

THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

**MAR
2020**

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



Celebrating 90 years

Hutt Workshop milestone



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Helen Kelly Together is doing the circuit currently and provides a wonderful illustration of a dedicated and generous union enthusiast doing her very best to the bitter end.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Some of the 200 plus people who gathered last month to celebrate 90 years of operation at Hutt Workshops. Pages 16 & 17.

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Wayne Butson
General
secretary
RMTU

Starting the year on a positive note

WELCOME to the first issue of *The Transport Worker* for 2020 and I am sure you will agree that this is another great issue which chronicles some of the things our leaders, delegates and rank and file members get up to as part of their daily working life. I use the word 'working' in the context that all of us in the RMTU are working for YOU, whether it is me, the paid staff or delegates and activists our efforts are always focussed on what is identified and agreed democratically as being best for members.

Our port members have seen considerable change in recent times and some have been for the good. One such welcome change had been major staffing changes in management in Lyttelton. We were hopeful that this would herald a sea change in behaviour and our relationship with the company and, as they say, the proof is in the pudding. We have seen personal grievances settled to the satisfaction of all parties and we have seen the Lyttelton logistics officers collective agreement settled in the record time of half a day with a fair deal now subject to member ratification (as I write this column).

We settled the Napier, Chalmers and Tauranga collective agreements and so we now look to the Port Nelson and C3 collectives with KiwiRail being the major negotiation for our Union this year.

We have put out the call for remits from rail branches and it will be very interesting to see what comes through from the discussions and motions at the coal face.

One fact that will make the KiwiRail wage round a challenge is that there is a widespread belief that the company is awash with cash. While there is a considerable sum of money promised and allocated from Government for capital projects, often obtaining the funds from Treasury is a challenge. However, these funds are for capital projects, they do not go into KiwiRail's standard cash flow. We are advised that KiwiRail is currently in the order of \$30m down on income from freight operations and hence the reason for restructuring and head count reductions in many areas of the company above front line staff. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that we should not be seeking improvements to members' terms and conditions of employment. Rather, I am saying that all claims etc will be dealt with in the context of 'the employer's ability

to pay'. This principle is enshrined in our Good Faith laws but there is also an equally applied principle around market forces and it's an indisputable fact that in many occupations KiwiRail is now a below market rate payer.

I am looking forward to the challenge these issues will pose for the RMTU negotiating team. Over the years, we have been able to be inventive, innovative and trendsetters in our settlements and I am confident that this year will be no different.

We are fast approaching Workers Memorial Day (April 28) and this year's global theme is "Tackling psychosocial hazards at work - taking the stress out of the job". This is to highlight the harm caused by occupational stress and related conditions, such as work related depression, anxiety, burnout, work related alcohol and drug misuse and work related suicides. Sadly our locomotive engineer members are all too often confronted with suicides etc and this creates stresses on each and every one of them. Before moving to Union work I was also a loco engineer and to this day I can close my eyes and replay with total clarity each and every one of the shunting, trespasser, level crossing and suicide instances I encountered during my time in loco. I 'managed' them but all too often some of our colleagues cannot and are forced to leave the jobs they love by post traumatic stress disorder and other reasons — and carry that burden forever. The RMTU was the first Union in New Zealand to recognise and mark International Workers Memorial Day thanks to the vision and passion of the then general secretary Ross Wilson. We continue his legacy and I am especially proud when I travel around and see the many memorial sites that have been either erected by the Union or created jointly with a caring employer. Please attend a memorial event near you on April 28. Good work place health and safety is no accident. Where it exists it is as a result of every person taking ownership of the need to ensure that we all come to work and leave at the end of our shift.

Remember if you see an unsafe act do something! Intervene, challenge and/or confront (in a non aggressive way of course) what's going on and the person doing it. The danger of not doing so is that it could become an accepted behaviour and practice.

Finally our planning is continuing so that we mark the 25th anniversary of the formation of our great Union at our Biennial Conference in October. We are also beginning the discussion as to what the Union should do to ensure a continuation of this rail supportive Government post 19 September. I for one, have no stomach to see the road transport cheerleaders of National returning to the Treasury benches. I urge members and branches to get active and become campaign workers in their electorates, support your local candidates and attend labour candidate selection meetings. We do get a say as part of being a party affiliate.

Be safe, be RMTU and I am sure that I will see you around in my travels during 2020. 🌐

Correction

In the last issue (TTW 4/2019) we incorrectly named the kapa haka group which performed at the Graham White commemoration as Otago Te Kupenga Mahi. Its correct name is Te Ara Tiira - Otepoti (the steel pathway) named for the carving on the wall of the network services building in Otepoti/Dunedin.

WIMDOI

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank RMTU members for choosing me to attend the Wimdoi Conference.

After flying from Wellington to Melbourne I began my adventure on the Spirit of Tasmania, the ship that takes cars and passengers to Tasmania from Melbourne and vice versa. A third of the Union Women attending the conference also took the ship across. We shared cabins with each other and discussed our jobs and roles in our unions well into the night as it was a 12 hour voyage across the Bass Strait.

We had sessions led by passionate union women as well as a few Australian MPs. We attended a rally for worker's rights and wages over the Australian Government trying to sell out and undermine in favour of cheap and easily exploitable labour. Over 200 of us marched the streets of Devonport and managed to make not only the local paper but also featured on the local news.

I found the session on Online Activism to be very insightful and helpful and I feel like it could be better utilised in our unions in New Zealand.

As we live in a very social media centred world, politicians and similar have no choice but to get online to interact and engage with the public. I recently helped our Australian unions online via twitter to spread the word and target the senators who were making a vote on a bill to destroy unions.

The 'ensuring integrity' bill has been voted out of the senate for now but it has recently been resubmitted by some asshole liberal politician whose name has slipped my mind. So we have another fight ahead. It would be good if we could support our Australian comrades in protecting their rights to have a union and fight back against this unfair bill.

We shared stories of the issues we face as women in male dominated jobs. They were all too similar and it is a shame that so many of us are faced with problems such as sexism, racism, homophobia, lack of access to changing areas and toilets as well as bullying and harassment from male co workers.

Despite the common struggles, there was an overwhelming sense of understanding and unity in our problems. We now have a network of empowered and fiercely supportive union women from across many different jobs and unions across Australia.

My biggest take away is that I am not alone. There are hundreds of women across Australia and New Zealand who work in places similar to mine and they are my sisters and together, united, we will never be divided.

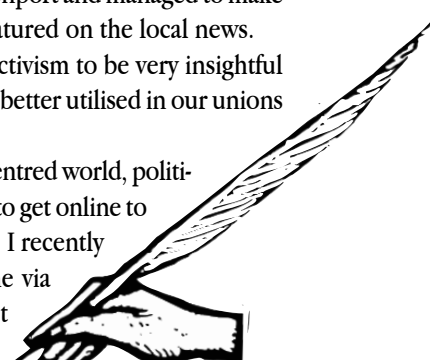
I will look to them for strength and guidance and support and I know they will always have my back.

This will not be my last WIMDOI.

Thanks for the experience

Louise Francis

Mechanical engineer, Hyundai Rotem
Wellington



In support of what is right

IN December last year the RMTU organised protests at Napier and Lyttelton ports against the import of blood phosphate from the Western Sahara by fertiliser company Ravensdown. MUNZ undertook a similar protest when the ship carrying the phosphate, the *Federal Crimson*, docked at Port Otago.

We considered taking strike action by refusing to berth the ship but in the event decided to register our protest by formally presenting the captain of the vessel with a letter condemning what was going on.

Under New Zealand industrial law political strikes are outlawed.

Under international law however, no dock worker can be compelled to work illegal cargo and blood phosphate is, arguably, illegal cargo.

Western Sahara is almost as far away from New Zealand as it is possible to be, so why is the RMTU getting involved protesting against the importation for rock phosphate from that part of the world?

Western Sahara is a former north western African colony of Spain. It is largely desert, sparsely populated and has some high quality rock phosphate reserves – a mineral that is used to manufacture fertiliser. New Zealand is one of the few countries that imports large quantities of this.

In 1975, Spain relinquished control of the territory to a joint administration by Morocco (which had claimed the territory since 1957) and Mauritania.



*Lyttelton Port branch vice chair Mike Shrimpton hands the captain of the *Federal Crimson* a letter of protest from RMTU members*

A war erupted between those countries and the Polisario Front – a Sahrawi nationalist movement. Mauritania withdrew its claims in 1979, and Morocco eventually occupied two thirds of Western Sahara, including all the major cities and natural resources.

There was been a United Nations-sponsored ceasefire agreement in 1991 and the UN considers the Polisario Front to be the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people. It maintains that the Sahrawis have a right to self-determination.

As of 2017 no other member state of the United Nations had officially recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. Sovereignty remains contested between Morocco and the Polisario Front and its legal status remains unresolved. The United Nations considers it to be a “non-self-governing territory”.

The Western Sahara conflict has resulted in severe human-rights abuses (reported by external reporters and Human Rights activists) and most notably the displacement of tens of thousands of Sahrawi

LETTERS (CONT)

◀ Retirement

Dear Editor,

It is with a bit of sadness that I tender my resignation from the RMTU. My first day with rail was in Westport 6 Feb 1967 and my last day was in Upper Hutt, 7 Feb 2020.

I started as a cleaner on steam and finishing as a locomotive engineer on EMUs on the Wellington network.

Over the years I have met, and still have, many friends within rail. I wish to thank the Union (RMTU as it is known now) for their

continuous support.

The past and present staff of our Union have been a pleasure to work with over the many years and may they continue to do a great job with your support.

Cheers

Bruce (Bing) Crosby
Upper Hutt.

Dear Editor,

Just a note to tell you I will be retiring from the RMTU on or about April 2, 2020.

This has come about by forced retire-

ment (or redundancy) whichever way one looks at it.

I wish to thank the RMTU for all they have done throughout my time at rail and I have thoroughly enjoyed my learnings with such an organised union and those in it.

Take care of yourselves and a big thanks from me.

Hopefully that double figure trout can now be caught!

John Bannerman
West Coast.

civilians from the country. Over 170,000 people are living in appalling conditions in refugee camps in Algeria.

Aside from its rich fishing waters and phosphate reserves, Western Sahara has few natural resources and lacks sufficient rainfall and freshwater resources for most agricultural activities. Western Sahara's much-touted phosphate reserves are relatively unimportant, representing less than two percent of proven phosphate reserves available to Morocco. The phosphate that is mined in the Western Sahara by Moroccan controlled companies is imported into New Zealand by Ballance Agri-Nutrients and Ravensdown.

In October last year the NZ Council of Trade Unions (CTU) passed a resolution calling upon the New Zealand Government 'to ensure New Zealand companies halt imports of phosphates from the occupied areas of Western Sahara until the legal status of the Territory is determined and the Saharawi people are allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with relevant UN resolutions and Peace Plan of 1991'.

Jacinda Ardern visited the Western Saharan refugee camps in 2008 when she was president of the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), and according to the *Otago Daily Times*, said: "It is time the Polisario was recognised" at a IUSY conference. Ardern went on to mention Western Sahara in her maiden speech in Parliament in 2015.

As an affiliate of the CTU the RMTU is



Lyttelton Port members express their disapproval beside the Federal Crimson.

bound by the resolution on Western Sahara. We also believe that stopping phosphate importation from occupied Western Sahara is the right thing to do.

Finally, there is the issue of the right to withdraw our labour on political grounds.

History is replete with examples of working people going on strike over what is right. Arguably, if current industrial law had existed in the 1980s, US nuclear ship visits to this country would have gone ahead, as it was waterfront workers who took strike action in protest against these.

The right to withdraw one's labour on political grounds is a fundamental democratic and human right.

