

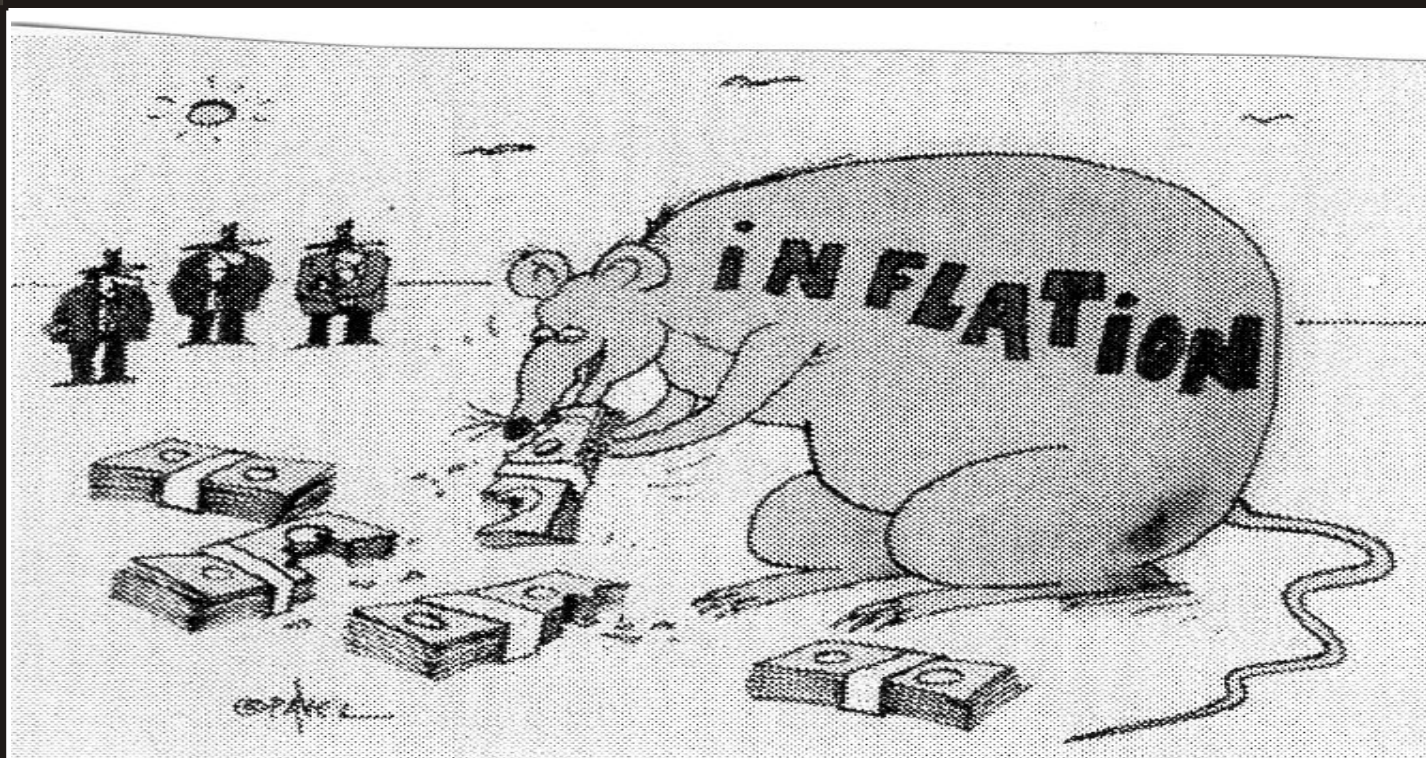
# REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia  
Vol.41 No.1 (233) May - June 2023

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

**Enterprise Bargaining: It's all Deception! Look beyond the Mainstream Media & the Union Hierarchy! They all want more of a slice from you! It's up to you to stop it! Meagre pay rises, bogus bonuses & EBA nasties don't meet Soaring Inflation! Strike with joint action in transport, building & others, while the iron is hot for the 'Real Demands!' Now with the re-opening of schools, offices, factories & unis!**



**NSW Health News P.2; NSW Railway News P.3 ; NSW Train Drivers' News P.6 ; Sydney Buses News P.7; Letters P.6 ; Doing the Impossible P. 6; Victorian Railway News P. 8; Public Transport in Vic. During the 1990's P. 9; France Today P.11; Spanish Labour News P.13 ; Ukraine War & Crisis P.14 ; Book Review Corner P.16; News & Notes P.19;**



Rebel Worker is the bimonthly Paper of the A.S.N. for the propagation of anarcho-syndicalism in Australia.

Unless otherwise stated, signed Articles do not necessarily represent the position of the A.S.N. As a whole. Any contributions, criticisms, letters or

