retain the Mediation Service but ensure it is properly resourced with properly qualified mediators. Require the Employment Relations Authority to act judicially in accordance with the principles of natural justice, including the right to be heard, and the right to cross examine before an impartial referee. Allow injunctions and important legal questions to be heard in the first instance in the Employment Court, and**

allow a general right of appeal to the Court of Appeal.

We say it is ironic that National says they want to make things easier for small businesses through their 90 day no rights period, but propose making the employment process more complex and legalised.

But what's missing?

National is silent on any concrete strategies to lift wages.

We all agree wages are too low, National themselves highlighted the wage gap with Australia at the last election. Leaving it to taxes alone is a joke. Rather than offer any ideas on how to lift wages, National will make it worse.

New Zealand wages are too low. In order to lift them we need to see more workers addressing their pay and conditions collectively across industries, not fewer.

The CTU advocates regularly raising the minimum wage, increasing the numbers of

workers addressing pay and conditions across industries, and modernising the workforce through investing in skills, plant and machinery and lifting productivity.

Meanwhile National have not addressed the following in their policy:

Their plans for the paid parental leave scheme.

Confirmation or otherwise of their 2005 policy of removing elected health and safety reps and the ability for workers to issue hazard notices in dangerous workplace situations.

Their plans to address the gender pay gap.

Their agenda to increase the minimum wage.

Whether they will continue employer contributions to KiwiSaver.

Whether they would repeal protections for vulnerable workers when their job is transferred.

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Let's not wait until it's gone

Maryan Street
Minister for ACC

IN its 34 years of existence ACC has become part of New Zealand's social and economic 'wallpaper'. It's one of those institutions that are simply there, in the background, doing what they do – day after day.

Unfortunately, that means many people have little idea of the significance of the ACC scheme and the security it provides New Zealanders.

Due to the upcoming election, it is now a very important issue to think about, because National's plans to privatise the scheme will remove that security – and remove it for all of us, quite simply because an accident can happen to any one of us at any time.

Five thousand New Zealanders a day lodge a claim with ACC and at some point in time each of us has probably benefited from the scheme. For some it may have simply involved receiving ACC support to treat and fix a minor sports injury or a thumb accidentally 'hammered' while fixing the fence at home.

For others, it may involve much greater support – paying 80 per cent of your wages, funding your rehabilitation and treatment costs while you're off work and recovering from a much more serious accident. In some cases the support may be lifelong, or in the case of death, involve supporting your family. In these cases in particular, ACC is quite literally a lifeline.

ACC was established in New Zealand following mounting public anger over the first half of the last century over the way groups of workers, such as injured miners, and then injured returned servicemen and their families were treated.

The scheme was based on several important principles. These included the need for it to be:

- Universal and 24 hour, so everyone is covered all of the time;
- No-fault, so that the injured person doesn't have to prove the accident is someone else's fault before they get compensation; and
- Run as a state monopoly, because it was accepted it would otherwise create a conflict of interest for private insurers. That's because their primary interest is profit and they would be under pressure to reduce claims and the amount of compensation paid out, which would undermine workers.

The system was seen as world-leading then – and still is. A recent independent report by PriceWaterhouseCoopers found the scheme to be more comprehensive than any in the world and amongst the most, if not the most, efficient.

More comprehensive because, unlike in many other countries, all injured New Zealanders are protected - whether hurt playing sport, falling off a ladder or in a car accident - and the cover they get is better.

More efficient because there are no private insurers involved, collecting their cut – and no lawyers, also expecting to be paid to fight in the courts over who should pay the compensation, if anyone.

ACC was set up as a state monopoly by a National government, who have since changed their tune. It succeeded in privatising parts of the scheme in 1998 before Labour came into power a year later and reversed the change before it was embedded.

National now wants to have another go and the Australian insurance companies are

the only ones smiling because they stand to make a lot of money out of it – at the expense of New Zealand workers.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers found exactly this scenario across the Tasman. Workers here on ACC are back at work faster than their Australian counterparts because we invest in getting people back on their feet. Our workers are involved in much fewer disputes over claims. Levies are generally much higher in Australia.

You only have to jump on the internet for an hour to see how accident compensation works in Australia. There are so many lawyers involved, it's frightening. And they are working for the people who can afford lawyers. Many can't, and get nothing. Cases arguing who is at fault and should pay, regularly drag through the courts for years. Compensation is usually capped, so those with lengthy or lifelong impairments often find themselves in poverty down the track.

The NZ Society of Physiotherapists says utter confusion reigned during the brief period of privatisation in 1998. It says workers were reportedly pressured not to make claims at all or to be dishonest about how their injuries happened, that some companies imposed strict limits on treatments and many patients were so frustrated trying to work out how to get help they just gave up. Importantly more claims were refused because the insurance companies wouldn't accept them, the society says. Doctors are also expressing similar, serious concerns about privatisation.