Unions in other countries are fighting to keep the right to strike, notably in France and Britain. In New Zealand we have largely lost it as we can only strike if we are in a union engaged in collective bargaining or on health and safety grounds. This means no sympathy strikes, no strikes against redundan-



Josie Butler, infamous for throwing a dildo at Steven Joyce at Waitangi, speaks to Canterbury Rail and Lyttelton Port branch members about the importation of phosphate.

cies or unjustified dismissals and no political strikes.

It's time to take back the right to strike.

As one of the people of Western Sahara said in thanks for our protest: "Your noble work is a jewel in the crown of our movement." 🇵🇸



French workers fight for rights

Protests against cuts to pensions and restrictions on rights to strike

SINCE early December last year France has been rocked by the longest and biggest wave of strike action in modern times. France has one of the lowest levels of union membership in the developed world, at around 8%. Critically however, anyone – not just union members as in New Zealand – can legally take strike action and not only when they are engaged in collective bargaining. This means unions can call strikes on political grounds and if people support this it can have a huge impact. Another benefit of having an extended right to strike is that 98% of French workers are covered by union negotiated collective agreements.

The current unrest has been triggered by so called 'Pension Reform' which was one of President Macron's election promises.

It has three stated aims:

- To create a universal state retirement plan, which would replace the 42 individual retirement plans that exist in France;
- The creation of a 'points system' to give a pension in proportion to the contributions paid; and



- To 'improve the pensions of the most disadvantaged'.

The result of the system Macron is advocating would increase the retirement age of many jobs in France.

Government ministers have claimed that the pension reforms will simplify a complex system, as well as making it fairer.

Unions claim that the system will increase inequality between pensions and decrease the general level of the pensions.

Strikes against the changes began in

early December and are continuing. After a month of protests, polling in January reported 61% of French people in favour of the strikes.

The proposed pension changes are complicated and although the expressed aim was a universal 'one size fits all' system, the government has already conceded and amended the changes to include eight special plans for policemen, airline pilots and stewards, train drivers, firefighters, prison wardens, truck drivers, fishermen

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The plan has an external administrator and contributions are invested with four fund managers.



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www.portsretirement.org.nz

Issuer: Ports Retirement Trustee Limited

and teachers. These plans were introduced to avoid strikes in critical sectors or to try to end continuing strikes.

Unions called strikes on December 5 with the intention of shutting down the country and forcing Macron to re-evaluate his plans. The Eiffel Tower was closed down along with most of the light rail lines in Paris and 6000 police were deployed in the city, particularly around the President's residence, the Elysee Palace, which was barricaded.

The protests became violent in the east of Paris where protesters were seen lighting fires and smashing windows. The police reported 65,000 people had demonstrated in Paris, while the CGT union suggested 250,000 people had turned out. Across the country the Interior Ministry said more than 800,000 people were protesting, the CGT said the figure was 1.5 million.

Strikes and protests continued on 6 December as unions said there would be no let-up. While some schools reopened, almost all high-speed train services were cancelled, most of the Paris Metro remained shut down, and hundreds of flights were cancelled. Transport across the country remained paralysed on 8 December as strikes by state rail company SNCF and Parisian public transport group RATP workers continued into their fourth day.

Unions announced another large demonstration on 10 December 2019.

On 12 December French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe unveiled the government's proposal for raising the retirement age from 62 to 64 and harmonising the 42 different retirement schedules.

The next day, the CFDT union announced that it would be calling for its members to join demonstrations on 17 December.

To protest against the loss of their special regime, ballerinas from the Paris Opera performed Swan Lake in front of the Palais Garnier on 23 December.

Union workers from the electricity company EDF conducted operations to cut power to symbolic companies such as Amazon or deputies from Emmanuel Macron's party LREM while also performing 'Robin Hood' operations to put electricity back on to homes unable to pay their bills. In Caen, on 8 January 2020, dozens of lawyers threw their robes in front of the minister of justice Nicole Belloubet as a sign of protest. Lawyers are also on strike protesting against the changes to their pension scheme.

During union demonstrations, the level of violence exhibited by the police has been extremely high with videos allegedly showing a police officer firing point-blank at the protesters with a riot control gun on 9 January.

On 25 January, French firefighters joined the protests.

People have rallied on the street with Hong Kong anarchist flags, Antifa and Palestinian flags while singing 'L'Internationale' and chanting: "Overthrow Capitalism!" and "Revolution now!"

It has been revealed that Jean-Paul Delevoye, the High Commissioner for Pension Reforms, has received money from the French Federation of Insurance, which has a direct interest in the pension reform.

Being funded by a private company in this way, while being a member of the government, is illegal according to the French constitution.

Media reports have also pointed out the links between President Macron and BlackRock, one of the world's largest asset management funds, which is interested in having the billions of euros of the French pension fund enter the financial market. Apparently there have been multiple meetings between the French government and BlackRock.

The French Government has tabled a bill to try and restrict the rail workers' right to strike, which would compel striking workers to maintain minimum services. This has prompted more protests and action. French rail workers have a proud history of resisting oppression. It was a rail strike in the Paris marshaling yards that triggered the uprising that led to the liberation of the city from Nazi occupation in 1944 as Allied armies approached.

The new chair of the International Transport Workers Rail Section is David Gobe from the CGT.

The RMTU received an invite to attend the 44th Congress of the French Rail Union, the CGT Federation des Cheminots, in March 2020.

The National Management Committee resolved that our South Island organiser John Kerr would attend and we expect he will have a great deal to report on his return.

With all the debate about Fair Pay Agreements and Pay Equity Awards here in Aotearoa, maybe we could learn from our French comrades. 🇫🇷



Hillside Reunion: Happy days at Hillside workshops as Government confidence and money breathe new energy into the works and its staff.

Gov'ts long term rail vision

THE Government has released its long term vision for a sustainable 21st century rail network that gets our cities moving, connects our regions and gets more freight off the roads.

Deputy Prime Minister and State Owned Enterprises Minister Winston Peters said the Government is committed to rebuilding New Zealand's rail network.

"After years of rail being run into the ground by the previous government, our Government is getting rail back on track. Since coming to office we have already allocated more than \$2.8 billion in rail.

"We need our rail network to be able to cope with New Zealand's growing freight needs. Freight is expected to increase by 55 per cent by 2042. Freight carried by rail not only reduces wear and tear on our roads, it reduces carbon emissions by 66 per cent.

"We have already begun investing in a national freight rail network with over \$1 billion funding in this year's Budget, \$741 million of which is the first phase of restoring a reliable, resilient and safe freight and tourism network," Mr Peters said.

Transport Minister Phil Twyford said rail

is critical to New Zealand's economy, and creates opportunities for regional development and employment.

"Passenger rail is also the key to unlocking gridlock in our largest cities and boosting productivity. The more people take the train, the more our roads are freed up for those who have to drive," he said.

"Passenger growth on the metropolitan rail networks in Auckland and Wellington has continued to outstrip expectations. Investment in rail is anticipated to more than double patronage in the Auckland metro network to more than 47 million trips a year by 2028.

"Building alternative transport options for people and freight is a vital part of

achieving the Government's goal of net zero emissions by 2050. It also helps make our roads safer by reducing the numbers of cars and trucks on our roads."

He added that the Draft Rail Plan will enable new long-term planning and a funding system for rail. The Land Transport (Rail) Legislation Bill had its first reading in Parliament last month and will enable the rail network to be funded through the National Land Transport Fund, with the support of ongoing Crown funding. It also introduces track user charges.

The Draft Rail Plan will become final when the next Government Policy Statement of Land Transport is finalised in the second half of 2020. 🌐

The Draft Rail Plan can be found at

transport.cwp.govt.nz/rail/the-draft-new-zealand-rail-plan/

For further information:

transport.cwp.govt.nz/rail/the-draft-new-zealand-rail-plan/

transport.cwp.govt.nz/legislation/bills/the-land-transport-rail-legislation-bill

Champion delegate

IN the inaugural award for Auckland Delegate of the Year, Transdev LE, Mike McLaughlin, headed out some quality delegates. The award, selected by the Auckland branch executive, noted that Mike had been a delegate from his early days of employment at Transdev Auckland going back some six years. Colleagues said it had been a privilege to work with Mike who has a forthright, straightforward style and calls a 'spade a spade'.

His work this year has been plentiful in both quantity and quality. He has been heavily involved in areas of real importance including the bargaining team, the HP2 team, and has been a crucial member of both teams. He will also be part of the team for the TDAK ROM rewrite.

Mike also has a terrific record in representing members in individual casework and in putting forward issues that are dear to the hearts of members, not least in the area of health and safety where he is tenacious and fearless in fighting the members' corner.

He is also more than willing to tell the Auckland organiser when he believes he is wrong!

This is a big year for the RMTU, Mike and all our delegates, who have an important role in making sure we are successful in ensuring our members' interests and needs are met. 🌐



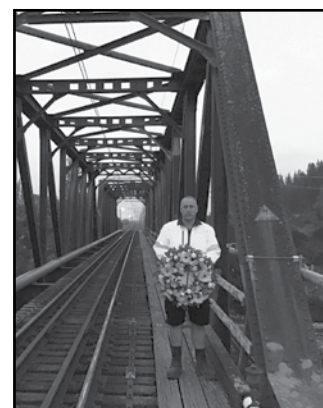
NMC Auckland rail rep Jas Giri (r) presents the award to LE Mike McLaughlin.

Tangiwai remembered

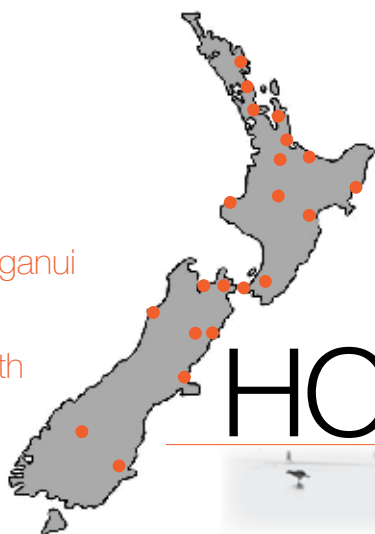
THE Tangiwai disaster occurred at 10:21 pm on 24 December 1953 when the Whangaehu River bridge collapsed beneath the Wellington to Auckland express passenger train No 626. The locomotive and the first six carriages derailed into the river killing 151 people.

On 24 December 2019 Stu Puller (loco engineer) and Mike Vowles (loco engineer U/T) drove KiwiRail train 222 to the scene of the disaster. It is customary for members of the Palmerston North branch to throw a wreath off the Tangiwai Bridge into the Whangaehu River as an RMTU remembrance of train 626's crew and passengers.

Additionally a team of Palmerston North members including Chris Carran, D Davidson, Camron Persson and Jack Still, drove to the Tangiwai memorial site for the service held at 10pm the same night together with about 50 people attending the hour long commemoration.



Auckland
Christchurch
Dunedin
Gisborne
Greytown
Hanmer
Kaikoura
Mount Maunganui
Napier
Nelson
New Plymouth
Ohope
Orewa
Paihia
Picton
Queenstown
Rotorua
Taupo
Wellington
Westport
Whitianga



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Double tracking



(l to r) Wayne Butson, Howard Phillips, List MP Ginny Anderson, Minister of Education Chris Hipkins and Todd Valster all participated in a very moving launch ceremony for Trentham to Upper Hutt double tracking. Welcoming waiata were performed by a local primary school and the response provided by Te Kupenga Mabi members. Hutt Valley and Wairarapa commuters are celebrating the beginning of the track works as it will remove a major bottleneck allowing trains to operate with greater frequency.