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

P.O. Box 92

BROADWAY 2007 NSW

E-mail: Via our web site

www.rebelworker.org

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

AUSTRALIA: \$12 a year

OVERSEAS

\$25 (Aus.) by Air

\$20 (Aus.) by Sea mail

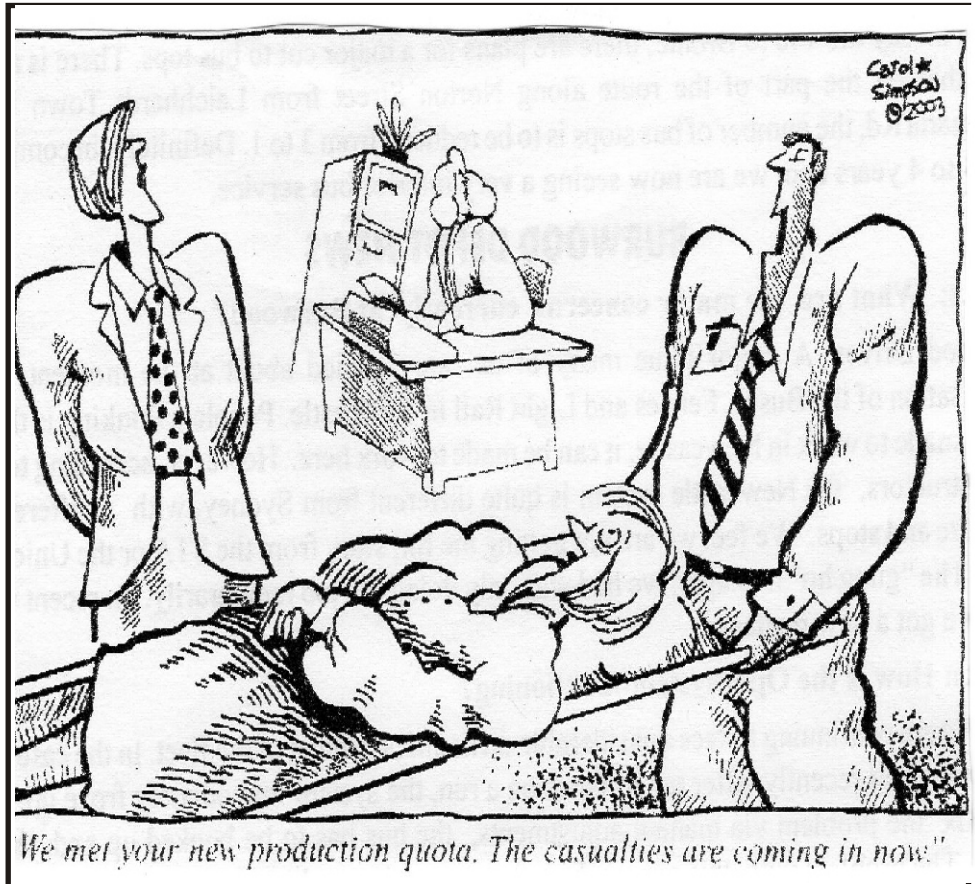
Free to Prisoners

Supporters Subs, \$40 pa

Receives copies of RW & ASN

Pamphlets as published.

Send to the above. Cheques should be made out to Black Cat Media.



## NSW HEALTH NEWS

### 'Ten things I Hate about you' Working under NSW Health

By a Rebel Worker

There's a growing trend facing hospitals in NSW at the moment. Uninformed and money focused moves by executives are leaving many health workers in a state of anxiety, in doubt of where their future lies. Most of them are workers who have been in the industry for a good portion of their life. Some of them are new, having only just started in the past few years and months. Yet all of them are thinking the same thing "Is this where I want my life to be?" They have seen the way the decisions are being made by those above, and just like a relationship, they are seriously thinking if it's really worth their time.

Some hospitals have felt it harder than others. Inside a small department of forty-five, they had fifteen full time workers leave in the past year, citing the actions made by the top brass to change up their rosters to include more unfavourable hours with an increased workload as their main reason. No bonuses or reward, just more work.

Well thanks for rocking the boat fellas, because they all left.

Of course it's not the executives fault,

just like in that relationship, it's the fault of the people who left.

In the theatres they are being made to work without 40 theatre nurses who have departed over the last three years and have not yet been replaced; according to one source "The decision has been made to open up two more of our theatres that were closed during Covid-19, which has seen our workload double".

It's very reminiscent of an episode of

## ASN APPEAL

**The Anarcho-Syndicalist Network requires suitable cost effective permanent premises. A\$750,000 is urgently sought to buy premises for the proposed Rebel Worker-Anarcho-Syndicalist Network Media Centre.**

**Please make out Cheques to Black Cat Media & send to P.O. Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW.**

“Yes, Minister”, a British political satire show from the 1980s, ‘The compassionate society’. In the episode MP Jim Hacker discovers that the newly built St Edwards hospital, open now for 6 months, has over 200 administration staff employed there but no medical staff, due to government cutbacks. His shock and surprise is expected. Though fortunately for them, it also had no patients, unlike the ones here.

When hospitals are continuing to be run in this way, it will continue that workers will have a lack of confidence in their management and a sense of being severely under-valued. This can be seen in the way they constantly undermine the importance of the worker’s role by explicitly not allowing any shifts to be covered through means of overtime.

Well how does that work? How can a unit that’s meant to have fifteen people working be effectively managed by eight people?

Refusing to pay an extra days pay on a job that is directly linked to the outcome of a patient’s life again shines that light on the moral integrity and values of those in charge. They say to work diligently and focused, to put the pressure on and say that lives depend on it. Yet to them, it’s clear how much a life is worth, no more than a standard days’ pay.

It’s hard to feel valued and appreciated in a relationship when money and vanity is the focus from the other half. It’s also difficult to want to stay in that environment, and furthermore for new people to be attracted into it. Maybe glossy television shows on the channel

9 network will inspire younger audiences into becoming part of NSW health. Although, the front is never representative to how it’s portrayed on the screen, particularly when the primary aim is recruitment.

With so many people leaving, and even less arriving, it would be smart to think the focus would be on retaining the people who have left. Offering encouragement and incentives other than a salary packaging deal, which all hospitals take a nice profit out of anyway, would be a start.

Whatever is their goal, it only takes a short walk a few metres down a ward, to overhear about another worker leaving too.

It’s breakup season for NSW Health.

## N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

### RAIL ROADING OF THE RAIL EBA's & THE WAY FORWARD

Some of the most important news is the railroading of the NSW Rail EBA's( Enterprise Bargain Agreements). As part of the sellout charade, RTBU NSW Sec. Claassens orchestrated a long drawn out, half hearted campaign, ultra bureaucratically run, set up to fail. Resulting in way below inflation so called pay rises and the illusion of a \$4,500 bribe bonus. Already the nasties in the clauses are being seized upon by management and the union officials to impose job cuts.

Other more positive news has been the defeat of a new push for DOO (Driver Only Operation) with the NIF (New Intercity Fleet) bogus 'Deed' in early Dec. Stemming from quick work by Sparks in assisting grass roots militants to expose the con. A new push is likely later in 2023 in late Nov. to early Dec. New light on the management/Govt./union hierarchy DOO strategy has been shown in the following articles in the SMH: 'New Train Fleet \$1b cost blow out' 6/2/23 p.3; 6/2/23 'Over time over budget:

train project off rails' p.9 7/2/23. According to the articles DOO is being phased in on different train types around the holiday period. First with the NIF built in Sth Korea, and then the replacement for the XPT's built in Spain, certain to be also 'secretly'

designed for DOO. Needless to say the replacement for the Tangaras will also be designed for DOO.

Its important for a joint campaign in rail, buses and trams to be pursued to secure wages justice and fight nasties in the EBA's clauses. Grass roots





committees could be set up in the depots and stations and then area coordinating committees to wage a joint campaign of direct action in the

current more favourable period. Delegations could be sent to other workplaces in the industry appealing for involvement in the campaign.

Taking advantage of bus driver shortages, new Metros not in service yet and the re-opening of schools, unis, offices and factories.

## The Cost of Living Crisis is also a Union Crisis

*By Crimson Coconut*

**Australian workers are facing the biggest cost of living crisis in their history. With rising prices and falling wages many people are struggling to make ends meet. This is a situation that was not caused by workers going after wage rises, but by greedy landlords, retailers and bosses who are price gouging.** The poverty of consumers and workers do not matter to the bosses and spivs who are ensuring that their profits are at record levels regardless.

A recent paper by the Australia Institute points out just how unequal Australia has become. The top 10% of income earners are reaping 93% of the wealth created by workers. Meanwhile the 90% of us, mostly the workers share, is just 7% of the remaining wealth. That's a massive income gap that is worse than most countries around the world.