ACC was a far-sighted investment in New Zealanders' health and wellbeing and its shareholders are, and should, continue to be New Zealanders. Let's not wait until it's gone to realise just what we've lost.

Port Marlborough CA negotiations

Negotiating for a renewed Port Marlborough collective agreement has concluded. Members ratified their CA in early June accepting the settlement offer put before them by the RMTU negotiating team.

The main outcomes of the settlement included:

- Two year term (July 1, 08 – June 30, 10);

- Five per cent wage increase on all wages and entitlements for each year of the CA;

- Overtime rates increased from T1.2 to T1.5 for all sectors excluding PSC (on specific days) and marina supervisors;

- Two lieu days given if your work shift spans over Christmas and Boxing Day continuously; and

- Existing main entitlements from previous CA carried over.

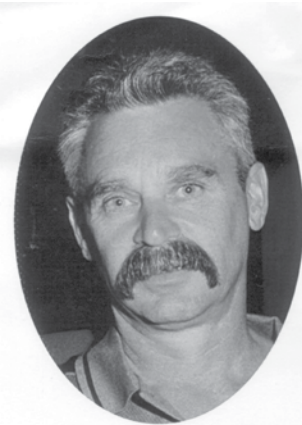
National Office congratulates members and thanks them for their input and debate throughout, and, more specifically, the RMTU negotiating team which consisted of Murray Burgess, Grant Herbert, Martin Burns and Debbie McManaway. WELL DONE!

Marty Sincock

THE tragic death of Marty Sincock when a mooring line snapped was a cruel blow for Marty's workmates at the Port of Lyttelton.

At 55, he was a fit and active cargo handler, popular and respected, and known for his roaring laugh and sense of humour. Ironically, he was also known as a stickler for working safely and wearing his PPE. But a line snapped unpredictably while he was letting go the coal ship Devprayag and the enormous force killed him instantly. The other end of the broken line struck a crewman on board, knocking him over – but without causing serious injury.

The accident is still under investigation by Maritime NZ and the Department of Labour, but early indications are that an error by ship's crew who were manning the winch caused the line to suddenly tighten. The apparent poor condition of the rope itself is also part of the inquiry. The ship was held for several days while the initial investigation was completed. A working party, comprising managers, engineering staff, lines staff and



Marty Sincock, died 24/6/08

union reps, has begun an inquiry into all aspects of lines safety at Lyttelton. Mooring work at the port is done by groups of cargo handlers or maintenance staff, under the supervision of specialised lines supervisors, two per ship.

Marty had worked at the port for almost 30 years, starting as a carpenter and moving to cargo handling a few years later where he was a proud member

of C group. He was a member of the RMTU throughout his career at the port. His eldest son Adam has followed in his footsteps.

Marty's death was a huge shock for the lines crew working alongside him but they handled the situation swiftly and professionally. The port company deserves credit for shutting down the port's operations out of respect and to allow appropriate grieving. The company also provided support to Marty's colleagues and to his wife Rhonda and three children. A solemn, impromptu, tapu lifting and memorial service was held on the wharf the day after the accident. The formal funeral

service the following Saturday was well attended and reflected the respect Marty had earned at work and in the community. The Union will place a memorial plaque at the bollard where he died.



The day after the tragedy, cones and a bunch of flowers mark the bollard where Marty Sincock was killed.



AMERICAN INCOME LIFE
insurance company

\$1,500 AD&D

All members are now covered by a \$1500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit, including \$500 spouse cover and a further \$500 cover on each child. This is an automatic membership benefit of belonging to the RMTU.

\$10,000 AD&D

Members can also take advantage of the new \$10,000 Accident Death Benefit, which costs just \$2 for the first year, but members must return a yellow AIL card to receive this benefit.

If you haven't received a card yet, please call AIL on freephone 0800 127 887. This is very important to you and your family.



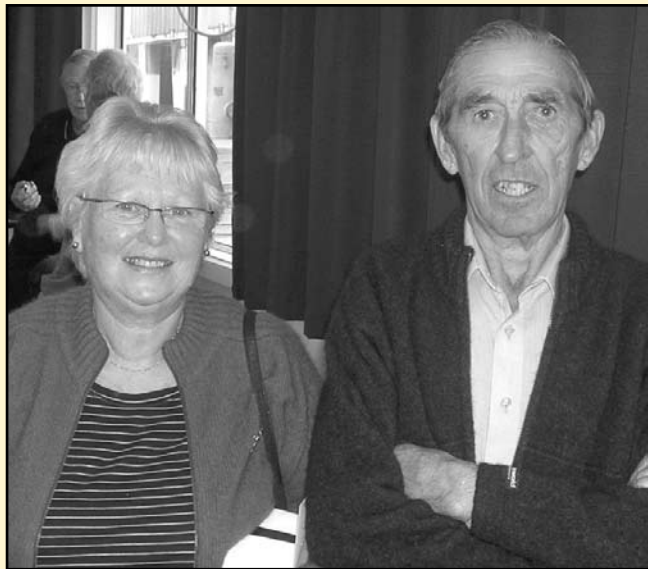
*Delegates, if you require more cards for your site, please e-mail mario@ailnz.co.nz