Hillside joy

Hillside workers celebrate the Government's new funding for the works.



\$1,500 AD&D

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

Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year. Please reply on line at ailnz.co.nz/request to have an AIL representative deliver your certificate of coverage and explain the additional insurance coverage available. This is very important to you and your family.

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



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Silly if you don't join says retiring money man

AFTER 26 years at the helm of the Ports Retirement Plan David Stevens is heading back to port.

"In fact I had made up my mind to tell Wayne (RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson) that 2020 would be my last year but health issues last year forced me to act sooner," he said.

Stevens, 83, leaves an impressive legacy. The Plan increased its wealth from around \$30.7 million when he wrote his first report in 1994 to around \$82 million in his latest.

He is rightly proud of this achievement and especially pleased that he was able to deliver port worker members an excellent deal.

"These have been very good years," he said. "I have enjoyed the responsibility, enjoyed the people I have been working with and have especially enjoyed working with the Union appointees to the board. I've been very fortunate."

While the Plan is squarely a union enterprise, he confesses that unionism was not in his blood. However, he had a strong social conscience and while "I did not move to the union world I did adopt a role where I could give back a little of what I'd learned in the banking world to look after the interests of the members of the scheme. I've had staunch support from the Union and together we have done well."

If there's one regret, he says, it is that only about half the eligible current port work force have joined up - a factor he assiduously tried changing through numerous campaigns over many years.

"The Plan numbers show an increase in the 45-60 year age group, but we'd really like to see younger members join up."

This lack of response disappoints him and leaves him somewhat bewildered.

He says the facts speak for themselves.



The Plan has grown significantly under his leadership.

"I can comfortably say that we have, over the years, regularly and substantially outperformed inflation," he said. "And it's not unusual for someone who has been in the scheme for 25 to 30 years to take home a lump sum in the region of \$500,000."

Stevens can't understand why the younger members aren't flocking to join.

"They are silly if they haven't joined, because their employers also put money in."

Wise young port workers should be jumping at this opportunity, he says, and adding it to their KiwiSaver and prospective government superannuation in their retirement.

Like many similar schemes, including KiwiSaver, dividends depend on how the funds are invested. There are good years and bad but Stevens can only recall two bad years during his time which disappeared into insignificance when combined with the good years.

He believes the various port companies aren't supportive "as they find KiwiSaver an easier and simpler scheme to promote and simpler for their admin people to work with, which is a shame".

Despite Government requirements to provide ever more information he is firmly of the belief that most investors want simple explanations. To this end he has always favoured a simple report with the full report in the background available upon request


"I'm a great believer in providing what people want to know in a form they can understand as most members simply want to know:

- Their balance at start of the year;
- How much they have contributed;
- How much their company contributed;
- How much they have earned;
- Their investment returns; and
- Their benefits at the end of the year.

"The Ports Retirement Plan is a good scheme and one people should think very carefully about not investing in."

"David will leave a huge gap in the Ports Retirement Plan governance in terms of his mana and knowledge of financial markets and his personal passion for our scheme," said Butson. "I was saddened and shocked when David suddenly stepped down but I know that he would not have done so lightly and so I say thanks for looking after members' retirement and it is time to focus on your own."

Stevens is still a banker and even in his newly-found (re) retirement he will be keeping his hand in.

"I will retain one or two small charitable trust which I manage and a couple of small investment portfolios which suits me." 

Labour Conference inspirational

WHEN I excitedly told a friend I'd been asked to go to the Labour Party Conference, the response I got was along the lines of: "Oh wow, that sounds boring."

It really wasn't!

I had a great time, and I came out of it feeling reinvigorated and enthusiastic about national politics.

Friday morning I was there nice and early for registration, and an older gent collared me, telling me he had just what I needed over at his wares stand. I bought a lovely pair of red and white fern earrings because it seemed like the right thing to do, and they came in handy as a conversation starter throughout the conference.

We kicked off with the Union Affiliates Sector meeting at the Whanganui District Council Chambers where we got to meet and listen to the presidential candidates Lorna Crane, Tane Phillips, and Claire Szabo.

The candidates really stood out from one another and I was impressed by the range of experience and expertise covered. Claire Szabo was elected as Labour's new party president and I'm sure she'll do an exceptional job.

We were also treated to a brief encounter with the Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, who told us all how she valued working with unions. Of course I'd seen our PM talking on the television but I didn't have much of an appreciation for what she might be like in person, and it was fascinating just how approachable and candid she was with us in the council chambers.

At 2pm the policy workshops started so I went along to the infrastructure and environment workshop. Todd, Howard, and Wayne split up and went to other workshops to ensure we had all the bases covered.

There was a very mixed demographic in my workshop, and it was pretty inspiring to see and hear the passion demonstrated in the room, in well thought-out and articulated ways. There was some very heated debate around environmental policies that crossed into agricultural practices. Of note to us was discussion around coastal



Newly-confirmed Labour Conference goer, Roz Muir, with old conference backs (l to r) Wayne Butson, Howard Phillips and Todd Valster.

cabotage policies, hoping to get a national shipping system back on track, and a strong focus on improving rail functionality and accessibility in key areas for both freight and passenger services.

Two highlights

There were two highlights for me on the Saturday: the deputy leader's address and Tania Pouwhare's presentation.

Kelvin Davis gave us an unusual and highly entertaining history lesson on our current coalition government which he'd based on the Maori creation myth. "Different groups tried every three years to bring light to the world but alone, they weren't strong enough against the dark blue nothingness. Until 2017, when whaea Jacinda, Winitana Peters, and the kakariki joined forces, pushing apart the darkness to let the light in."

Tania Pouwhare (Ngai Tuhoe) is a social entrepreneur for the southern initiative team at Auckland Council. She spoke about how her focus was on using local businesses for products and services required by the Council, with a strong emphasis on using Maori and Pasifika-owned and run companies.

It was such a refreshing view of how

the tender process could be used to boost local areas rather than continuing the race to the bottom that we so often see in local government decision-making.

The conference finished on Sunday with the leader's speech at the Whanganui Opera House.

I was thoroughly impressed with Jacinda's public speaking. Her engagement with the audience and her ability to insert spontaneous humour into her speech without losing track of the facts and figures she was quoting was second to none. She comes across as honest and thoughtful which in my opinion is a complete polar shift from the 'Troy McClure' character we had in charge previously.

I make no apology if this write-up has come across sounding somewhat fan-girl-ish, because the fact is that attending the 103rd New Zealand Labour Party Annual Conference has changed my mind and my opinion on a number of subjects — and in some cases quite substantially.

My future voting will be adjusted accordingly (and no, despite owning horses, I have never voted for the blue team. I grew up on the land with animals because my parents are lifestyle block hippies.).

- Roz Muir

Crab safety



FOLLOWING extensive consultation and many face to face meetings a safer method of moving train sets on and off the electric depot wheel lathe has been agreed and has commenced operation. The RMTU and the employer have been uncomfortable with the wire rope winch arrangement which hitherto had been used to move the sets. The electric Zephyr mini shunt vehicle is a safer alternative. KiwiRail is currently seeking expressions of interest from manufacturers to use an electric shunt vehicle within mechanical depots for shunt purposes. 🌐

PN freight hub launched

REGIONAL Economic Development Minister Shane Jones (right) unveiled a master plan for the three kilometre long intermodal freight hub which combines a container terminal, warehousing for road transport operators, and bulk goods and forestry loading operations with KiwiRail's train operations and maintenance facilities.



He also stated that the biggest project he is working on is the rehabilitation of KiwiRail.

"For quite some time the leadership of Manawatu and Palmerston North have been

promoting themselves as a leading hub manufacturing logistics centre," said KiwiRail Group chief executive Greg Miller (left).

"The design of the new rail road freight hub near Palmerston North is a bold vision for New Zealand's logistics sector," 🌐



Select hearing?

RMTU leaders attended the Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee session to listen to KiwiRail present its annual report to Parliament. (l to r) Wayne Butson, John Kerr, Todd Valster, (unknown) and Howard Phillips.



Whole body vibration

- What's the problem?

LONG-TERM, whole-body vibration (WBV)—stemming from engines and vehicles—has been identified as an important mechanical stressor causing early and accelerated degenerative spine diseases leading to back pain and prolapsed discs.

International evidence shows that amongst rail operators the prevalence of back disorders due to exposure to WBV is high, with elevated risk after five years of exposure.

International WBV expert Eckhardt Johanning recently reviewed the KRG/RMTU working group report on the subject. He endorsed the group's recommendation to adopt the EU standard for measuring WBV but cautioned that there is no defined safe level of exposure. Therefore, the goal should be to keep exposure (to vibration) as low as possible.

This can be achieved by improving track conditions, improved locomotive design and having suitable air suspension seats.

LEs are all too familiar with the toll of rough riding conditions.

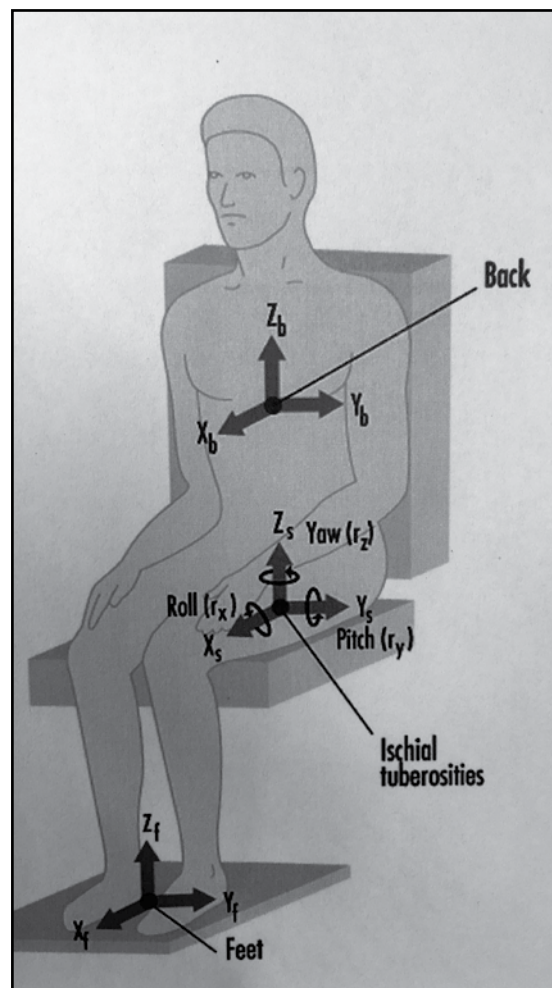
LE Jed O'Donoghue said that the vibration in his DX cab was so bad his pedometer recorded he'd walked 5,000 steps when he in fact hadn't left the cab operating from Christchurch to Studholm. He knows of another LE who slows down to 60km and wears a neck brace whilst operating his loco due to the vibration in the cab.

Invercargill LE Danny Kent, said the new seats have made a difference. However, he pointed out that some of the DCs which had been red-carded due to vibration issues had already been fitted with new seats. He said all the flash vibration meters are no match for his 'bumometer'.

Eckhardt (in his report) was also critical of KRG's vibration testing method saying the seat pad, dosimeter was unsuitable and provided "limited data". In his report he made the following recommendations:

- KRG use the Svantek106 human vibration meter rather than the Svantek 100A;
- Kiwirail engage an outside ergonomists review of the loco cabs, LE control stands and seats to identify improvements;
- Measurement of actual vibration levels following international guidance ISO 2631-1;
- Onsite surveillance and monitoring programme of workers exposed to WBV to identify susceptible individuals and provide medical intervention;
- Education and training for workers and the RMOs to enable early recognition and intervention;
- Worker and union involvement in work-site assessment, solution development and implementation; and
- Encourage early reporting of musculo-skeletal symptoms to the health care providers to reduce the progression of symptoms.