There is yet to be a roll out of tax cuts for the high income earners of around \$300 billion which means that most of us will be paying a higher marginal tax rate than someone earning \$millions or \$billions a year. This will add to the entrenched inequality because of forgone spending on services. Against this backdrop we have a new Labor Government in NSW and a newly ratified Rail EBA. It is an illusion that Labor will be much different towards workers than their LNP predecessors. Their record of privatisation while in office each time has seen a wholesale sell off of public assets. Labor's privatisation record stretches from the sell off of the Eveleigh Workshops and Chullora Workshops in the 1980's to Christina Keneally's sell off of electricity's poles and wires and retail sales of electricity to a plethora of multinationals when she was Premier. During the N.S.W. election night coverage, 26th March, on the ABC panel, Labor MP, Penny Sharp was asked whether the 2.5% imposed salary

cap for public servants would be dropped. She refused to give a definitive answer saying that "We respect workers unlike the L.N.P." While I can recollect that dropping the wage cap was a Labor promise early on in the election, there now seemed to be hesitance in actually scrapping the cap. When pressed further on the dropping of the wage cap she was non committal, saying that negotiations would have to take place with the union movement and "we'll see". The Labor Government's record with

most of the bargaining positions close to their chest and failed to have a broader consultation with a majority of union members. The nitty gritty detail of the Agreement is still largely unknown to the workforce. A broad brush has been given to management to make many changes which could be deleterious to the workforce. These remain relatively unknown to those subjected to the EBA.

The EBA starts out with the following: "Issues subject to consultation may



public transport workers is not that much different to that of the Coalition. We can hark back to the days when Michael Costa was Transport Minister. Costa fought running battles with public transport workers in his privatisation and productivity drive. He was eventually forced to relinquish the Transport portfolio. The battles ahead still remain with this new government. Meanwhile we have a new Rail Enterprise Agreement that promises wage rises much less than the inflation rate which is running somewhere near 7% P.A. During the non-campaign, as in the past, the Combined Unions kept

include, but are not limited to the following: (a) changes in the composition, operation, location or size of the workforce, or in the duties and skills required; the elimination or reduction of job opportunities" Considering the lack of consultation during the EBA process, the process of consultation on changes to jobs and job numbers is fraught with danger. Take the recent proposed reduction on job numbers in NSW TrainLink. Despite worker protestations at the shop floor Management is continuing to push ahead with a reduction in jobs. The



unions have not lifted a finger either to support the workers affected or to organise a workplace campaign.

### According to an article on World Socialist

#### Web regarding the EBA:

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/02/14/quru-f14.html>

“Although workers had voted overwhelmingly in favour of strikes in January, the RTBU leadership ensured that industrial action was restricted to a handful of partial stoppages and limited work bans. By August, the anger and frustration of workers was such that the bureaucracy was compelled to call more substantive action, but isolated stoppages to individual sections of the network, minimising disruption and avoiding mass action by the broader workforce.”

“Despite the limited character of stoppages by rail workers, Premier Dominic Perrottet and other senior ministers repeatedly denounced the striking workers. At the end of August, Perrottet threatened to tear up the existing enterprise agreement covering rail workers, slashing hard-won conditions and pay, if there was any further disruption to rail service.”

“The unions readily complied with this ultimatum and no further stoppages were carried out, with workers forced to watch from the sidelines as the bureaucracy mired the dispute in multiple court cases.” That’s the real point. The bureaucratic means of obliterating the workforce and union members from the decision making process is taken out of the workplace and held behind closed doors. By resorting to a legal process through the so-called “Independent Umpire” (hardly impartial when it’s the bosses court) the Combined Unions weaken themselves by cutting workers out of the decision making process. Any decision is effectively taken out of the hands of those at shop floor level and given to Industrial Lawyers.

**Having said that, the RTBU called the claim in the original proposal a “Realistic Pay Rise”.**

### “What is a realistic pay rise?”

“The Fair Work Commission will now determine what a “fair and reasonable” pay rise is for Sydney Trains and NSW Trains workers. However, we have managed to lock in an absolute minimum figure for each year of the Agreement (2.53% for 2022-2023, backdated at a minimum to May 2022, and 3.03% for May 2023-May 2024). Again, this is a minimum, and we will be pushing in the FWC for more.”

<https://rtbuexpress.com.au/your-questions-from-the-sydney-and-nsw-trains-online-member-meeting-a-n-s-w-e-r-e-d/>

It’s OK for the Unions to promise to “push” the Fair Work Commission to grant a higher wage rise. However our beef is that we could gain much more by organising the workforce a solid mass rather than appealing cap in hand

year (with superannuation backdated to May 1 this year).” However the FWC “In a 52-page judgement released on Friday afternoon, the Fair Work Commission found the government had not been able to demonstrate that a wage increase past its three per cent wages cap would cause any “discernible detriment” to the NSW budget.”

“No evidence has been adduced, nor is it contended, that any wage increase additional to those provided for in the 2022 agreement would cause any difficulty for the commercial or financial position of the rail entities or for the budgetary position of the NSW government,” the judgement said.” The FWC then set about granting an extra 1% on top of the 2.53% and 3.03% already agreed to effectively making it a 3.53% and 4.03% rise respectively. In addition workers were to receive a \$4500 “sign on” bonus,



to the bosses court. The pay off would be a better organised and educated workforce which would be prepared to struggle when the need arose. The ratification of the EBA in the Fair Work Commission did produce a further pay rise. In it’s judgement the commission stated that the original deal between the Unions and Rail Management “provided a pay rise of 2.53 per cent in the first year (as well as superannuation backdated to May 2022), and 3.03 percent for the second

obviously a big sweetener to get the deal past workers struggling after the p a n d e m i c .

This then begs the question of why the dispute was so drawn out past the use by date of the proceeding Agreement? What more could have been achieved if a proper cross- union campaign had been started from the very beginning without workers’ hands being tied behind their backs and left in the dark? The NIF was always a red herring and

in the end had little bearing on the final Enterprise Agreement. The Unions should not have entertained the position that the EBA should not have been contingent on the acceptance of the NIF. Although in our opinion the safety issues involved in the NIF are/were worth fighting for, these issues should have been separated out from the general negotiations around

the EBA. There was an error of judgement of the union in accepting the premise of these safety issues in the EBA. They served as a delaying tactic on the overall delivery and negotiations around the EBA and muddled the waters for workers on what the EBA contained therein. The fight for better working conditions and wage rates must continue. The

struggle for a greater say in the decision making process against the bureaucrats in the union movement will take organisation and courage. The fight will be no easier now that we have a Labor Government in NSW and Canberra.

Just get out there and organise.