AIL of New Zealand has been proudly serving RMTU members since 1995

RETIREMENTS



(l to r) Trevor Bremner and KiwiRail area manager John Sargent at Trevor's afternoon tea to celebrate his retirement. Trevor has held most positions within the rail unions and was an active member up until his retirement – and will no doubt remain active afterwards. Members look up to Trevor for his experienced advice and support – he will be missed. The Palmerston North branch wishes Trevor a long and healthy retirement.



Brian Calton and his wife Veronica. Brian was recently medically retired from his rail operator role in the Palmerston North Yard. Despite being seriously ill Brian wanted to continue working as long as he could. Brian will be missed by his colleagues and management alike for his hard-working approach to yard work, great sense of humour and for bringing some positivity when it was needed. Hope you win the battle, Brian.



(above) Suttty and Wayne Butson (below) Suttty playing and winning his last game of table tennis at Metro

THIS month, Chris 'Suttty' Sutton medically retired from his role as locomotive engineer. Suttty had worked in rail and been a union member since November 1962. Anyone who has worked on the job in Wellington Rail will know him, one of rail's real characters – never a bad word about anyone and always plenty of laughs. Suttty had a unique driving style – either in power or brake – no in between. It certainly made for some interesting shifts a few years back on the shunt! Many would underestimate Suttty's skills on both the table tennis and pool tables, only to be thrashed by him. After an afternoon tea put on for Suttty's last day, the challenge for who would be Metro's table tennis master took place. Another LE, Terry Hopper, challenged Suttty. It was quite a contest but Suttty retired as the Metro Table Tennis champion and retired as a railwayman. All the best for your retirement Suttty.



Medically retired Wellington LE Peter Clark receives his cheque from the Loco Engineer Sickness Fund from national president Jim Kelly



PORT NAPIER BRANCH

OUR deepest sympathies as we acknowledge the plight ahead of our port Lyttelton brothers and sisters and the Sincock family over their untimely loss of another port worker within the marine section. Our sincere sympathies are with you all and what you are going through and all the legal requirements/inquiries that have to be endured before you can move on. Unfortunately we understand through bitter experience the ripple effect of loss in such circumstances.

Closer to home we had Repanga (Rep) Taana's inquest in Napier. His death, as a result of a wharf collapse, was nearly two and a half years ago. The hearing was scheduled for three days but rolled into a fourth. We await the coroner's findings. RTMU member and local list MP Russell Fairbrother has taken a great interest in this matter.

A shared thought for our members in Timaru (Primeport) is truly warranted. The ramifications of losing key shipping lines in such a short time has no doubt caused grief. The unsettling nature of such a predicament must be hard to deal with at this time. It is appalling that so much can occur in a small community at a whim of a shipping company. All of the local community will suffer. The smaller ports must take note of the current crisis in Timaru, this could happen to any of us. Our thoughts and best wishes are with you and the difficulties currently being experienced.

On the local front, container volumes have dropped off. Typical for this time of year really. However the up-side is that due to the cost of charter vessels for logs going through the roof, containerisation has become the preferred mode of transport, which helps maintain container volumes through the port which is all good for the terminal. The down-side is the amount of methyl bromide (MB) being dispatched into the atmosphere. Let's hope the lobbying continues to do away with such practice and providing substitutes which are not harmful to the environment. My understanding is that in Belgium it is compulsory to extract MB from containers at the time of venting

and capture the residues. This approach must be pursued in New Zealand as a possible preferred option. Ethically the users of MB must also take some responsibility for the environment damage along with the health issues surrounding its use. Once again, it seems money is the factor.

On the subject of MB, thanks to RTMU member Jim Lane from Port Nelson for his invaluable knowledge, much appreciated. The session at the Ports Forum on MB was most illuminating and very educative.

Lastly, a good-bye to Kevin 'Pinky' Ryan, who left the port after serving over 28 years, mostly assigned to crane driving. He has headed across the ditch (Perth) to be with family.



*Karl
Mudzamba
planner
Paul Olsen
driver*



*Drivers Dwane
Ewert and Darryl
Petersen*



*Kevin
Ryan and
wife
Mania
(Perth
bound)*



*Peter Van
Veelan crane
driver*

LE reunion update

THE 2008 LE Reunion Organising Committee thanks all who have registered or expressed interest in attending. We are very pleased with the numbers, especially from our expats.