LEs are reminded to 'red card' locos that have excessive vibration and book them up as 'trail-only'. 🚂



Measurements of vibration are typically complex and challenging.



WHERE ARE YOU?

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

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

ICLS Forum — Bangkok

Jas Giri, Auckland NMC

NEO-LIBERALISM has swept across every corner of the world, and continues to tyrannise workers and unions alike. Among global challenges facing workers and their unions throughout the world, including those who join the International Centre for Labour Solidarity forum 2019 (ICLS), is union oppression and the protection of workers' rights. Our goal must be to create a society where everyone lives a quality life.

The ICLS Forum 2019 was held over 22-23 November 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. More than 90 trade unionists participated from 14 countries along with affiliated organisations.

Wayne Butson, Rebecca Hauck and myself (Jas Giri) were given the opportunity to represent the RMTU and we participated along with our fellow comrades.

The highlight from this forum were discussions around the future of workers and unions. Key elements of this forum were reflected in the current state of public transport, organising women and young workers, wage decline, casualisation and increasing productivity. There were many discussions around how some of the above challenges are coherent to global issues of increasing automation, and challenges faced by our fellow unions in organising around women and young workers and the challenges of cheap — wage disparity and cheap labour.

In Thailand, 1% of the population possess 66.9% of assets and 99% of the population (67.8 million) possess 33.1% of assets.



RMTU at the ICLS forum, (l to r) Jas Giri, Wayne Butson and Rebecca Hauck.

Thailand has been ranked number one in global inequality and wage disparity on the global UN index. Through this forum, our comrades from Thailand put forward proposals and strategies for discussion including that governments must adjust the minimum wage at the same rate as national rate of pay. A country's wage structure should be determined and adjusted in line with the annual wage and the increase in the cost of living. The ILO standards are designed to overcome the issue of inequality.

Wayne Butson shared the challenges RMTU and our membership confronted during the commissioning of Chinese DL locomotives.

Upon first delivery the Union raised concerns relating to cab visibility, loco weight and crash worthiness. In 2014 all DLs were removed from services after positive testing for asbestos. The RMTU played an important role in fixing wages and living conditions for the Chinese workers who

were sent to New Zealand to disassemble the locos and to reassemble them after the asbestos was removed. The RMTU, as part of the legal process, was able to achieve an agreement with KiwiRail that knowledge transfer must occur and that all maintenance must be done by KiwiRail staff.

The purpose of the ICLS forum is not only to take concrete actions to strengthen ICLS, but also deepen its relationship and partnership among affiliated organisations from each country.

This was Rebecca and my first exposure to the warm solidarity and comradeship that is the hallmark of ICLS and the challenges and hardship faced by unionists outside of the first world.

It was enlightening to experience the high regard which the RMTU is held in within Asia Pacific.

We are grateful for the experience and look forward to using the learnings we took away from the Forum. 🇳🇵

Farewell Phil

AFTER 12 years with the RMTU Phil Spanswick will be retiring on May 1, 2020.

"In retiring I would like to thank all of the members of the RMTU that I have worked with through collective agreement negotiations, campaigns and the daily challenges that we have faced in that time."

He makes special mention to all of the delegates and executive members who "without your involvement the RMTU would be the poorer. I wish you all the best for the future". 🇳🇵





Delegate Radu Borsaru and life member Phil Bosworth.



Union delegate Manu Barclay.

Celebrating 90 years

LAST month Hutt Workshops celebrated 90 years of continuous operation – a fact lauded by current Transport Minister Phyl Twyford who praised its virtues in his speech.

He described rail as the "backbone of a sustainable transport system" and the changes such a "change from governments 30 plus years ago".

"Rail is a key resource to combat our climate emergency."

He reflected on some pretty desperate times for the Workshop which, under some governments, hovered on closure. However, he assured the 250 at the function, that under a Labour-led government the future was much more certain.

"Labour has made a huge commitment to rail," he said. "We believe in rail and we believe in you!"

He expressed excitement by the current construction of the rolling stock for the upcoming Hamilton-Auckland link and said, "After this event I will be going down to plant 2 to check on the H2A (as the refurbishment of the Hamilton to Auckland trains are called) progress. Then you can look forward to upgrading stock for the Capital Connection and refitting wagons to carry logs thus getting more trucks off our roads."

The tone of his speech was upbeat and positive and the assembly clapped and cheered regularly.

He was followed by RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson who told the crowd

that if they liked Twyford's message and the future prospectives for Hutt Workshops they had better all get out there this year and work for a Labour election victory.

"I'm absolutely certain a National-led government won't be such enthusiastic supporters of rail," he said. He told the assembly to "remember the pathway to getting here" and the history of who supported rail and who didn't.

"Remember those infamous moments in history when Tranz Rail was formed, the enterprise sold and privatised, Hillside was closed, purchases made overseas when they could be built here and the terrible ERA years," he said. "All under National! Remember, only one side of the political spectrum supports rail - and your jobs - and that's the left. If job security is your key concern tick Labour."

Hutt Workshops, currently with a work force of around 200, it once had more than 1500 on site - all male. Today the work force comprises 12 women and growing.

Started in the 1920s it replaced the original Petone Workshops which were opened in the 1880s, adjacent to the railway station. The new workshop boasted modern equipment and improved efficiency and, together with Addington Workshop, was considered among the most modern engineering plants in the country.

During WW1 it turned its hand to producing Bren gun carriers, marine engines, boilers for navy trawlers and machine tools.

Work at the Shops has scaled back since



PHOTOGRAPH: John Irvine

Years of rail creativity

1980s and now undertakes all essential work on KiwiRail's rolling stock including locomotives, passenger carriages, wagons and their components.

The renewed enthusiasm from the current government has allowed the intake of more apprentices which currently stand at 10 with plans to take on another eight over the next year. Given the ageing workforce, KiwiRail has a focus on apprenticeships to rejuvenate the site.

Current projects at the workshops include converting ageing container wagons for use transporting logs, upgrading former AT carriages for the Hamilton — Auckland passenger service, carriages for the Capital Connection and work has just begun on the electric locomotives.

This influx of work has allowed around 40 new staff to be taken on in the last year.

KiwiRail have also committed a significant investment to upgrade the workshop itself with almost \$18 million going towards it and an additional \$20 million set aside for a new wheel shop in Plant 3. This will include new equip for processing wheel sets, and enable huge improvements in safety, productivity, as well as an improved work environment for staff.

Finally Maryan Street spoke of Hutt Workshop staff leading the way with the High Performance-High Engagement initiative.

Historically, there had been a number of issues at the Workshops including poor safety performance, low employee engage-

ment and at times, a combative industrial relationship.

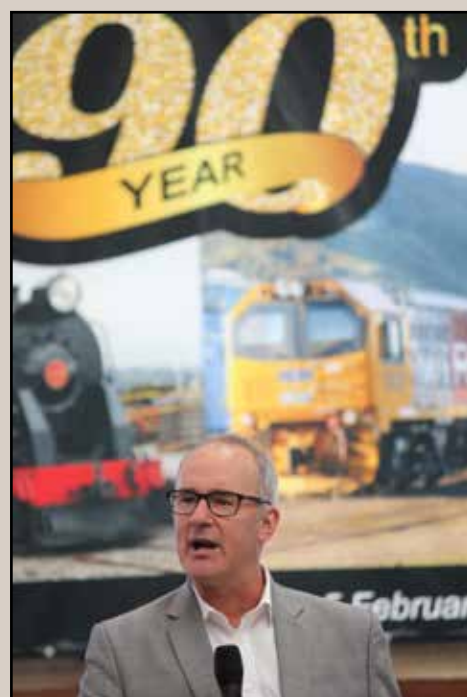
In 2016 KiwiRail piloted a new HPHE workplace programme designed to bring management and workers together to problem solve issues and forge a new relationship. It was embedded at the workshops during 2017.

Since then there have been notable improvements in several areas, including safety, efficiency and staff engagement. It has created visibility and ownership of performance and has empowered front line workers, encouraging them to identify restraints to their work and efficiency and come up with solutions.

Team culture is more inclusive, workplace groups design improvements and major improvements to the efficiency of the business have been noted.

HPHE has also allowed for experimentation and open thinking, resulting in improved planning process

Some of the tangible results achieved include a 30 per cent reduction in cycle time for locomotive overhauls; 19 per cent reduction in labour hours for traction motor overhauls; and improved site efficiency with \$1.2 million in annual savings. 🌐



Transport minister Phil Twyford.

Helen Kelly Together

THE new movie following ex-CTU leader Helen Kelly over the last year of her life is inspirational, sad beyond words and a wonderful testament to a staunch advocate for human dignity. It also shows how WorksafeNZ's practices were a contradiction of terms. Instead of encouraging safer work environments they appeared to actively support the owners of companies where unsafe work practices were permitted. The film's abiding reference was the terrible death rate we New Zealanders tolerate in our work places—among the worst in the western world—and the industries which appear to be above the law: farming, forestry, mining. Despite mimicking Australia's work safety legislation New Zealand's results are significantly worse.

Helen Kelly Together was filmed and directed by Tony Sutorius who managed to gain the confidence of Kelly and all who surrounded her in that last year, to film some delicate, honest, wretched and joyous moments as we watched Kelly's inexorable deterioration.

She admitted when she left the CTU she wasn't sure what she might do but it didn't take long for those issues to knock on her door: The first was the wife of a forestry worker seeking justice for her husband killed on the job. The company, along with WorksafeNZ, called his death accidental and blamed the worker for poor work practice. Kelly discovered an enormous number of forestry workers were failing to return from work—and only a handful of cases where the company was blamed.

Then along came meat workers at Wairoa seeking help to get the lockout of union workers lifted.

Despite gut wringing doses of chemo and radiation, Kelly made numerous trips there to advise and encourage.

And finally, the families of the dead Pike River miners came knocking seeking help to get Peter Whittle's acquittal overturned and a fair trial established to sheet the blame to someone in authority.

She took on all three issues and made some wonderful friends along the way.

These friendships were a revelation. She welcomed them all into her Wellington home every time a court session was called and they all fitted in like family: cleaning, cooking, quietly chatting and vigorously plotting.



They were with her to the end.

This is not a maudlin movie about Kelly's life and demise but rather an uplifting view on a supremely unselfish woman who tirelessly sought justice for the downtrodden and to bring the powerful to task.

It wasn't easy watching and there are some uncomfortable truths revealed, but its focus was firmly on the needy and powerless and the necessity for more powerful laws to support unjust, unfair and down right unsafe work conditions.

Go and see it when it comes to a theatre near you, and take your teenage children that they may consider the ways of the world they are entering — and be encouraged to join a union. 🇳🇿

- Mike Regan

RAIL - TAKING STRESS OFF NORTHLAND ROADS

It's time to reconnect Northland's extensive railway network enabling industry to use the safest way to move freight and increase high value rail tourism.

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union Fully Supports re-opening lines to Dargaville and Otiria. Reconnecting rail to Kawakawa - Opua for rail tourism.



Rail is the Strategic missing link to Northport.

- Logs • Woodchips
- Dairy • Bulkloads • Tourism
- Large Consignment freight



POSITIVE MECA OUTCOME

WHEN the 17 member RMTU negotiating team for the renewal of the Transdev Wellington and Hyundai Rotem MECA met with the employers and lodged the claims of members we believed that we were in for a very difficult negotiation and that we would struggle to reach a just outcome without major disputation.

The fact is we came out the other end of the wage talks with greater unity amongst members and with a deal that we were proud to be able to support and recommend to members.



Christine Fisiibo and Tangiwai Haney.