## NSW TRAIN DRIVERS' NEWS

NSWT was/is prepared to run a Bullet service YoYo between Lithgow and Orange (change at Lithgow for a fast V-set service to Central which has been in place for some time already). The crew numbers had already been provided at Lithgow. A vocal Rail Action Group in Orange has been saying that isn't good enough and they'd rather not have any train if they can't have a direct one with

a buffet car. So they don't have a rail service at all.

Also, plans maybe to reintroduce passenger rail services to Mudgee. These would piggyback on the reopening of a freight line between Point Piper and Newcastle for coal movements. As I understand it, that line is still used to move trains (eg NIF - New Intercity Fleet) around but is not

in regular use. Coal is freighted by truck for the time being. The landowners on whose properties the line borders have got the ear of

Mudgee Council to oppose the proposal. Of course Mudgee and Orange residents not in the respective interest groups strongly support the provision of passenger trains to their towns.

*By Railway Jimmy*

## LETTERS

Dear RW

A couple of or maybe 3 years ago there was an article in RW about 5G and the Internet of Things. That was the only factual analysis (as opposed to one-sided hyped marketing promo) of these topics I have ever encountered. Perhaps this is the case with others of your readers. I wonder if it might be a suitable subject to revisit in a forthcoming issue.

Here is an essay I know is a few years old but which lays out the entailments of this technology even more explicitly:

<https://www.newdawnmagazine.com/articles/5g-the-final-assault>

Are the DOO trains part of this? What network do they use? It would be nice if the 5G/IoT things were showing flaws or not working as expected for any reason. However, uninformed as I am about them I can't comment.

Concerned Sydney Trains worker

Dear RW

A issue which has sparked much anger amongst us is the lump sum payment to bribe us to approve the Rail EBA.

There is a lot of pissed off staff who were counting on the \$4500, not 2800 - 3000 after tax.

Angry Sydney Trains Reader & Supporter

Dear RW

The thing going on with us at the moment is that we are waiting for meetings with the new Transport Minister. Hopefully we can reduce the layers of management in the NSW Railways.

Sydney Trains Reader & Supporter

## Doing The Impossible

Governments around Australia have been telling us for decades that privatisation is good for us and that it makes services cheaper and more efficient. The Trade Union Movement has largely gone along with this lie and has failed to mount an effective campaign against privatisation. Unions instead have preferred to agree to

privatisation as long as they have had coverage over the residual workforce. We've never believed the hype, especially when we have paid higher prices of privatised electricity and fares.

Now the chickens have come home to roost in South Australia as the new Government there is having to take

back ownership and control of trains from the operator Keolis Downer. The original deal of \$2.4 billion for the private operator was touted to save the Government \$118 million in operating costs yet this has proven to be far from the mark. It is believed the contract, instead of saving money, would cost an extra \$120 million over the 12 year life of the project if it continued.

Part of this blowout, according to an ABC news article is that 134 rail staff refused to transition to the private sector and were thus still on the



Government payroll.

(<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-04-01/sa-to-scrap-rail-train-tram-privatisation-contract/102175772>). Maybe the previous Government should have factored that into the overall cost in the beginning.

The original contract with Keolis Downer has a compensation clause exposing SA taxpayers to a "\$94 million termination and disengagement clause". The State Government has vowed to refuse any compensation and will move ahead to bring the trains back under their control.

It just goes to prove that it can be done. Privatisation can be reversed if we have the will. We are continually told that it will be too costly or that privatisation saves us money. Nothing is further from the truth. Here in NSW the Unions have accepted the lie about privatisation. Slowly by stealth separated services such as cleaning, ticketing, information, maintenance, catering, Metro etc has been hived off with barely a whimper from the unions involved.

A full public campaign against privatisation is needed. I think the

general public would be on our side. Pressuring the NSW Labor government which was so vocal about privatisation during the election would be a good start. That can only happen if we have the public and public transport workers coordinated in a general campaign against privatisation.

As the South Australian Government example has shown, anything is possible when the public is on board. After all Privatisation is theft.

## SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

### Leichhardt Depot News

**RW: What's the situation at Leichhardt?**

Leichhardt Driver (1): In early March things were going from bad to worse. A big dispute with management over rosters blew up last year and is continuing. We are going to face a

bosses were demanding. In particular we were angry with proposed cuts to sick leave, annual leave and penalty rates. We are awaiting the outcome further negotiations by the union officials and the bosses over the EBA and the impact of the outcome of the NSW Elections held on 25/3/23 with the Minns ALP being elected into Govt.

**RW: What is the latest regarding the**

developments with the union and the industrial campaign.

**RW: What are your impressions of the driver staffing situation at Leichhardt?**

Leichhardt Driver (2): We are facing quite a crisis at the depot due to drivers particularly new drivers being unable to cope with the worsening conditions. The depot should have 500 drivers and currently has only about 300 as so many have resigned.

**STOPPRESS:** According to the SMH 13/4/23 cancellations of bus trips over the last two years are partially caused by Government contracts with the bus companies which fail to penalise these companies for all cancelled services under performance targets. These companies are not penalised until after a certain number of service cancellations are reached each month. These contracts give a financial incentive to these companies to cancel bus services. Government documents show about 28,000 bus services in Sydney were partially or fully cancelled August last year.



severe driver shortage resulting in a reduction in trips on time tables. In recent weeks management presented a new proposed EBA and offer associated with the 'Two Tier' RTBU/TWU joint EBA campaign in Region 6. There was massive opposition amongst union members to the proposal. 95% voted against it across Region 6. We were particularly angry with the major attacks on our entitlements and conditions, which the

**RTBU union rep?**

LD (1): Tom our previous RTBU union rep went on sick leave last year due to having an operation and suffering from cancer. He has not returned to the job so far and given the seriousness of his condition we are unsure whether he will ever return to the job. A replacement union rep has been elected. The new rep since he was elected has been doing a good job, such as keeping us informed on

### Burwood Depot News

**RW: What is the latest with the EBA negotiations?**

Burwood Driver: We have been extremely angered by aspects of management's proposals with the latest EBA offer as part of the RTBU/TWU 'Two Tier' campaign. They are making absolutely outrageous demands such as wanting us to clean and refuel our buses. There are 3 sheddies at the depot involved in this work. They appear to do just quick brooming of the buses and not effectively cleaning them.

There is an urgent need to radically improve the spread of our shifts which go up to 12 or so hours per day. Most of us can't handle this spread. Particularly those married with children and living in the far western suburbs. On top of the shifts they have extensive travelling time to the depot each day amounting to several hours. It seriously harms these drivers family life. Those who are single and live nearby to the depot would not be so adversely affected. We haven't had a pay rise for 2 years now and we are being constantly hard hit by the rising soaring cost of living. We are all awaiting the outcome of the coming NSW Elections regarding its impact on the EBA negotiations.