Registrations are still rolling in and anyone with e-mail will be receiving regular updates. Please distribute these to anyone who does not e-mail.

You are reminded that final payment is now due and that a number of people haven't yet provided their first names. Please let us know ASAP. We also need to know which of the preferred motels you have booked so we can organise transportation to and from the various events.

The Organising Committee has engaged the services of a professional film maker to record the entire weekend. He (Graham Clephane) will undertake some 'one to one' interviews and will produce a quality DVD which will be mailed out to you after the Reunion. The cost of filming, producing and distributing this DVD is included in your registration fee. If you change address let us know ASAP.

Latest programme

Friday 24 October

– Opening night

Riccarton Park is our venue situated in South West Christchurch. Access is gained from Yaldhurst Road or Main South Road. Those staying in designated motels will be picked up by coaches in time to transfer you to the venue. All of these motels are reasonably close. The buses picking you up are large so please keep an eye out for them. This applies to Saturday and Sunday evenings also.

Signing in will begin at 1800 hours (6pm). A committee member will meet you and sign you in. Your registration pack will include name tags and various other oddments. The venue will be decorated and various rooms set aside for static displays and photographs of early Canterbury Rail identities and scenes. Transport back to your motels will start at

Continued on the next page

PORT CHALMERS BRANCH

GREETINGS from the frozen South. Well, it is at the moment anyway. We have (like everyone else it seems) had plenty of rain, wind and the odd skiff of snow but all in all, not a bad winter so far. Do you remember the National Party propaganda back in March, where Labour was relentlessly pursued over the possibility of power shortages as lake levels dropped and that this would be a big election issue? Funny how now that the lakes are full again (as predicted by the minister) that the Nats are as quiet on the issue as a frosty morning in Wanaka? Politicians eh?

Dunedin and Port Chalmers has had a reasonably eventful period of late, including new arrivals and subtle changes to existing ship visit patterns which have a flow-on effect on nearby ports. Additional staff have been taken on (with the option of joining either RMTU or MUNZ – depending who offers the biggest carrot!) but undoubtedly the highlight would have to be, that after 18 long weeks of on-again-off-again negotiating (including some mediation) we finally ratified the combined unions collective agreement, currently being proof-read.

Part of the settlement was to accept the employment of new permanent ship-lashing crews to help facilitate 24/7 labour to service container shipping. We will get to see even more new faces over the next few weeks or so. The down side of that is that Port Otago doesn't have enough space in the existing facilities to accommodate the growing numbers of cargo handling staff, and so plans are afoot to move part of the group into new premises by re-opening the old purpose-built Otago Stevedoring Co building. This building backs onto our staff car-park and will be set up again as a new Port Otago facility. Possibly for the lashing crew? Let's hope that this isn't a divide and conquer ploy by Port Otago Limited.

As always, there are the few areas that we can never satisfactorily cover every round, but on the whole we believe it was a well fought battle and a pretty good deal reached in the end. (From all accounts, the best Ports deal in the country so far) (perhaps – Ed)

Our branch was shocked and saddened to learn of the tragic death of Marty Sincock at Lyttleton Port recently (see page 21). This again highlights the hazardous nature of the industry we work in. I was honoured to attend Marty's funeral service on behalf of the RMTU National Management Committee and to also represent Port Chalmers. It

was over-whelming to see so many in attendance to support his family and farewell an obviously, very popular man. It was a huge tribute to Marty.

Health & Safety is always paramount in our industry but recently there have been many changes in procedures and it is disappointing that some of these changes are slow to be publicised to the staff. There have been several differing stories about instances and the application of the procedures lacks some consistency. One can't put a price on H&S but we would have thought that any change to a procedure would have been highlighted and published with bells, whistles and flashing lights. All we ask is that we all 'sing from the same song sheet' and get some consistency, and get all the facts together before firing the gun! To be honest, some of the handling of investigations deserves a nomination for a Roger Award!

We congratulate Lana Kennedy and Phil Simonsen on the birth of their daughter, Isla. It was also fabulous to welcome back our branch vice president, Bruce Walker, after his recent illness. Bruce seems to be well and truly on top of things again, which is great to see.

Pauline Evans, our receptionist at the Port, is heading back to 'Old Blighty' for eight weeks' holiday and we all hope she has a well-earned break.

After two years hard labour, Lisa Adam (nee Stevenson) and her husband Michael have moved into their new home much of which they built themselves. Well done Lisa.

Mike Morgan should be back at work again in a few weeks or so following a lengthy absence after surgery, but his time away has not been wasted, he has studiously applied himself to mastering the art of TXTing with his one good arm, and boy is he good at it now!

Malcolm McDonald is also currently holidaying in Europe and we wish him a safe return.

Our local dredge, 'New Era', under the watchful eye of skipper Alistair Adamson has steamed up to Lyttleton to do some dredging there over the next six weeks, where the boys will be putting in some long days. They will no doubt be looking forward to some well earned R&R by the end of their stretch.