This illustrates what can be achieved when both sides of the process are focussed on reaching a deal on just and agreed terms.

The deal provided a strong basis to enable the employers to achieve Living Wage accreditation which had been a challenge for KiwiRail in the past with the low hourly pay levels for passenger operators and delivered parity in percentage increase with Transdev Auckland. The deal also recognised the increased workloads of Wairarapa train managers with the headline across the board increase being 3% + 3% + 3% for a three year term. 🇳🇿

Encouraging 'upstanders'



CREATING POSITIVE WORKPLACES was a course provided by WorkSafe Reps on Wednesday January 29 2020 facilitated by June Hoddle. There was a good mix of 12 people who attended which included Transdev Wellington, Hyundai Rotem and the RMTU.

It was interesting to hear the different stories of bullying and harassment from the different companies and occupation levels. It was also fascinating to learn about the definitions of bullying and harassment, as some of the terms were unknown to me and it has helped me get a greater understanding and awareness of unacceptable behaviours.

I enjoyed listening to the different workplace culture examples given by my fellow workshop attendees, both positive and negative. It demonstrated that even

though there can be toxic workplace environments that cause difficulties with communicating with each other, there are also positive cultural activities that can bring the workers together.

Next we looked into the legal duty to manage unacceptable behaviour and how to respond. Bullying is a workplace hazard and it was really informative learning about the formal and informal approaches to dealing with these inappropriate behaviours.

We broke into three groups and were given a case study so we could apply what we have learned into these potential real-life situations. The risk management cycle was eye opening. I enjoyed learning about risk assessment and how it can manage the risks of bullying and harassment and help change a negative workplace culture. This includes promoting diversity and tolerance, setting

organisational values, developing managers and encouraging the 'Upstander' — someone who notices bullying behaviours and uses words and actions to help the person being bullied.

We finished the session with creating actions for improvement in our own workplaces by identifying the unacceptable behaviours (risk factors), establishing actions to manage the risk, select who would be in charge of carrying out these actions, creating a time frame, how to monitor and finally how to review.

This is an excellent course, informative and relevant and beneficial for anyone to attend. It covers issues every person will encounter in their lives whether it is inside or outside the workplaces. Five stars. 🇳🇿

Chelsea Cardy

RMTU Administrative Assistant

RMTU WOMEN

The RMTU fully supports equal opportunities for women and men

Lou Francis

RMTU Wellington Union delegate

How long have you been a member of the RMTU?

Nearly a year.

What does your current job involve?

I'm a mechanical engineer. I help service the Wellington electric passenger trains. I do heavy maintenance work as well as preventative and correct maintenance on, under and inside the train.

And what's your role in the RMTU?

I'm a Union delegate at our depot.

What do you think about working in a male dominated industry?

I think it takes a strong woman to put up with the gender bias and bullshit a lot of

workplaces have. It's not for everyone, and it's definitely not a bad thing if women find they can't keep doing it. You have to find your supporters at work and have people that have your back and will stick up for you against misogyny and any other harassment.

What would you say to a bunch of women school leavers about working in an industry that's male dominated?

Other than unless the culture and male workers change; it's not worth it, definitely have some girl friends on hand to talk with and offload with, whether in the same field or not. It just helps to be able to talk with women. And call guys out for stuff right away if they say a sexist joke. Don't just laugh it off, thinking it'll just happen once, because it will happen again, and just laughing makes them think it's acceptable. 🇳🇿



21st century toilets for women - about time!

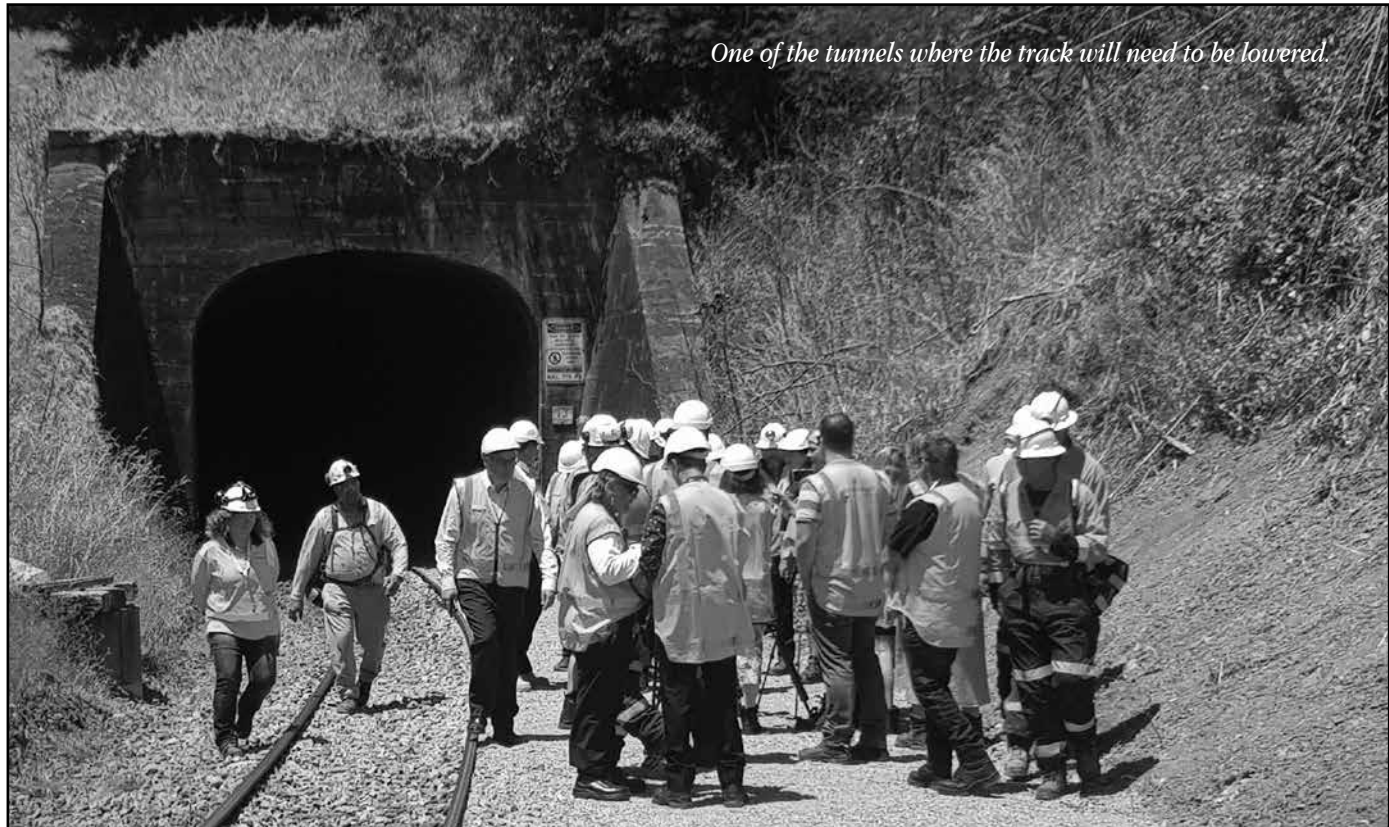
THANKS to some great leadership from our West Coast branch secretary in Greymouth, Ron Nijssen, and with the support of the membership our growing number of women members on the Coast now have their own toilet facilities in the depot.

Ron mobilised the members around the issue after World Toilet Day in November and KiwiRail came to the party.

Well done everyone – campaigns get results that change things for the better.



Investment in Northland rail



One of the tunnels where the track will need to be lowered.

THE Government's latest investment in Northland will enable hi-cube container freight to be transported by rail in the region for the first time ever, said KiwiRail CEO Greg Miller after State Owned Enterprises Minister Winston Peters and Regional Economic Development Minister Shane Jones announced a further \$109.7 million rail investment through the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF).

From that money \$69.7 million will be spent on lowering tracks in the 13 tunnels between Swanson and Whangarei; reopening the currently mothballed rail line north of Whangarei, between Kauri and Otiria; and building a container terminal at the Otiria rail yard, in Moerewa.


"I'm really impressed by the ingenuity of KiwiRail's engineering staff to be able to lower the tracks in the tunnels – which is a lot less expensive than boring bigger tunnels," said Miller. "The tunnel work will have a huge impact on how freight is moved in and out of Northland. Currently 18 million tonnes of cargo is moved in and out of the region every year. Of that, around 30,000 containers leave Northland by road. Most aren't able to fit through the tunnels, but this investment will change that – open-

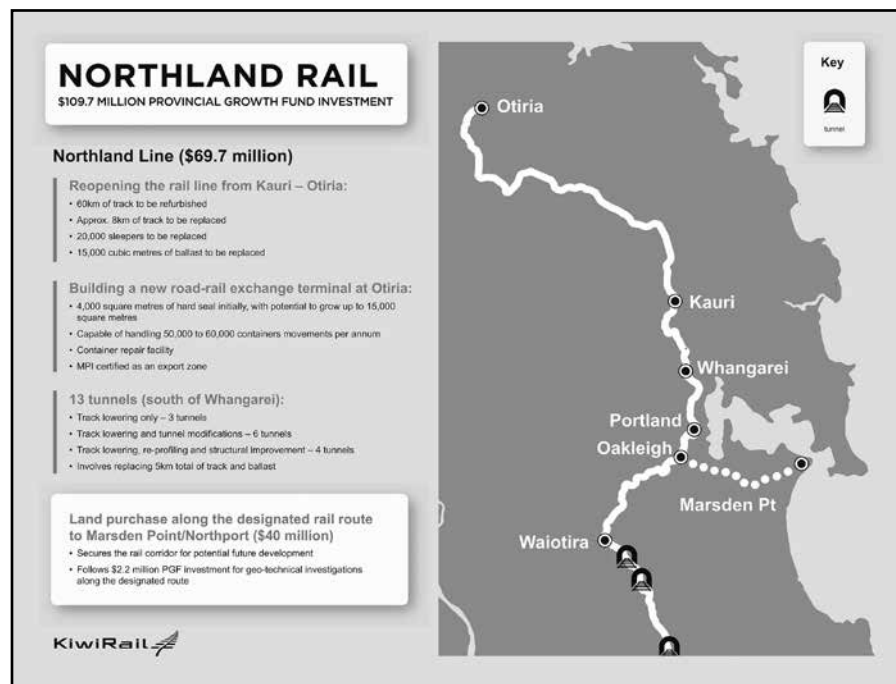
ing up a whole new market to rail."

The new rail projects will have a significant effect on roads in the region where less will need to be spent on maintenance, there will be fewer emissions and less congestion.

Miller added that the combined projects will employ around 200 contracted staff on 10 fronts across Northland simultaneously, and KiwiRail itself will take on 12 more

local staff for ongoing maintenance of the Northland Line and, hopefully, see the way clear to take aboard new apprentices "to get more young people into our industry".

This is the second PGF investment in Northland rail, following the \$94.8 million provided to make significant improvements to the Northland Line between Swanson and Whangarei, announced last year. 



New union to protect rail workers in Thailand

THE International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) is a global union federation and organises transport workers across all transport modes. The ITF also runs strategic campaigns and one such campaign is 'Our Public Transport' which attempts to unionise metro rail, taxi and bus metropolitan operations. To date there are two OPT organising locations, Nairobi and Bangkok, with Manila and Jakarta as additional possible targets.

In many overseas countries the labour laws are very restrictive on unions.

If they are public sector unions they are not permitted to organise in the private sector.

This is the case in Thailand.

Rail in Thailand is predominantly state owned and controlled and has a strong independent union called the State Railway Union of Thailand (SRUT). The Thai government is building additional lines and capacity and is using private sector subsidiaries to operate the new lines. The SRUT



is not permitted to organise these new entities.