**RW: What are your impressions of management?**

BD: In our buses they have bizarrely put up all these signs about how they support pride and equality in regard to

the recent Mardi Gras. This is hypocrisy! There is no equality at Burwood. The ex-STA (State Transit Authority before privatisation) drivers are treated quite differently from the Transees. The bosses are unwilling to come around on the job to meet us and hear about our concerns about workplace problems which we have. They have transferred the 480 and 483 routes to Kingsgrove, but this change has not adversely affected us. Bizarrely despite these bad conditions such as the shift spread problem, the bosses want to retain drivers at the depot.

Other news is we are continuing to face a shortage of drivers at the depot, with most new drivers not lasting long.

## Kingsgrove Depot News

**RW: What are your impressions of**

### the situation at the depot?

Kingsgrove Driver: We are facing a severe staffing crisis in regard to the driver shortage. It's having a big impact on our rosters. I believe this staffing crisis is occurring across Sydney Buses and elsewhere in the buses and other industries. There are a variety of reasons explaining this crisis such as the low pay for new drivers which discourages the unemployed to seek a job with us and young people not wanting jobs in our industry due to unattractive conditions. Despite the staffing crisis, the bosses have had the depot taking over runs for the 483 and 480 previously operated by Burwood Depot.

# VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In this issue of RW, Drivers, Conductors and Station Staff will discuss current issues at V/Line. As in previous issues names have been changed.*

**RW: What is the current situation regarding Catering and Velocity Trains?**

Sheona: In the last State Budget funding has been made available for twelve new Velocity Trains.

Ahmed: Since late November Catering in the Shepparton Corridor has ceased. All locomotive trains have been replaced by Velocity Trains. No employees have been retrenched. The jobs will be removed by natural attrition.

Archie: Some of the job losses in catering have been absorbed by an extra Warrnambool service which started in December. There are now five services per week day to Warrnambool.

Moose: How long will Catering on Warrnambool services last? We wonder.

**RW: What is the situation regarding the Albury Corridor?**

Shem: The Albury service is like a game of Roulette.

Sparks: In what way?

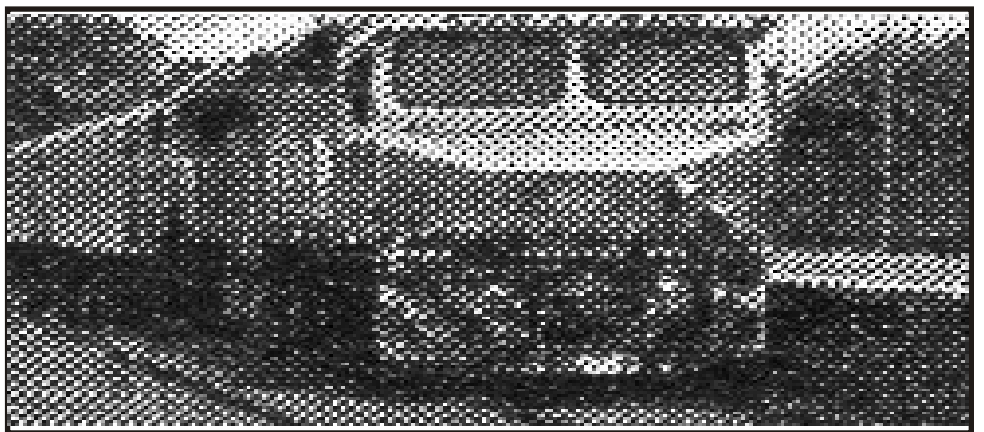
Moose: The services are replaced by buses. Sometimes at short notice.

Ahmed: If it is not the track it is the trains. Due to track defects some trains have been grounded due to defects.

Roscoe: How would you feel if you

Rostered Conductors who have to sort out their problems hoping no complaints occur.

Ahmed: Due to over crowding there is a Wyndham Vale train with nine cars during the evening peak. 60% of the



turn up at Southern Cross and there is a sign saying "No train, proceed to coach terminal". No reason given, you would either go home or cop a bus trip.

Rastus: Due to train defects or a shortage of Velocity Trains some trains which run as six car trains were reduced to three cars on the Albury line. This also happens in peak hour trains on other lines. We drivers feel sorry for the

time this train is reduced to three cars. What a joke.

**RW: What about Buffet Modules on the Albury Trains?**

Shem: There have been OH&S issues about these Modules from Conductors. This is the first Sparks has heard of these defects but when we find out Sparks will print a full report.



**RW: We hear that a former CSM has resigned.**

Rastus: You are correct. This SLUG was returned to Seymour as a Station Officer as a result of issues at Bendigo. He has resigned and joined Pacific National.

Roscoe: Good riddance but we feel sorry for the employees of Pacific National.

Shem: The depot at Bendigo is now a pleasant place to work since he and a former manager were removed.

**RW: What is the situation at Southern Cross?**

Ahmed: The Management are very good at cheating employees out of overtime.

Shem: If a Customer Service Employee reports sick the shifts are covered by juggling the rosters, altering employee duties.

Moose: The same has happened in the Booking Office where due to staff shortages sometimes the Flinders Street Booking Office is closed with booking office staff sent to Southern Cross.

Ahmed: Overtime is worked by Conductors when the shifts cannot be covered.

Archie: Employees are still docked

even if they are minute late.

**RW: Is this still happening?**

Moose: It is. You see management is under pressure from higher up to cut costs so docking employees or fiddling the rosters is the name of the game. No wonder employee morale is low.

**RW: Are there career paths for Customer Service Staff?**

Archie: In theory yes, in practice no.

Ahmed: A number of Customer Service Staff who have applied for Conductor positions have been unsuccessful in comparison to outside applicants. One employee has applied for Conductor positions over the last five years being unsuccessful. Staff at Southern Cross are of the opinion that Human Resources have it in for this employee.

Shem: Another complaint is that Management fails to place notices advising patrons of train disruptions or future occupations.

Ahmed: The notices go to the Country Stations on the affected lines weeks before these occupations yet at Southern Cross nothing has appeared for a number of the occupations at Southern Cross Booking Office.

Rastus: Do these managers realise there are Commuters and other

passengers who turn up and know nothing until they see a sign on the indicators departing from the Coach Terminal.

Ahmed: Management is good at picking on employees for minor mistakes but will not admit these failures.

**RW: Was there a V/Line Christmas function this year?**

Moose: What party? Over the last ten years we have had nothing. This year some employees were lucky to obtain a stale sausage roll.

Shem: Metro Trains had a Christmas function at Royal Park for their employees. We got nothing at V/Line. Not even a thank you. If we have a minor complaint Management wants to throw the book at you.

