

NEW ZEALAND MERCHANT SERVICE GUILD IUOW Inc

Helen McAra - General Secretary

helenm@nzmsg.co.nz

Sarah Dench - Organiser

sarahd@nzmsg.co.nz

**Sharyn Steffensen - Office
Manager**

sharyns@nzmsg.co.nz



**PO Box 11878
ph 64 4 382 9131
Fax 64 4 382 9106**

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2008

This is the first newsletter for almost a year due to the reorganisation of workload and associated training requirements for the new Organiser, and also the unexpected absence of the Office Manager due to health and family circumstances. Protracted negotiations with Toll/Kiwirail did nothing to alleviate the heavy pressure on the office during this period.

Collective Agreements

Negotiations have concluded for the renewal of agreements covering Pacifica Shipping (1985) Ltd, North Tugz pilots, Sea-Tow, Golden Bay, Kiwirail Interislander, Hawkes Bay Stevedore Supervisors, Port of Tauranga Customer Service Centre, Westport Harbourmaster and Deputy Harbourmaster, *Kawatiri* dredger. A "final offer" is currently under ballot in the Silver Fern Ltd negotiations.

Negotiations are underway for new collective agreements covering Stewart Island Experience (Foveaux Strait ferries), and Black Cat Ferries in Lyttelton and Akaroa. Bargaining is underway for the renewal of the Port of Napier pilots' collective agreement, and Strait Shipping Ltd. Shortly to commence negotiations are Niwa, Offshore Multi Employer Collective Agreement, Auckland pilots, and Port of Napier Tugs and Launchmasters who are covered by a combined agreement,

Coastal Shipping

Potential for government subsidies in new coastal shipping ventures has generated approaches to the Guild and the other maritime unions from existing and aspiring coastal shipping operators.

Cargo opportunities are numerous and growing due to recent and planned rationalisation carried out by the international shipping companies, creating room for the development of a coastal feeder network.

The companies say they want to employ New Zealand citizens and permanent residents, and to provide training to assist with the future labour force requirements, and if Ministry of Transport initiatives on workforce development are implemented in a timely manner, there could be a positive coastal shipping renaissance in New Zealand.

The same sentiments and aspirations for a New Zealand manned fishing fleet

were expressed in the 80s as New Zealand companies clamoured to form joint ventures with foreign companies, and then to charter vessels which, surprise, surprise, could not be chartered unless complete with foreign crew. The idea was, as expressed by both business and government, to use foreign labour only as a 'temporary measure' while the NZ workforce was trained and encouraged into the industry. But today, more than 20 years later, there is not a single New Zealand citizen or resident working on any charter fishing vessel.

Tourism

Sarah Dench writes:

The Guild's presence in the inshore tourism industry continues to grow, with bargaining now underway for a collective document for Black Cat Cruises at Lyttelton and Akaroa, and for one at Stewart Island Experience, based at Bluff and Half Moon Bay, Stewart Island. Both these companies have links to Real Journeys. There is a huge range of wages and conditions in maritime tourism, but the Guild has definitely raised the bar with the progress that's been made over the years with the Real Journeys document. This is now the benchmark for the industry.

Inshore launch handling requires specialised skills. The most important, of course, is the ability to handle smaller boats, often in difficult conditions. Add to that the need to cheerfully wrangle up to 400 passengers and crew, do emergency repairs as required, educate passengers in a entertaining way about local history and the natural world, as well as organise the loading and unloading of cargo, and all this on low wages – "After 20 years doing this job, I'm earning less than the teller in the local bank" a skipper told me, "and I'm responsible for people's lives". Even working in some of the most breathtakingly beautiful parts of the country doesn't compensate for not being able to save for a holiday yourself.

We look forward to making a difference for our members in the tourism industry.

Obituary

It is some time now since the passing of former Guild President, George Kaye, but as mentioned in the opening of the newsletter, this is the first opportunity for the Guild to pay official tribute to George for his huge contribution to this organisation. Members all over the country referred to George's actions in saving the superannuation scheme from attacks by employers as 'heroic' efforts.

George was President from 1988 to 1990. He will be missed.

Attendance at General Meetings

Recently attendance at both Wellington and Auckland meetings has dropped, and in some cases a quorum has not been reached. While this has been common in Wellington due to the difficulties for rail ferry members in attending Wednesday meetings, it was surprising that a recent Auckland meeting was short of a quorum. General meetings should be supported by members as their opportunity to discuss recent work of the union, the developments and employment opportunities in the industry and overseas, to encourage and mentor younger Guild members in supporting and participating in their union, and to catch up with colleagues. Refreshments at the Tas (Wellington) and Rose and Crown (Auckland) will be provided following the next meeting.

and finally.....Meeting venues and dates

Auckland: meetings are held on the first Friday of every month and are held in the Aviation & Marine Engineers premises on the first floor Administrator House, 44 Anzac Avenue, commencing at 0930 hours on the following dates:

7 November, 5 December.

Wellington: To accommodate different changeover days in the rail ferries, the Wellington meetings will now be held on the second Friday of every month at the Guild rooms at the Guild premises on the 6th floor, 94 Dixon Street, Wellington commencing at 0930 hours, with the next meetings on:

14 November and 12 December.