We wish all of our fellow members around the country well as spring arrives and we can all warm up a bit – and hopefully shake off the old winter ailments that seem so all prevalent.

2300 hours (11pm).

Saturday 25 October

- Day trip and evening entertainment

The day begins early, but will not be stressful! Once again, coaches will pick motel-stayers. We leave Riccarton Park at 0845 on our journey to Waipara – 50-55 kilometres. For a full description of activities at Waipara please refer to your registration form. We are using coaches for this trip due to Toll Rail's inability to supply rail carriages for the day. The trip through the Weka Pass will be headed by steam locomotive A 428. We expect to return to Riccarton Park at 1600 hours (4pm). Buses will take you back to your motels to 'freshen up' prior to the evening's entertainment. At 1800 hours the doors will open and the big night begins. From 2300 hours transport will be provided on a regular basis back to your motels.

Sunday 26 October

- Farewell

The farewell begins at Riccarton Park at 1600 hours. Motel buses will get you there on time. At 2100 hours (9pm) the bar will shut and once again, coaches will transport you to your various motels.

The Committee are working hard to provide you with a very memorable experience. We are looking forward to meeting you, one and all.

If you need more detailed information about the weekend do not hesitate to write to The Secretary and he will do his best to answer any questions.

On behalf of the Organising Committee

Murray Dunlop.

murray.gaildunlop@clear.net.nz

TARANAKI BRANCH

GREETINGS from the Taranaki. The silly season is about to kick in with the arrival of the first milk trains. Whareroa has had a make over with the milk road being re-sleepered with concrete sleepers and concrete pads put down where the milk is unloaded from the wagons - hopefully that should stop the stench! So far the crew from Whareroa seem happy with progress. Management have promised that before season's end there will be a port-a-com provided containing a drying room and toilets. The present facilities are sadly lacking in suitability and aren't practical for staff.

Ray Treeby (ex British Army) has joined the ranks at Whareroa and is a welcome addition.

Sadly I would love to say that there has been progress on the yard tower at Stratford but same story, a lot of talk only.

The Taranaki staff have concerns over the ARGO radios in the main line locomotives. Wally Wallbutton put a memo out asking about the height of the Argo radio and the AM/FM radio and asked if it was restricting the left hand side of the cab with the field of vision. The feedback from the staff was that while the height may not be the best, it is progress from radio gear hanging off the roof. The major concerns are the ARGO radio itself. Staff find it dangerous and awkward to use and train control overrides the shunt



Marlene Tooke, aka 'office guru', at Toll Tranz Link, New Plymouth. Marlene has spent over 35 years toiling away in the office at the TTL

New Plymouth depot which makes her special for TTL but also for the RMTU – Marlene is the RMTU's longest serving female member. Well done Marlene.

channel while it is being used for shunting. Wally has asked that any problems with the ARGO radio or its height be noted in the repair book.

The tamper and concrete sleeper layer crews have been busy between Mokia and Whareroa with concrete sleeper lays. Jack Ashby said that when the EM 80 track evaluation car came through recently it highlighted 40 double star faults – down from the 300 odd between Whareroa and Marton.

The track boys north of Whareroa and over the SOL have been working in pretty trying conditions to keep tracks clear of slips and keeping the restrictions to a minimum. Thanks to all the gangers. You guys are

greatly appreciated. Most certainly in the Taranaki we have noticed a huge difference over the lines up here with the excellent effort the ONTRACK crew have put in.

The new Kai Iwi deviation is now open for business. The old number four tunnel couldn't take the high cubes hence the need for the new deviation. Let's hope now they can do something with tunnels 1, 2 and 3 to get rid of the 15 kph speed restriction for high cubes.

Taranaki has lost to retirement Lew Paul. Lew had just brought up 40 years service and decided that touring New Zealand's speedway tracks was more appealing than driving trains. He was the back bone with organising the rosters along with Dave Creagh and he was also a minder driver. Lew was a genius on the mechanical side and what he didn't know about locomotives wasn't worth knowing.

Kevin Jenkins (KB) has just brought up 30 years service so congratulations KB.

Allan Wight the Taranaki area manager also knocked over 30 years.

Dave Creagh's mother passed away recently and there was a good sprinkling of rail members at her funeral, which was great support for Dave, Annie and family.

Allan Robertson, ex Taumarunui, has joined the Stratford loco team and seems to be settling into life in the Naki nicely. Welcome Allan.

BAY OF PLENTY PORT BRANCH

THE branch has been meeting monthly. Some of the matters under discussion were:

- Renovations and setting up the Union rooms at 60 Totara Street, the outside painting has been delayed due to the inclement weather however we hope to have everything spruced up for the grand opening;

- Setting up of a welfare fund for members who are in need of help.