**RW: We have run out of space. V/Line takes the easy way out. In 2023 EBA negotiations commence. RW wonders what V/Line places on the table.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say we drivers are pleased that SLUG at Seymour has departed.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN VICTORIA DURING THE 1990's

*In this issue of RW we will discuss events thirty years ago regarding public transport in Victoria. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.*

**RW: What happened in Victoria in January 1993?**

Alvin: From late 1991 rumours were circulating that the Liberals were planning massive changes for public transport in Victoria once they were elected. Expressions such as Mode Substitution, Outsourcing and job cuts were being heard. The State Labor Government was on the nose and a Liberal victory was inevitable.

Archie: Public Transport was operated by the Public Transport Corporation of Victoria.

Ichabod: On January 6th 1993 the Victorian Liberal Government issued a report entitled, 'Public Transport from

a System to a Service', to the media and employees.

Algernon: The report was extensive but the main points of the report were:

(1) V/Line passenger services were not to operate beyond South Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Seymour and Traralgon.

(2) Tenders were to be called by Victorian Treasury and not the PTC for the private sector to operate Trains or Buses on the following lines: South Geelong to Warrnambool, Ballarat to Dimboola, Ballarat to Mildura, Bendigo to Swan Hill, Seymour to Cobram, Seymour to Albury, Traralgon to Bairnsdale, Melbourne to Leongatha, Frankston to Stony Point. Private operators having the option to replace these services with buses or trains.

(3) Two suburban train lines were to close. These being the Upfield and

Williamstown with the Camberwell to Alamein service to operate during the week day peak periods. The other suburban lines were to be replaced by buses in the outer suburban fringe. Introduction of Driver Only Trains (this will be discussed in a future issue of RWs).

(4) Operation of Interstate Trains by other State Transport Authorities. This was planned under Labor.

(5) Closure of Tram Routes 82 Footscray to Moonee Ponds, Route 9 Northcote Shuttle, replacement of some Tram routes with Buses after 7pm and all day Sunday.

(6) Elimination of Tram Conductors. The Conductors and Station Staff were to be replaced by Ticket Machines.

(7) PTC operated bus services were to be put out to tender. The PTC was not allowed to submit tenders.

**RW: What was the reaction of the**

**union and employees?**

Alvin: I was not on the job when these changes were announced but the other employees have told myself they were **SHOCKED** and wondered what would happen. Some said they would like redundancy while others said they hoped they would still have a job.

Archie: Most of the recommendations were compiled by Treasury and when presented to the previous Labor Government were knocked back.

Clarence: The Transport Minister stated that if any industrial action occurred the report's recommendations would be implemented straight away with no negotiations.

**RW: Was industrial action planned?**

Algernon: The Trades Hall Council was to co-ordinate a planned industrial action but this was never taken.

**RW: Why?**

Alvin: The Rail and Bus Unions were not merged until February 1993 and the Tram Union conducted negotiations with the Transport Minister.

In late January the Media was notified that a deal had been negotiated. The main points were:

(1) Tram Conductors were to be eliminated once ticket machines were installed. Tram Conductors were to be offered positions as Customer Service Staff plus Revenue Protection employees subject to suitability.

(2) No cuts to tram services except the Northcote Shuttle.

3. PTC were allowed to submit tenders to operate PTC bus routes. The tender was to be administered by an accounting firm.

Clarence: The Rail Division did not know of these meetings. Employees were shocked and so was the State Opposition.

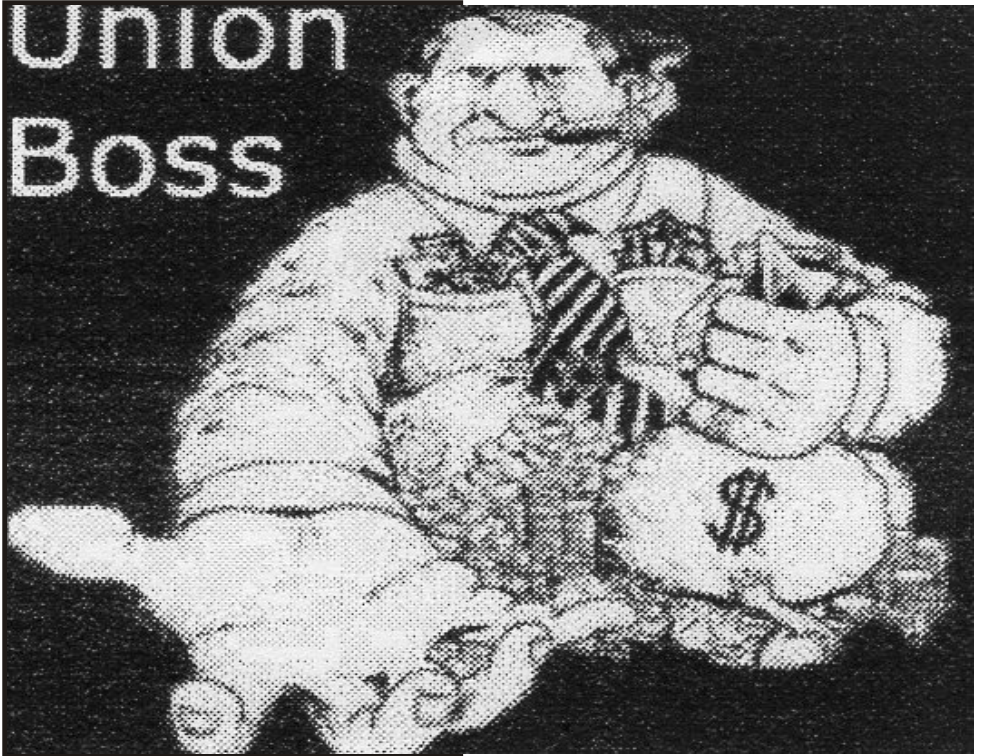
Algernon: The Rail Division started negotiations with the Kennett Government and in late March an agreement was reached.

**RW: What was achieved?**

Archie: The Suburban Rail System was to remain intact except for the Upfield Line, Suburban Guards, Station Staff were to be eliminated. Premium Stations were to be placed around the Suburban System. Guards and Displaced Station Staff were to be offered Customer Service Positions and Revenue Protection positions subject to suitability.

Clarence: V/Line copped the brunt of the service cuts.

(1) Country Services to be retained by V/Line were Bendigo to Swan Hill, Seymour to Albury, Traralgon to Sale, Frankston to Stony Point. Two lines were to be handed over to the private sector. These were Melbourne to



Shepparton and Melbourne to Warrnambool. The other lines were to be replaced by buses under contract to V/Line. Shepparton was contracted to Hoys Coach Lines. Hoys hired the train from V/Line and used their station staff. Warrnambool was operated by West Coast Railway. The Company will be reported on in a future issue of RW.

Alvin: The Transport changes were implemented from March 1993. The irony of Tram reforms was Route 3, Route 57 and Route 82 reverted to Trams on Sundays. With regards to Bus Services the PTC lost all bus routes except services operated by Footscray, Elwood and Sandringham Depots which operated services under the trading name METBUS which was tendered out in 1998. (Refer to previous issues of Sparks.) The Rail Services operated by V/Line were replaced by buses in July - August 1993. Ararat survived until May 1994. Warrnambool and Shepparton. Interstate Trains were operated until December 1994.

