

# THE Transport Worker



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

*ERRATA - Mistakenly omitted from the September 2012 issue of The Transport Worker.*

## AROUND THE BRANCHES

### PORT NAPIER BRANCH

I guess jumping in at the deep end is the only way to go considering the impact this f/~#ing government is having on our Union.

For the brothers and sisters in our rail divisions – both Hillside and track – your position currently, to say the least, has to be of great concern to all of us as KiwiRail sets about slashing viable jobs and/or selling parts of its core business. It's a little ironic that there has been a hold put on importing Chinese locos in recent days. In terms of track members – we all know the negative financial consequences of contracting out. The logic behind such decision making is bewildering.

### Falling foul of Maersk

Additionally, our members at Port Timaru have fallen foul to Maersk yet again, with Hamburg Sud also choosing to leave the port. One certainly would hope that another shipping company will pick up the slack. None-the-less, for those who may end up being caught at the wrong end of the ledger, words are not enough to convey our disappointment for you in this time of difficulty.

On the local front we have now finalised both the main collective and harbour crane agreements (the latter only taking a couple of days) with positive outcomes. Inclusive were the introduction of twilight/sunset clauses for those coming to the end of their careers and in preparation toward easing into their retirement and the forming of teams to work on established rosters. There is still work to do in this area which is associated to the shipside driving pool and the numbers of members required to operate around the clock. This effectively will break away from the 'wait by

the phone' aspect that has historically been standard practice by many employers – and still is across many ports.

Coupled to this a request has been lodged/suggested to management to look at the situation in Timaru for plant operators that may wish to move. No promises have been made but the notion is an acknowledged consideration.

Both collective agreements are for a three year terms which hopefully will see us into a Labour-led government by the time the next negotiations come about.

In all, a very trying time for the RMTU and its members embroiled in this feckless approach by, in essence, the current government and the external influences of large shipping companies. Half the time you don't know who is pulling the levers.

### Big decisions on a whim

It is widely known that job security or career life span within the management sectors of some of these large companies can be relatively short – usually happening after financial hits. However, bringing in new personnel can also bring dangers such as lack of knowledge around previous agreements and operational practises that are achieved through experience. It is then that big decisions are made on a whim.

Shit only falls one way and this government, its anti industrial relations policies and asset sales are coming with large costs to workers who end up being caught up in the fall-out or are left to clean up the mess.

Those at the coal face where the real work is done, are, in most cases, the first casualties.

There are concerns locally at the Port of

Napier that the regional council (RC) has put its total shareholding in the port into a holding company. This will expose the port to a regional asset sale as the council looks for cash to build a proposed dam in Central Hawkes Bay.

### No mention of share transfers

In the RCs most recent regional flyer there was no mention of the transfer of shares. This seems a little clandestine considering this is probably the region's key asset and provides rate payers with returns that aid in keeping the rates down.

If there is to be a 49% sell down of the port we may well find ourselves in a Huchinson-type scenario as happened at Lyttleton Port where the RMTU and rate payers forced the local council and Board to back away from a sell down.

One has to wonder what – or if – other big internal corporations or federations are influencing the RC – especially a dairy industry hungry for more. The wording in the editorial indicates there will be a corporate-style take over of farm lands with family farms on the way out.

The RC have certainly put a spin on how great the dam will be, which in part I do not doubt. However, if it is deemed to be so profitable, why sell assets to pay for it?

Interest rates are low, so borrowing from the banks may be a far better option. I'm sure the National government's policy of 'user pays' is somewhere behind this. In the end, the only winners are the fat cats.

Kia kaha tuakana me tuahine honore kei hononga.