- Discussion on our local Union fees;

- How to recognise members who have contributed to the branch through service and commitment;

- How to improve Health & Safety awareness in the workforce; and

- How to increase the skill level of the delegates.

We have also run two stage 2 delegate seminars and are setting up two stage 1 seminars before the end of the year. We have increased the number of H&S delegates going to the ACC/CTU H&S training programmes which is helping improve awareness. Four of our women members are attending a leadership seminar in Hamilton on August 12 and we are sending six delegates to this year's annual conference.

The following changes were made at this year's AGM:

- Agreed to increase the union fees to \$8:50 per member and \$1:20 per day for casuals; and

- Agreed to increase the branch officers' honorariums.

The branch officers are now; Kelven Martin – chair, Kelvin Rush - vice chair, Vicki Te Amo - secretary/treasurer and a committee of: Mark Allen, John Carmine, Ian Oakley, Dion Young, Neil Wharry, Maurice Carlin, Blair Hammond and Terry Butcher. Brent Thompson did not stand for re-election, nor did Aubrey Wilkinson, who will be ex officio as he is on the NMC.

Negotiations with Port of Tauranga are progressing very slowly, same with C3, the members at Champion have rejected the employers offer, so we will be round the table soon. The Quality Marshalling members have reluctantly ratified their collective agreement.

WEST COAST BRANCH

HI from the beautiful but cold West Coast. Winter is really upon us these days with mother nature dumping several heavy snow falls over the pass roads thus making the driving of fleet vehicles for train couplings a hazardous trip – if not, at times, impossible. Remember, vehicle chains are for driving us out of trouble not into it, so if there is doubt about roads being open demand to go by light loco or as a passenger on a train.

Forty five wagon coal trains came back on the agenda last month with delegates from Westport, Greymouth and Christchurch being summoned to participate in a Risk and Assessment meeting. This is some 15 months after the trials were conducted. As no progress had been made on some of the outstanding matters pertaining to the running of 30-wagon trains that still need to be

addressed. All delegates refused to attend the Otira meeting. It was great to see all branches stand in unity re this matter.

Great progress has been seen on bridge repairs and complete bridge replacements here on the Coast. The new Rocky Creek bridge is now connected and once the restriction is lifted should see train speeds increase over this portion of line to enable trains to get a good run at the climb up to Otira.

Our AGM was on August 21 with both Wayne Butson and Henry Fagaiava attending a lively meeting around politics and the wage rounds being conducted at present.

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Bob Hunt. Bob known, as 'The Gentleman', had worked in Kaikoura, Otira, and Greymouth as a loco engineer. He had retired early from the job. A gentleman sadly missed.



Westport Kiwirail delegate, John Valvoi

Let's all be careful on the roads out there.
ROLL ON SUMMER.

NELSON BRANCH

GREETINGS FROM SUNNY NELSON.

We had our AGM on August 20 and RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson attended. Recently our area organiser Henry Fagaiava met with the Port Nelson branch Picton-based guys on his way through the South Island.

Our September wage increase, according to the collective agreement, was negotiated as being 3% or CPI whichever is greater. Currently the CPI is running at 4% so we look forward to the rise.

On 8 October we have our next consultative meeting with Port Nelson Ltd and this is to be held in the boardroom.

Also on 8 October we have a stopwork meeting for the troops with a delegates meeting on 6 October. On 14 - 16 October we have the RMTU Conference in Wellington and we will have a delegate attending.

Consultative meeting

At the last consultative meeting with PNL we requested a breakdown of back injuries as they applied to lines as this was cited as being a reason for the adoption of a mechanised system. Jim Lane and Karen have compiled graphs. So in the last year,

about 14% of total lines' injuries were back injuries. Also after several months of prompting, the canteen telephone has been replaced and is working well.

Brunt Quay smoko room is a related subject. At the consultative meeting the branch tabled a detailed argument for shifting the smoko room. This was based around it being central to fumigation activities, and its age, size, location and condition made it defunct. Martin Byrne agreed that it was unsuitable. Developments in the procedures and logistics of container fumigations make it difficult to plan a suitable change of location now, and in the meantime workers are perfectly entitled to take their smoko in the main canteen room, as decided at a meeting with Digby recently.

Shipping: Understaffed lines jobs have been occurring frequently, especially with follow-ons on the 'graveyard' shift. PNL will be looking at providing incentives to improve the situation. The RMTU vote to resist manning reductions and the mechanised system will be taken into account during future consultative processes relating to lines.

Some nuts and bolts issues from the consultative include: PNL offered to lift advanced trade rates. This offer was accepted by the members concerned and consequently a variation to the CA was signed. Also one member with higher skills was promoted, and plant and electrical break down roster rates may be incorporated into the CA but is ongoing.