**RW: Sadly we have run out of space but could you report on the situation in 2022?**

Clarence: (1) V/Line is operated by the Victorian Government with Warrnambool and Shepparton returned to V/Line in 2004. Services have been extended to Ararat and

Bairnsdale. The lines to Waurn Ponds, Windermere, Bendigo (restored to Echuca) were rehabilitated between 2002 and 2006. These lines plus Seymour have increased services seven days a week.

(2) Metro Trains was privatised in 1989 and is now operated by MTA Hong Kong. The Upfield Line and Williamstown lines have been retained with Automatic Signalling and level crossings eliminated.

(3) The Tramway network was privatised in 1999 and trades as Yarra Trams operated by Keolis. Route extensions are being made to Docklands, Bundoora, Vermont South and Box Hill.

Alvin: In conclusion we hope these kinds of service cuts will never happen again. What we hope for is UNITY in the union movement.



# FRANCE TODAY

## Campaign Against Macron's Changes to Pensions

**Despite the fact that the French President officially signed the anti-social pension reform law, the workers and youth of France continue to resist this attack on their rights and interests. The protests are accompanied by riots and street fights with the police. However, the bureaucratic bosses of the reformist trade unions, by refusing to call a general indefinite strike, paralyze the movement.**

The tenth, eleventh and twelfth days of strikes and protests, which were announced by the trade union alliance, took place on March 28, April 6 and 13. On March 28, about 2 million people took to the streets, including 450 thousand in the capital. During the protests, battles with the forces of the capitalist order were in full swing in many cities of the country. In Paris, black bloc demonstrators set fire to garbage cans, built barricades and smashed supermarkets. The police released gas. The Eiffel Tower and the Palace of Versailles were closed to visitors. In Rennes, the crowd threw stones at the police, who used tear gas and water cannons. In Nantes, protesters set fire to cars and a bank branch, throwing various items at police officers. Tear gas was used to disperse the protesters. Near Nantes, in the city of Saint-Nazaire, the police also resorted to tear gas and "non-lethal" weapons. The demonstration in the city of Tulle in the south-west of the country was accompanied by violent clashes between demonstrators and the police. Banks and Molotov cocktails were thrown at the guards of the capitalist order, the police used tear gas grenades. In Lyon, demonstrators fired firecrackers at police. Those dissatisfied with the reform temporarily interrupted the movement of trains at Saint-Etienne station in Lyon. The radicals smashed the local branches of BNP Paribas and Attijariwafa Bank. In

Lorient, demonstrators blocked railroad tracks with burning barricades. At Moulins they climbed onto the roof of the town hall. Protesters interfered with public transport in Rennes, Lille, Gera. In Nantes, those dissatisfied with the reform erected barricades on the city's ring road; in Toulouse, entry to the territory of the French national meteorological service Mete-France was closed.

Due to strikes at oil refineries and fuel

The total number of protesters, according to trade unions, was about 2 million. The marches were marked by radical actions and clashes with the police. In Paris, on Danfert-Rochereau, protesters blocked the police special forces. Hundreds of members of the Black Bloc and Yellow Vests threw bottles, firecrackers and stones at police guarding the luxurious Rotunda restaurant, where Macron was



depots, about 25% of gas stations in the country have reduced the range of fuel, 7% of the fuel has ended. The police reported that 175 police officers were injured. About 200 protesters were captured.

(<https://www.dw.com/ru/vo-francii-zaderzany-200-ucastnikov-besporadkov-izza-pensionnoj-reformy/a-65161759>).

On April 6, thousands of demonstrations shook Paris, Nantes, Marseille, Lyon, Nice and other cities.

celebrating his election victory. The building was set on fire.

Further, on Boulevard Raspail, the agency of the Credit Agricole bank was destroyed, and then an attempt was made to attack another bank. Demonstrators broke into the building of the BlackRock investment fund. In Nantes, policemen were pelted with stones; street battles broke out. In Strasbourg, demonstrators broke through police barriers by force. According to the police, 154 police officers were injured and injured. At

least 111 people were captured, including 45 in Paris. On the railways, the movement of high-speed trains was reduced by 25%, and regional express trains by half. In the electric power industry, a fifth of the employees were on strike. In schools, 8% of teachers stopped working ...;

<https://fr.news.yahoo.com/manifestation-6-avril-%C3%A0-paris-161108461.html>).

Many educational institutions were blocked by students during the strike of schoolchildren. On a number of occasions, the police broke through this blockade with tear gas and batons. On April 13, 400,000 people took to the streets in Paris alone. During the protests, the demonstrators seized the headquarters of LVMH (the owner of Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Hennessy and other luxury brands), and then broke into the Champs Elysees. Near Place de la Bastille, a bank office was destroyed.

During the clashes, there were wounded among the demonstrators and the police.

Molotov cocktails flew to the police. A spontaneous demonstration took place in the subway. The strikes caused traffic problems. The Paris Garbage Workers' Union went on strike again after a break. The previous one lasted 3 weeks and left 10 thousand tons of garbage. In total, marches were held in 250 cities of France. In Rennes, strikers blocked the street with a burning Mercedes. School children blocked the entrances to the lyceums. Some flights have been cancelled...

The approval of the reform by the French Constitutional Council on April 14 caused a general outburst. Spontaneous riots engulfed various cities of the country. In Rennes, the police commissariat was set on fire; there were heavy clashes with police in the city center. Arrested at least 11 people. Barricades made of garbage cans and bicycles burned in Paris, and city property was damaged.

A large police force dispersed the protesters. In total, at least 150 people across the country were arrested by Saturday morning.

On April 17, Macron went on television, still with the same stubborn tenacity, declaring that the reform would be implemented. He repeated

his old song, full of arrogant contempt for everyone who does not belong to the ruling elite: they say that the masses are irresponsible and do not understand anything, but he knows that reform is indispensable. So, be patient, bitch!

In response to another impudence of the ruler of France, spontaneous riots broke out again in the evening in various cities. The protest march of empty pans took place in all major cities of France.



In Paris alone, thousands of people demanded the abolition of the pension reform.

The French greeted the approach of twilight with salutes. But they did not fly into the sky, but into cars parked on the streets. Protesters smashed shop windows, set up barricades and set fire to trash cans. The loudest night was in Lyon. The mob fired firecrackers at the police and set the local branch on fire.

The gendarmerie had to use water cannons and tear gas to push back the demonstrators.