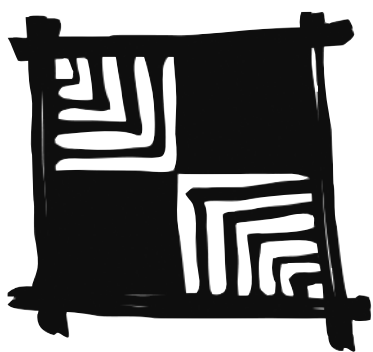
The OPT project in Bangkok provides an organising base to see the formation of new private sector unions to

organise the new train operations.

RMTU GS Wayne Butson is on the steering committee of the OPT Bangkok

project and was in Bangkok to celebrate and support the formation of the Mass Rapid Transport Union (MRTU).

"It is humbling to be present to see the birth of a new independent strong and democratic union for mass transit rail workers and the brave union leaders willing to take on leadership roles in a fledgling alliance of workers!" said Wayne. 🇹🇭



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Better Work, Better World

AUCKLAND RAIL

THE Transdev ROM rewrite will finally start in March. This has been long delayed while the Company has queried the way in which the stand-by payment is paid. The team has been picked and are chomping at the bit to move forward. HP2 (High Performance High Engagement) continues on driver door operations. Currently we are developing the risk assessment tool for the practical tests.

TDAK are looking to bring in a 'wellness clinic'. Once a month, people who have used excessive sick leave will be called into a meeting to discuss their health. Anyone called into these meetings needs to take someone in as support. This will be the employee's choice and, if that choice is unavailable, the meeting will have to take place at another time.

The employee does not have to discuss their, or their family member's, health at these meetings.

Transdev are talking about this eventually leading to disciplinaries. However, genuine illness is not a disciplinary issue and we will fight any attempt by Transdev to do this. It appears that TDAK are still using the widely discredited Bradford Factor.

Transdev operating centre is undergoing a restructure and there is a dispute on whether the new position descriptions that TDAK are looking to put in place attract a higher pay rate. The Company has 'kindly' offered an aggregate wages to get rid of overtime rates. The members have politely declined.

We will be restarting the regular CAF

meetings with delegates and management

in March.

After ironing out the access issues with Toll prior to Christmas, no sooner were we back when Toll started attempting to deny our members' entitlement of an alternative day off when they worked a public holiday. This has been sorted but members need to be aware that this practice is occurring and inform the Union if it occurs again.

We will be bargaining the Toll collective agreement this year and we are seeking a meeting with key delegates in early April. This meeting will take place in Auckland and we need members to be thinking about what they want to claim and putting remits together for the delegates to bring to that meeting.

Unhappy members

The roster rewrite for KiwiRail mechanical at Westfield has been completed. It is fair to say the members are deeply unhappy with the outcome.

Having been told they needed to change rosters to increase the touch time on locos to 80%, and that the Company wasn't concerned about how this was achieved, KiwiRail then told them that they couldn't have their preferred roster, but would have to follow the Company's roster, after consultation.

This is particularly disappointing as the members entered into a High Performance High Engagement process in good faith and

THE BRADFORD FACTOR

is calculated using the Bradford Formula

S2 x D = B

S is the total number of separate absences by an individual

D is the total number of days of absence of that individual

B is the Bradford Factor score

The Bradford Factor allows managers to monitor absenteeism during any set period. Many companies identify a running year as an acceptable period.

put a great deal of work in to achieve what the Company wanted, only to have to wear a roster they're not happy with.

The Bradford Factor is also raising its ugly head at KiwiRail and appears to be driven by senior management.

People are also being braced in an ad hoc way and questioned about why they have taken sick leave or used domestic leave.

You are under no obligation to answer these questions unless you have had an extended period of sick leave and are looking at a return to work programme.

KR are also looking to add to the role of the team leaders at Southdown regarding locking out locos. This is a currently a job for shunters. There is an alleged consultation process going on but management have been speaking to members in an ad hoc fashion without following a proper consultation process. Watch this space.

We are also involved in a review of pay scale 8 for our CT workers which is a big chunk of work that fell out of the previous bargaining.

This is going well at the moment and we will have variations to members to vote on before this years' bargaining round.

TARANAKI RAIL

FEBRUARY is nearly over and Christmas will be here before we know it. Like the rest of the country we have been slowed down by coronavirus, just as some traction was to be gained in the log market it's now wheel slipped back to the beginning. Let's just hope that things in the logging market get back to it feet.

The Westmere hill has posed problems for many LEs over the decades. In the last few years it's had a facelift to help prevent slips and washouts. Retaining walls, and drainage ditches have been added, which is great for KiwiRail as a business, but it has provided issues to LEs. In the event of a stalling or breakdown, where it is required

to secure the train or place detonators, it is down right dangerous or, in some cases, impossible to secure the train. A proposal from the branch and local health and safety representatives to the company has meant marker posts will be erected at the most critical locations advising of unsafe locations.

An example of a prototype marker post

is that one silver mark means that the track can't be accessed forward of this point, two silver marks indicates the track can't be accessed from either. Thanks to the individuals behind this initiative for their perseverance.

A team was dispatched to clean up the memorial of Tim Steffert. Tim was tragically killed in July 2002 44 kms east of Stratford on the Stratford to Okahakura line. Production is soon to start on a workers memorial at Whareroa. It's been a while coming and there have been several design and modification changes but, I think we are nearly ready to agree on one design. Wow!! 🌐



(above) An example of a rail side marker.

(l) Tim Steffert's memorial site at Whareroa.



NAPIER PORT

TWENTY-FIVE percent of 2020 will be over by the time this edition is posted so I'll begin on percentages.

The Napier Port branch main collective agreement has reached the terms of settlement stage of our four month negotiation process. It is hoped by this time next week, we will have ratification.

A very different, and at times difficult, negotiation subsequently due to the 45% sell down of Napier Port to the share market in 2019.

Without going into previously scribed details, as a consequence of the sell down, there was certainly some leverage from the Union's perspective over the distribution of no-cost shares to some senior managers and the CEO, whereby they will receive the fruits of OUR labours around 2022 in

terms of the no-cost shares allocated to them. The share price entering the market at \$2.60 and within eight months it currently stands at the \$3.80 mark, peaking at well above \$4.00 at one point. This certainly fired up the troops over this unfair allocation.

The response to this unfair share allocation of stocks to the few, was met by the rank and file with a strong 96% vote in favour, via the secret ballot, for strike action.

Once the negotiating team had this solid backing we were able to do what was needed, to get key claims across the line.

Besides the percentages in the general increase of 3.2% year one and 3.3% year two, there were a range of other increases from 1.5% to 3.0% over and above, to specific groups/departments across the collective. In essence, some will get close

to 6% overall in year one both in basic wage and allowances. There are also significant increases to the manning levels within the mooring section and adjustments to improve the rosters.

It is with respectful appreciation I acknowledge a dedicated team for this outcome including our retiring organiser, Phil Spanswick.

Having engaged in many negotiations with Phil, I would also take this opportunity to say a big thank you on behalf of the Napier Port branch, including our local C3 sisters and brothers. Your efforts over the many years are noted with gratitude.

We wish you, Sue and whanau every success in whatever is next in your future. I guess a spot of RR is well over due. Poroporoaki e hoa.

A belated compliments of the season to all. Be safe and prosper. 🌐

HUTT WORKSHOPS

WELCOME to the New Year. We start by farewelling Dodie Joseph who was one of our apprentices just coming out of her time and now she has decided to broaden her knowledge by becoming a trainee locomotive driver on the West Coast. Dodie has always had a

thirst for knowledge and our loss will be the West Coast's gain.

We wish her well and she has been keeping the team updated of her exploits via the medium of Facebook.

The much anticipated new wheel shop is taking baby steps towards installation with the tenders being subjected to a de-

tailed technical vetting — it's been a long time coming but we're inching closer and closer!

The H2A project continues with a large number of staff crammed into our Plant #2 building constructing coaches for this long overdue project up north. There have been the usual delays and other holdups however the main thing is the project is

moving in the right direction.


February 5 saw us celebrate 90 years since our official opening. There were speeches, food, photos and a cake to mark the occasion. Looking back we have a proud history that commenced with us being a brand new facility that took over from the workshops at Petone. We have constructed and maintained a wide range of rolling stock and ancillary vehicles over the years and have endured takeovers, restructurings and threats of closure.

The challenge now is to plan for our 100th!

It is with continuing sadness that we hear of another victim of the Whakaari/White Island tragedy succumbing to their horrific injuries. It serves as a warning that we must remain ever vigilant in everything we do, and if something is not right or we feel it is not so, we need to question those in charge and satisfy ourselves that our safety and that of those around us is paramount.

Flavour of the month (or longer) is the

RSAS Top 10 Critical Risks. This ranges from managing people Vs plant through to control of stored energy. This is a huge internal safety initiative that will result in many things including a review of all the existing risk assessments and the likely production of more! However, if the end result is a safer and more productive work environment then that's got to be good.

We hope to have a more full report next time around. Take care and be safe everybody. 

NELSON PORT

As 2020 dawns it's a little quiet for us at Port Nelson as we slow down due to a market correction for the log industry and of course the ongoing issues with coronavirus. A tough start to the year especially for many of our casuals with not a lot of work around, further vindicating the work we have done over the last few years getting more people on to contracts.

We can't help but feel that things will pick up soon. Coronavirus cannot last forever. We have the fruit season around the corner and although the summer has been dry, we anticipate plenty of fruit flowing through the Port.

We are in a non-negotiating year and always try to have a theme to keep our impetus up. This year's theme is availability

and a downturn in work has only highlighted the importance of this topic. We

see a growing emphasis from employers on the flexibility of their workers whilst seeing little flexibility in return. We are often told we work in a give and take situation; it just seems the worker does all the giving and should then be thankful they have a job.


We at the Nelson branch are really interested to hear from anyone who has anything to add to the availability debate. We need to remember that we now have favourable laws around agreed hours of work and availability and we really need to start using these.

Despite the downturn PNL continues to grow, work has almost finished on the demolition of the old main north wharf. Soon we will have a shiny new wharf which

should make a big difference to container operations. In the meantime the operation seems to be a bit of a Rubik's cube with a lot of challenges around extra contractors and reduced space.

Wine continues to be a big winner for PNL with a lot of potential for further business in this booming sector. It is unbelievable how much wine there is and NZ only produces about 2% of the world's supply.

Bargaining has been initiated for our C3 members and negotiations should have started by the time this goes to press so please send your words of encouragement, this may well be a real struggle.

Kia kaha to all our brothers and sisters around New Zealand and the world let's hope 2020 is a great year for all after a tough start. 

CANTERBURY RAIL

GREETINGS from the Garden City where we are looking forward to 2020 with some optimism. Since the last edition of the TTW we've had a few challenges, to say the least.

First, just as we geared up for the peak freight season before Christmas the road and rail link with the south was cut by severe flooding at Rangitata. Our network services members were very much on the front line restoring the line to full operations which they did in a very timely manner.

Then, just as the previous edition of

the Transport Worker was distributed, management embarked on

a much heralded 'restructure' in KiwiRail aimed largely at management and engineering staff, but also involving our South Island administration members.

Rumours had been flying around for months and this in itself was generating much stress and uncertainty. To compound this by announcing a proposal before Christmas, just as many people were about to take leave, and then reserve the final decision until February, is simply poor management. We understand there is no good time to embark on this sort of exercise, but some are certainly worse than others.

The sudden resignation of the South Island regional manager was very telling given the circumstances.