Secretary goes AWOL: Colin Lowe travelled south with his wife to Dunedin and Queenstown via Hanmer Springs. They had a week in each location and stayed in the NZR Staff Welfare houses by virtue of their membership of the RMTU and their group C membership of the Trust. They soaked under the stars in the hot pools at Hanmer Springs – only a minute from the house and at Dunedin, although it rained constantly, were only 200 metres from the Octagon and had plenty of city stuff to keep them amused. In Queenstown the unit overlooks the lake with glorious view of the Remarkables. They took a bus up to the ski fields and tramped through powder snow to a ridge where they say they enjoyed the best views ever seen. They recommend the Trust houses to all members. Get out there and use them to see your own country.

OTAGO RAIL BRANCH

GREETINGS from a very cold little Edinburgh of the South.

All our members are either in the throes of negotiating or in the process of ratifying their respective collective contracts. One thing that has become patently clear is that we must guard against the insidious attack of the individual contract. We must also be prepared to take action to achieve what we believe in but also must be realistic in what we expect.

It would seem that ONTRACK are suffering a few deflections to the Australian attractions, this is causing a few headaches and challenges but that is the nature of the employment world.

A lot of people are looking forward to the improved rail

vehicles that should be forthcoming now that the government has taken ownership of the industry again, meanwhile the United Group Rail workers are still waiting (at the time of writing) for any word of when their replacement work vehicles will arrive. It has

Royce Kirk retires

Locomotive engineer Royce Kirk retired from Toll rail and its predecessors after a sterling effort of 49 years. Royce was a very professional and highly respected member of the Dunedin loco depot and his absence has already been felt.



During his retirement afternoon tea he reminisced about his early life as a cleaner and remembered cleaning locomotives dating back to 1899 – that was in 1959. History may well be repeating itself if we look at the ageing fleet out the window.

Royce was presented with a well deserved gold watch (hopefully he won't need to check the time too often now and certainly not in

the small hours of the morning) and a framed certificate with a background picture of the engine shed in which he started his illustrious career.

We all wish Royce the very best for his retirement years and are confident that he will be able to get on with his recreational pursuits without the interruption of going to work.

been a reprehensibly long time since the damning report on the work vans that were in Dunedin was tabled and United Group Rail should hang its head in abject shame at the lack of delivery. How hard is it to get a lease vehicle? ONTRACK didn't seem to have any problem replacing theirs. They manage to present not only a professional image but also allocate time and materials to look after their vehicles. SHAME ON UNITED GROUP.

There was a bit of uneasiness at the time of Toll exiting and creating its new freight business but things seem to have settled down and people are getting on with the day to day operation of being part of the freight moving industry.

KiwiRail gives us all an opportunity to be joined together so that we can be Stronger Together!

TIMARU BRANCH

HELLO FROM SUNNY TIMARU.

It is with much sadness that the branch has lost one of its most ardent supporters in Richard Graham last month who died of a heart attack while being rushed to Timaru Hospital.

Richard was a solid worker for ONTRACK in Timaru for many years and his smile and humour will never be forgotten. Our thoughts go to his family and friends at their loss, but also in such a small depot like ONTRACK Timaru, the guys have felt even more of a loss of a workmate and close friend. So to Laurence, Joe, Vic and Brent – our thoughts are with you.

On a happier tack, our local manager has presented a new shunt roster and it's always nice to get a cut in one's hours just prior to

a wage round – so on we go again...

Primeport has been in the news locally after laying off about 30 experienced staff and replacing them with casuals to do the same work.

There is also a lot of bitterness and resentment at the way Primeport management have panicked in regards to two major shipping companies leaving Timaru for Port Chalmers about three months ago. After they were told that this move would not work and that Port Chalmers may struggle to handle the new season's tonnage, the shipping companies are back in talks with Primeport again. Scary stuff.

The Timaru shunt roster has been under huge pressure in the last few months as they have had three staff on light duties and the

rest of the team have been working huge hours to cover the gaps. Thanks to Bryan and Ian and their rostering magic, but most of all the guys on the ground for their efforts. Well done.

Our loco team is happy and Allister Grant is feeling a lot happier and is settled back into work after his horrific accident at Orari several months ago. Well done Allister.

Wage rounds are still ongoing and Doug has been away a lot on the wage bargaining team and is under no illusions as to expectations for Timaru, and also the whole South Island rail terminals staff.

With an election coming up the chats in the smoko room makes for interesting talk and banter.

That's all for now from sunny Timaru.

LYTTTELTON BRANCH

THE Lyttelton collective agreement has been settled and signed for a three year term. It includes a six per cent wage rise, backdated to the expiry of the previous agreement, followed by annual increases based on CPI movements. Trades staff received an extra pay boost. There were improvements in sick pay and the contentious bonus scheme was replaced with an increase in the employer superannuation contribution to eight per cent. The straddle driving roster is under review by a working party, in response to concerns about congestion in the container yard.