Our RSAS members are hard at work trying to provide better servicing and maintenance. For the maintenance staff at Middleton this means a roster that requires some movement towards 24 hour, seven day coverage. This is demanding when members haven't worked these shift patterns. Our servicing members know all about this and are coping with limited staffing levels as well.

Over in Scenic Journeys members are working flat out in what is our peak season. The outbreak of coronavirus in China has hit one of our biggest sources of customers



Our RMTU TranzAlpine crew members in Arthur's Pass – women at the heart of our Union.



and we've had to dust off all the protocols that we had around SARs as we're on the front line.

At the time of writing the tragic news has just come in of a fatality at a level crossing in Rangiora after a truck was hit by the Coastal Pacific. Once again, our thoughts to the family of the deceased and also to the train crew and passengers who were faced with dealing with the awful consequences.

There appears to be a fair bit of controversy surrounding Middleton Operations at present. The above mentioned management restructure has emphatically not helped as it has left a vacuum of leadership. A number of thorny issues need to be sorted out. Relationships between RSAS servicing and networks staff are two cases in point. The RMTU has a role to play here as the

difficulties prompted us to write to senior KiwiRail management as we fear people are being distracted to the point where this could compromise health and safety.


Management have been receptive and the acting South Island manager has undertaken to convene discussions between the parties to try and resolve matters.

On a more positive note we welcome the stream of announcements from the Labour-led government about increased investment in rail. For those of us on the South Island the declaration around the renewal of Hillside was particularly heart-warming.

Our branch chair and secretary met with newly elected regional councilor Tane Apanui, who stood for ECAN on a rail and water ticket, in January. It was refreshing

to talk with a passionate pro-rail politician who shares the vision of those of us who would like to see commuter passenger rail in Christchurch. Although Mr Apanui is a regional councillor he understands how vital a rail friendly government is in Wellington. Let's all do what we can to ensure the election in September means that rail investment continues.

Of course, many members in Canterbury are aware that our MECA is up for renewal this year. Last time we had a very innovative settlement that delivered an outstanding deal for our lower paid members. We look forward to our members getting fully involved and supporting their elected officials and delegates.

Remember, your union is only as strong as its members! 

LYTTELTON PORT


AS we mark the 20th Anniversary of the untimely death of Christine Clark, who was killed on the picket line at the gates of LPC while fighting for worker's rights, we reflect on this tragic and needless loss of a life. To Christine and her family, we will never ever forget her ultimate sacrifice and we salute with fondness and sadness her contribution and loss. Rest in peace.

The change in 'sea state' at LPC since the departure, at the end of December 2019, of now ex-CEO Peter Davie, has been signif-

icant. Under the watch of acting CEO Kirstie Gardiner, there has been a dramatic turn-around for the better in most areas and we are well into a period of thaw in terms of industrial relations. First evidence of the 'thaw' came with the successful use of interest based bargaining to successfully conclude, in short measure, our Inland Ports collective agreement, as reported in the December issue. This success has now been backed up with an equally quick and successful settlement of the logistics officers collective agreement — we are hopeful this will be ratified as

you are reading this. Momentum has been established that bodes well for the future of bargaining for the main waterfront collective agreement which expires in September.

This month the RMTU has welcomed Lyttelton Port's new CEO, Roger Gray, who started in his role on 3 February. We are cautiously optimistic that the outstanding work and positive new course set by Kirstie Gardiner will continue under his helm and look forward to being able to report so in the future.

The largest elephant in the room (there are a few of them) is fatigue management. This has already been a protracted affair 

and, to date, we have seen no tangible sign of progress other than the arbitrary and unilateral implementation, by the operations manager of new 'rules' that are in direct contravention to the collective agreement. The RMTU continues to demand that LPC re-engage in negotiations to reach agreement on a port-wide fatigue management plan and dispense with the quick fix, band-aid approach that is serving neither party and creating so much unnecessary industrial disharmony.

The fact is that any discussion around fatigue management has to address safe rostering and hours of work. Historically the parties have been complicit in incentivising unsafe patterns of work — so called 'rolling eights' are the stand out example. The science, and the law, around fatigue and its impact on safety is clear: our members are at risk of injury or worse and management and the directors are liable. We simply must negotiate a just transition to safer work practices. The RMTU wants to get started on this — the lame duck period of the former

CEO's tenure is past, we have a new man at the helm and the time to get moving is now.

Cutting lash gang numbers assigned to a crane also continues to be of significant concern. Once again this appears to be another band-aid solution to an ill-defined problem. Productivity is not sustainably improved by cutting costs at the expense of safety, morale and quality of output. This sort of decision-making is extremely shortsighted and we look forward to a time when it is weeded out of LPC management culture as it is inconsistent with the company's positive new attitude and direction. Members have supported a petition on this and the branch is advocating for a more mature approach.

With the seasonal reduction in cargo



Lyttelton Port members show their support for French protesters

volumes being exacerbated by the onset of the coronavirus outbreak our permanent relieving pool (PRP) of cargo handlers are bearing the brunt of some shocking labour allocation. One member was rostered to do two shifts with only a six hour break! At the time of writing the PRPs are getting organised as this sort of thing needs to stop.

Finally, we are proud of the stand our

Sickness, accident and death



The New Zealand Locomotive Engineers' Sickness, Accident and Death Benefit Fund

In the last 10 years 230 locomotive engineers had to retire due to medical reasons. They received a total payout of \$4,737,097 from the above Fund. LEs who didn't belong to the Fund and who were forced to retire did not receive anything.

You could be next to miss out!

For as little as \$219 a year your future – or those of your next of kin – could be better assured.

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Fax: (04) 471-0896
debby.green@rmtunion.org.nz

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

◀ branch and the wider RMTU has taken on international issues. The import of 'blood phosphate' from Western Sahara (see page 4) is one example. As waterfront workers we are in the front line of this issue, and whilst there are many global injustices that

we can have little practical impact on, this is one where we can make a difference.

We also had an opportunity at our last branch meeting to express our support for French workers in their struggle to maintain decent retirement provisions. We know

how valuable support from friends you never knew you had can be when you're embroiled in a fight — and some French workers have been on strike for over two months at the time of writing. We are happy to return the favour. 🌐

WEST COAST RAIL

OUR networks members have hit the ground running after the Christmas break with workers being drafted from outside our area such as the tamper group, the Dunedin heavy maintenance and Christchurch distress gangs all coming over the hill. The low loader gang is removing old rail and sleepers and together with Weld One welders are making the most of our beautiful summer days with the mercury nearly reaching 25 degrees!

The local gangs are also flat out on mud spots, faults, bridge, signal and communications maintenance. The down side is we seem to be considerably down on staff numbers with attrition and a number

of people off on ACC leave. Replacing people seems to proceed at a snail like pace but must we must admit morale seems to be the best it's been in quite a while.

Even the impact of the South Island restructure that has caused so much angst around the South Island has been blunted somewhat with the news that our very valued office worker Bev is going to stay with us and the rumour that John Bannerman will finally get to retire with a modest golden handshake.

Over in operations we extend a very warm welcome to our first woman trainee locomotive engineer, Dodie Joseph, who joins us from Hutt Shops. Dodie has gone from fixing trains to driving them and we're

sure she and her family will enjoy being part of the West Coast rail community.

We're seeing more and more women choose a career in rail and our branch welcomes this.

Up in Westport Frank O'Donnell will have retired by the time you read this. Frank has been a stalwart of the Westport track gang for many years, keeping the Buller Gorge line safe for all who use it. He's a keen fisherman and we wish him and his wife Aileen all the very best for many years of happy and healthy retirement.

Our South Island organiser is reportedly shattered at the news as he cannot imagine where he will get bacon butties of the quality Frank cooked on his regular visits. 🌐

TIMARU RAIL

AS the previous edition of The Transport Worker went to press Mother Nature served up a big problem for us in Timaru in the shape of severe flooding of the Rangitata river north of here. Both the road and rail link with Christchurch was severed, with all the attendant disruption to freight traffic. This couldn't have come at a worse time as we were just gearing up for peak freight volumes.

Thanks to some sterling work by our network services members the rail line was rapidly restored. A couple of things stand out from this episode:

- The dedication and commitment of rail workers to keep the system running; and
- The uncomfortable fact that weather related events like this seem to becoming more frequent.

As we write, similar flooding closed the Waipahi — Mataura section of the

Main South Line over Waitangi weekend.

Perhaps all those warnings about severe weather and climate change were right after all?

The other big issue in the South Island has been the restructure that KiwiRail has undertaken over the Christmas period. This has largely affected non-MECA IEA staff such as managers and network services engineers and a fair few of these are RMTU members. It also impacted on our South Island administration staff who do such great work for the front line sorting out our travel and accommodation and processing time sheets, to name only two aspects of their work.

The timing of this restructure and the uncertainty it generated could not have been worse. To announce the proposal before Christmas, just as many people are looking forward to a well-earned holiday, and then reserve the final decision until early February was insensitive, to put it mildly.


The irony is that many of those affected are the same people the company relies on to get them through emergencies such as the floods mentioned above. The sudden resignation of our South Island regional manager was duly noted.

In the yard our members would appreciate a couple of new shunt locos — the two we have keep breaking down. And fine clay based AP20 shingle would be nice to walk on. It's things like this that have a huge pay off in terms of increased productivity.

As we look ahead to this year we are pleased at the Labour led government's announcements regarding increased investment in rail. The revitalisation of Hillside in Dunedin is particularly good news for those of us in the South Island who campaigned against the previous National government's attempt to close it. We are hopeful that the election will see another rail friendly government on the Treasury Benches after September — we certainly don't want to go

back to the days when vital infrastructure like rail was barely being kept alive through lack of investment.

And of course, this year is MECA renewal year. Let's all take the time and make the effort to get involved and work with our

delegates and officials to support them in ensuring a good result for rail workers. Stronger together! 

TIMARU PORT

AS readers will be aware from *The Activist*, the big news in our branch at the start of the year was not good news: four of our members who work for Prime Port in repair and maintenance were made redundant at the start of February. This came after a couple of weeks of determined advocacy as the RMTU tried to dissuade management from its proposal to contract out work to construction companies.


Most redundancies are a result of lack of work rather than too much of it, yet it was the latter that was used to justify taking the axe to four out of eight of our members' jobs. Management seem to believe

that outsourcing major repair and upgrade work will somehow

mean it will be done more quickly and efficiently, a point on which we vehemently disagree. The original proposal was to cut five jobs, and thanks to some hard work by officials and members we managed to save one of those. In fairness to management, they paid more compensation to those made redundant than they were obliged to and they did listen to our concerns over the application of criteria for selection for redundancy. The fact remains however, that we don't accept the reasoning behind what occurred as valid but under current New Zealand industrial law there is very little we can do to turn this around. An extended right to strike, beyond the very

restrictive limits currently imposed on us, would certainly go some way to offsetting the imbalance here.

A big thank you to our active members and delegates for supporting the members, particularly Murray Cadigan, who navigated us through some challenging circumstances to secure the best results we could in a difficult situation.

Elsewhere in the port our members have been kept busy through the peak season, although the closure of the main south road and the rail line because of flooding at Rangitata in December had an impact. As your scribe writes this the rail line further south at Waipahi - Mataura has only just re-opened after being flooded over Waitangi weekend. Perhaps we should be giving climate change more of our attention? 

PORT CHALMERS

HERE at Port Otago we are still experiencing a challenging time with our management. Readers will remember that last year we had a dispute involving an overtime ban and protracted negotiations before MUNZ and the RMTU renewed our multi-union collective agreement with Port Otago.

A real stumbling block in the bargaining was management's top down approach to hours of work, where they were fixated on a claim that purported to address fatigue but had no fatigue management policy in place nor any apparent appetite to work cooperatively with the unions on the issue.

Part of our settlement committed Port Otago to adopting a fatigue management policy by year end, with the appropriate consultation and discussion with both unions.

On January 14 we discovered copies of a fatigue policy lying on smoko room tables. Correspondence with management confirmed that this so called policy had not been consulted on as specifically agreed in

the terms of settlement of our bargaining last year.


The key point is that we (both management and unions) have undertaken to address fatigue in the currency of the current collective agreement and that will require us dealing with some contentious matters ie: hours of work. We're only going to be able to do that if we work in a cooperative manner. The imposition of the policy without consultation as per the agreed terms of settlement is hardly that.

The above is indicative of a poor relationship between the membership and management. Further evidence of this is the drama we experienced in December when the two unions held a paid stop-work meeting under s26 of the Employment Relations Act. The Act has been in place for almost 20 years so it was something of a surprise to us to find ourselves arguing over our respective obligations regarding allowing attendance and maintaining operations until literally the last minute before the meeting was due to commence. The matter is now in the hands of both union's lawyers

after Port Otago sent a demand for money to offset alleged losses they said they had incurred as a result our meeting.

Even in a mature, constructive employment relationship disagreements and conflict will occur from time to time. What we're experiencing here goes far beyond that. It takes all parties to improve matters and whilst both unions are prepared to give a bit to make things go better, it remains to be seen if management are of a similar mind.

We watched the protests against the import of 'blood phosphate' by the RMTU Napier Port and Lyttelton Port branches with some interest as the ship in question was due to call into our port after Lyttelton. Ravensdown have their own wharf in Otago Harbour but MUNZ members provide the labour so it was great to see them register a similar protest. The vessel was subject to what the Otago Daily Times called 'bad karma' as a couple of steel bracing rods between the piles on the wharf broke when it was being berthed, prompting MUNZ to refuse to work the ship until it was sorted.

Until next time stay safe and stay RMTU! 

OTAGO RAIL

THE big news in January in the Otago rail branch was the Labour-led government's announcement of the first \$20 million slice of a \$60 million investment programme to revitalise Hillside Workshops. This has been part of the Provincial Growth Fund allocation of money to stimulate the regional economies of New Zealand. What a change from life under the previous National Government that was bent on closing Hillside and running down rail and, it appeared, Dunedin.

As well as this initiative, Dunedin will also benefit from the investment spent building a new hospital on the old Cadbury's site.

Having a government that is committed to rail and to regional development is a huge plus for the RMTU and whilst we are mindful no government is perfect we should never let 'perfect' be the enemy of 'good', as a very wise man once said:

"We're sure members will keep that in mind when they cast their vote in the election this year."

As we go to press, both the Mechanical Industrial Council and the Networks Industrial Council is meeting in Dunedin. Hillside is very much in everyone's minds and it was great to have our first branch meeting on site there since 2012. Life member and former RMTU president and Hillside worker Jim Kelly attended and it was great to see him.

Our industrial council reps are meeting in our city and merit a huge thank for representing us and participating in the industrial councils. Here in Otago we have a very active and strong membership and this is reflected in our high participation on industrial councils.

The South Island restructure is running its course. It largely effects managerial and IEA staff, but many of these are members. The restructure has been badly handled and mistimed. The sudden departure of our regional manager speaks volumes.

Over in infrastructure and engineering we have had a few problems with getting some of our track staff upskilled to enable them to become trained track welders. The problem appears to be (as usual) caused by a manager up north refusing

to allow our people to attend a welding course even though they are perfectly capable of completing it. Local managers agreed that the people nominated could, and should, do the training. A recently departed South Island general manager also agreed. However road blocks were put up and finally it was decided (by the manager in the North), that track skills level 1, 2 & 3 had to be completed first. No mention of very competent KiwiRail welders who have previously done the welding training without the track skills training. The on-job training manual for track staff makes no mention of having to complete this skill training before upskilling to the welding module.

We were also were sold the idea through the High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) people development project, that KiwiRail wanted staff to take charge, with encouragement from their managers, of their own careers. If it was within their skill set, by using the on job training manual and the KiwiRail Learning Exchange (KLE), they could have input to their training.

It appears that some KiwiRail managers do not want workers to progress in their careers.

This in effect causes the worker to give up and not upskill because they no longer have a say in their progression and professional development.

The cost to KiwiRail is two-fold, not only do they have to pay exorbitant prices for contract welders, they are missing out on training their own people, those who actually care about what they do and are trained to do a better job than most contract welders and do it for the same price as a track worker.

Luckily down here we have some managers who do care and adhere to HPHE and have arranged for a level 1,2 and 3 track skills training for a number of track staff. At the time of writing it will be interesting to see if another road block appears from up north. It would also be interesting to see if training has been curtailed elsewhere.

There has been a meeting with networks staff about the revitalisation of Hillside workshops and the possible move for us to the Hillside workshop area. Some of

our members who survived redundancies, downsizing, and centralisation are looking, perhaps with good reason, at the prospect of a shift with a jaundiced eye. However it cannot be denied that should the shift be handled properly it could, and should, be beneficial to all. The revitalisation of Hillside should be about opening up more of Hillside's manufacturing ability for the fabrication of rolling stock, maintenance of locomotives etc, not just lumping all KiwiRail workers in Dunedin in one site without rhyme or reason so KiwiRail can lease out the surplus land to our opposition. Networks staff have for some time been squeezed into areas that are not fit for purpose so when the shift happens it will be a great chance to do it correctly. Time will tell.

Call-out roster

Remits are being called for the wage round this year, and one thing that keeps rearing its head is an availability payment for those people in networks who participate in a call out roster. At the moment the system is officially 'catch as can catch', but is in fact a call out roster by stealth. Almost all people who participate operate an informal roster with their colleagues and put aside personal time to be available to attend faults without compensation.

This can caused conflict at home. A fine example is a ganger heading down to the beach in the middle of summer and being called in to do a heat run. KiwiRail is in the business of running trains and seems not to care if you are on call, on leave or whatever, they will call whoever, whenever, to fix a fault. This is not the help desk's problem as they are told to keep calling until they get a response. The callout payment should also be fair compensation, not just an appearance fee.

Over in the freight depot some positive news with Dx 5051 arriving in the south after an extensive overhaul at Hutt Workshops. It's been many years since a new locomotive has been seen working south of Christchurch. It's a very welcome change to see a locomotive that is clean with brand new paint down here. Let's hope this trend continues with the talked about upgrade of more DFTs into DFB locomotives that

will hopefully see some head to the South Island. This in turn will hopefully see the end of DC locomotives being used on main line trains south of Christchurch.

Talking of new overhauled locomotives Dunedin Railways has on hire a very tidy and newly overhauled DI 1102 that last ran around Dunedin back in the early 1980s. It was then numbered DI 1820 that was a regular on stones trains 291 & 292 as well as Number 7 and Number 20 shunts. This locomotive is on standby to replace any DJ locomotive that may fail.

The Dunedin LE team are still struggling at times since the change of the South Island master train plan. This saw some very welcome changes to their rosters at each depot 210 km each side of Dunedin. However, this has created some issues for the Dunedin roster.

Long night shifts and fatigue management in particular. Also, holding opposing trains to keep the Dunedin LEs moving

when they have the longer foot plate hours is a bone of contention especially when trains ex-Dunedin are running late.

A very big thanks has to be passed on to roster delegate Graham Fahey with his first class work in trying to build the Dunedin LE team a better roster.


With low staffing levels and long term sickness this has not been an easy job. On top of that there has been at times the a push by management to change jobs and extend the hours of shifts that of late has been met with a big negative from the Dunedin LE team. We congratulate Tipi Penny on being signed off — another welcome addition to our roster!

Faults and rough riding issues continue to plague the South Island loco fleet. The odd loco has to get tagged trail only until the loco is looked at and fixed. This will continue and will not get better until new replacement locomotives are purchased.

Christchurch loco delegate Steve String-

er and Dunedin loco delegate Mike Kilsby were recently in Christchurch for a two day meeting about planning for the new DXE cab with project lead Alastair Horsfield. Some great work was achieved but it was not long after that it was announced that the DXE project will be put on hold. At the very least we hope some of that good work will be transferred over to the new locomotive cab design.

Over in Dunedin Railways our members are working flat out in the midst of the high season. The impact of corona virus on tourism is a worry, as is the future of the Cumberland St workshop with the projected shift of KiwiRail's facilities to Hillside. Perhaps it's time to bring KiwiRail and our major shareholder, Dunedin City Council, together to discuss the future of our great little railway.

Thanks to Julian Evans and Courtney Kilner for all the hard work they are doing on behalf of members. 

SOUTHLAND RAIL

GREETINGS from the deep South. As readers will know, the weather here is normally always lovely so it was something of a shock for us to experience the floods that closed the Main South Line from Maitai to Waipahi in early February.

The track was re-opened very quickly once the flood waters receded after an absolutely terrific job by our networks members. Considering the volume of water through the Maitai and Clutha Valleys which drowned the lower parts of our rail network, this is testimony to the professionalism and dedication of rail workers. The Ohai branch didn't escape some down time as well, and once again our track workers did a great job getting it re-opened.

Here on the frontline we're not really sure what the South Island restructure is all about, but many of our members support the retention of administrative support jobs — the ladies in Christchurch and Grey-mouth do great work sorting out paperwork that ensures we get paid correctly and that we have somewhere to stay when we travel. This is particularly true of our track and signals members. The sudden departure

of our South Island regional manager was a surprise. Jeanine will

be missed by many of us down south, not least for the compassion and support she demonstrated over matters like the Waipahi disaster anniversary.

Your scribe is getting plenty of positive comments regarding work done on locos including 7132 which came back with a lot of great work done to it. Also we have had DX5051 visit us regularly. Fantastic job done there.

It really is something special to be able to read the fuel gauges on top of the rest. Quite obvious the diesel engine has been fully overhauled just by simply listening to it. Thank you to our brothers and sisters in RSAS.

Please make sure you book all faults, ensure at least the operations team leader is advised about those needing immediate attention. Our aged locos are here for a few more years yet, and to keep them running in the best condition possible reporting is essential.


It was also great to hear about the huge investment into Hillside. What a difference having a rail friendly government makes!

Looking around the infrastructure in our patch, the 40 kph temporary speed restrictions from last August's derailment between Morton Mains and Edendale have been lifted to 60 kph. These ran for 13kms so it's great to be able to lift things up a notch, so to speak.

The new roof on the ops depot was finished late December and looks great. Just in time for the rain. Seriously, our depot has had quite a bit done to it in recent times, little things like a new kitchen area that make all the difference.

And our members are making good progress too.

We have Mike Batt doing his OJT for the RCO role, and Rae Tuau-Templeton is starting her LE training this coming March. It's good that our depot has a women LE-to-be. We are all looking forward to Brayden Hikawai's sign off as an LE, which is due in March and Rata Shearer is currently almost halfway through his LE OJT. This is our future, as there are plenty of rail workers who are approaching retirement and it's pleasing to think they can hand over the baton to the next generation.

Until next time — stay safe and stay dry. 



AROUND THE BRANCHES

Claudia Green, CT planner Napier Port.

*Canterbury
rail delegate
Annette
Telfer and
SI organiser
John Kerr.*



*Canterbury
rail's Jed
O'Donoghue
and Neil
Davies.*



*Lyttelton
branch award
to Inland Port
delegate Brad
Roberts.*



*Russell
Ringdahl with
his
Certificate of
Appreciation.*



*Middleton RSAS - (l to r) Stuart Miller, Luke James, Tamsen Fletcher
and Andrew Jelley.*



*Canterbury rail and port members, led by Josie Butler and rail
women's rep Holly Egger, express solidarity with Auckland bus drivers.*