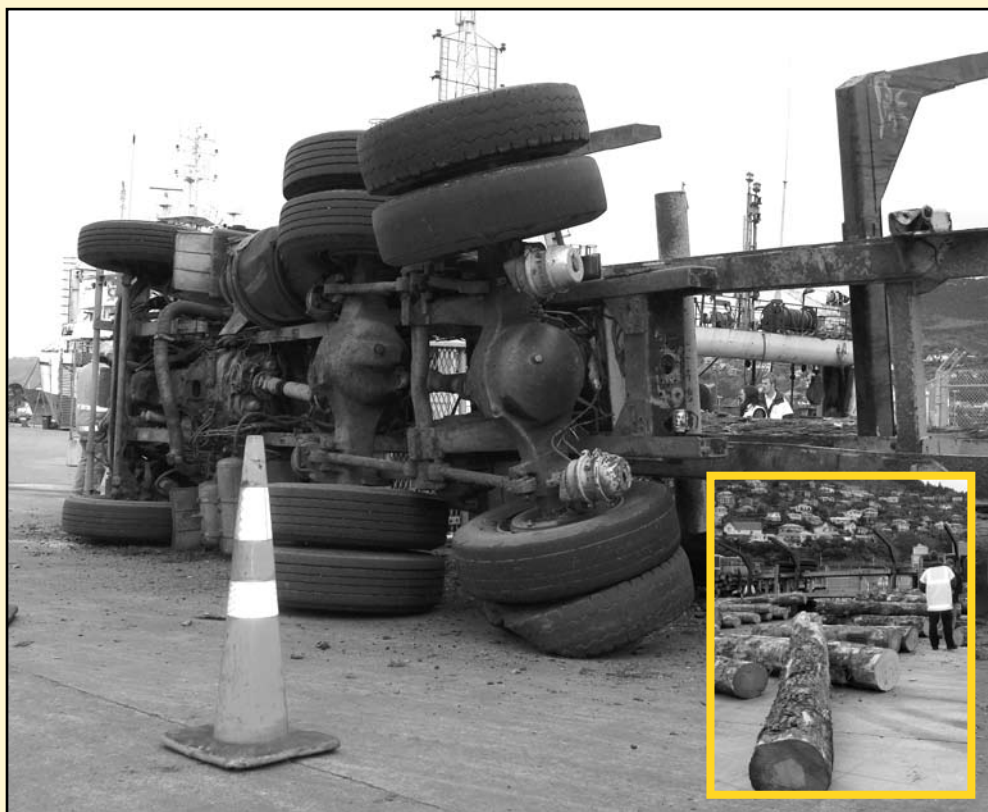
The timely settlement reflected a strong working relationship among the reps on the combined union negotiating team and enthusiasm on both sides of the table to avoid the exhausting extravaganzas that have characterised previous wage rounds.

The sudden and tragic death of Marty Sincock on June 24 when a mooring line parted (see obituary page 21) has brought a stark focus onto working safely. Health and safety committees are more purposeful and people are working more carefully and taking fewer risks. How long will it last?

The most recent previous fatality at the port, just two years ago, also involved lines work. A Russian seaman on the container ship Yuriy Ostrovskiy was caught in the bight of a rope that suddenly tightened. The line was trailing in the water as the vessel left Cashin Quay. It was driven under the wharf by the ship's bow thruster, and snagged on a buttress.



Chris Baines, died 21/05/08



Logs scattered through a busy yard near No 3 wharf at the Port of Lyttelton when this loaded truck rolled over. Luckily no-one was in harm's way. Concerns about the safety of the contractor's logging operation were raised by the RMTU Lyttelton branch last year in a letter to the company and at health and safety meetings. We specifically criticised the overloading of the trucks, the driving care with loads not tied down and the general roadworthiness of the trucks, after a previous incident when a log fell off one of the trucks and narrowly missed a member of the port security staff. Another errant log almost hit marine staff parked cars near the logging yard. The port company complained to the contractor and behaviour improved for a while, but loads got higher again, driving got faster and a blown tyre on a tight bend was the last straw.

Marty's death was a double blow at Lyttelton following the sudden death of Chris 'Bully' Baines a month earlier. Chris, who was 51, collapsed and died at his Lyttelton home on May 21. He was a familiar and popular figure at the coal operation where his expertise in building coal heaps was legendary. He was also a legendary prankster. Chris had served on the

RMTU branch executive and his strength and thoughtfulness made him a natural leader, but he generally preferred to be quietly useful and to just drive his bulldozer. He is very much missed.

Skilled general hand Ron Quartly has slipped away to a well earned retirement after 29 years' work at the port. Ron has served a variety of roles at the port and will be missed by his colleagues in the works department. RMTU branch secretary Con Jackson is moving on, after a mere five years.