In Paris, in different parts of the city, "pot concerts" thundered: there was a roar of iron utensils, which had previously accompanied the performance. In Rennes, about 700

people gathered with pots and pans during a speech by the president in front of the city hall, the path of the protesters was blocked by an impressive police barrier. But with the end of Macron's address, the audience did not stop thundering. In Lyon, up to 600 people gathered in front of the city hall, several hundred protesters came to the city hall of Marseille. In Nantes, the authorities counted more than 800 demonstrators.

Street confrontation in France has long acquired the features of a small and diffuse civil war. From March 16 to early April alone, 1,093 police officers, gendarmes and firefighters were injured during clashes with protesters, 2,579 deliberate arsons and 316 attacks on public buildings were committed.

Meanwhile, the trade union bosses, despite their declarations of their intention to continue the struggle, actually sabotage it, treacherously dooming the protest to defeat. They are not going to organize new protests until May 1st. And they still avoid the only way to bring the Macron regime to the wall - a general indefinite strike. It is to this method and the use of "yellow vest" methods of self-organization that the French anarcho-syndicalists call.

<https://aitrus.info/node/6071>

## CGT (General Confederation of Labour) Congress

**Weakened by decades of Stalinist control, by structural deadlocks around company micro-unions, by a difficulty in recruiting and training a new generation of militants, the CGT is preparing for its 53rd congress at the end of March. Never has a congress been so poorly prepared at the base, even though the stakes have never been so high.**

Since the Force Ouvrière split in 1947, major disagreements in the CGT were resolved in the equivalent bodies of the French Communist Party (PCF). The collapse of this hegemony is a liberation, but requires relearning how to bring union democracy to life and freeing it from the weight of clashes between bureaucratic factions from the



PCF movement. Because if the stakes are considerable, they are unfortunately not played between "reformists" and "revolutionaries", but between different possible evolutions: return to the past or continuation of recent openings.

The candidacy for the post of Secretary General carried by the outgoing management, that of Marie Buisson, symbolizes the pursuit of positive developments, sometimes hesitant, sometimes contradictory, on democracy and internal pluralism.

She came out of the last "crisis" National Confederal Committee in early February rather comforted, with a night session until five in the morning! The criteria on the composition of the Confederal Executive Commission (CEC), on the equal presentation of candidates for the CEC by the union structures, which were disputed, have been reaffirmed.

The various shades of nostalgia proved incapable of presenting a credible candidacy leaving all the room to Olivier Mateu (general secretary of the Departmental Union of Bouches-du-Rhône) whose outrageous postures and general public factionalism push back towards Marie Buisson a part of the hesitant executives.

## Who is the boss?

If the sectors nostalgic for the great Stalinist era will probably not manage to seize the post of general secretary, they will try to build a CEC which could paralyze not only the general secretary and the positive developments, but at the same impetus the whole CGT. The term of office of Philippe Martinez will have highlighted the relative powerlessness

of a secretary general in the face of the union baronies which divert the concept of federalism to their profits. While the orientation document of this congress does not have a word on Ukraine (which illustrates the limits of openness...), the most determined of the nostalgic people are preparing an offensive of amendments favourable to Cheese fries. In Clermont-Ferrand as in Ukraine, it will be vital to defeat them!

Jean-Yves (UCL Limousin)

To validate

[1]"Congress of the CGT - Reflections on the orientation document", Alternative Libertaire n°335, February 2023

# SPANISH LABOUR NEWS

## NEW LIBERTARIAN UNION ALLIANCE IN SPAIN

**The pact: 'To the working class, for mobilization and convergence' is a first step to "carry out a joint fight against the attacks against the working class."**

Perhaps it was due to the centenary of the murder of Salvador Seguí, the Noi del Sucre, the repression suffered by the unionists in the case known as La Suiza or the impact of inflation on wages. Or perhaps it was already playing, after three decades of disagreement. In a "historic" agreement between the CGT, CNT and Solidaridad Obrera, the libertarian unions have reached a pact for unity of action.

"It is everyone's responsibility to begin to come together and carry out a joint fight against the aggressions that capital and the State are carrying out against the working class", summarized the CGT Trade Union Action Secretary, Maribel Ramyrez. "It is an agreement for the present to build the

future", added the general secretary of the CNT, Antonio Dyaz. "The objective of the confluence is to promote the struggle of the working class", pointed out the general secretary of Solidaridad Obrera, Jose Luis Carretero.

The three anarcho-union

strategic companies, but also those of small companies, precarious jobs and self-employed workers".

The press conference to announce the agreement, which they have described as historic, took place at the symbolic Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation.



representatives have also shared the vision of the union as "new common institutions", which represent a "diverse working class with a multiplicity of subjects", among which they have highlighted "the workers of

Located in Madrid and linked to the CNT, the foundation is the depository of the main archive of the libertarian movement in the State.

"We have decided to overcome the isolation imposed on us by the dynamics of partial struggles and

focus on what we have in common".

The agreement is a first call for joint action on three points: the defense of public pensions, the defense of equality in the workplace with the aim of Eliminating the wage gap and the end of the repression against social movements and against the labor movement.

In the agreement To the working class, for mobilization and convergence, the CGT, CNT and Solidaridad Obrera state that they have decided to "overcome the isolation imposed on us by the dynamics of partial struggles and focus on what we have in common, to overcome the dispersed mobilizations and try to overwhelm the official trade unionism promoting a great joint process of mobilization of the militant trade unionism". They also call on the working class to "fight for their rights

and win their emancipation in these moments of crisis through struggle and unity of action."

Union alliances have allowed the sovereignist unions ELA (Euskal Herria), CIG (Galicia) and Intersindical (Catalonia) to carry out joint demonstrations against Escrivá's pension reform, while the entente CC OO and UGT have been working for years in good harmony at the Social Dialogue Table, together with the Ministry of Labor and the employers' associations. However, anarcho-union alliances were only woven on a small scale, such as the Taula Sindical de Catalunya, in which the CGT, CNT and Solidaridad Obrera participated along with IAC, COS and CoBas.

Maribel Ramirez (CGT) had a few words of solidarity for her CNT compañeras retaliated by La Suiza: "If

they touch one of us, they touch us all", and she has emphasized that from the logic of confluence mutual support must be present and class solidarity.

Also, the three unions have expressed their concern about the war in Ukraine. They have recalled that in a war the main victim is the working class and, Antonio Dyaz, has recalled that anti-war "is one of the hallmarks of anarcho-sindicalism." After this point, they have criticized the Gag Law, which has not yet been repealed and "has resulted in people being in jail for writing a tweet", and that unions should be "shields in defense of the rights won".

<https://www.elsaltodiario.com/laboral/cgt-cnt-solidaridad-obrera-alcanzan-acuerdo-persigue-unidad-accion-anarcosindical>

## UKRAINE CRISIS & WAR

### REPRESSION AGAINST DRAFT RESISTERS IN RUSSIA & UKRAINE

**In Russia and Ukraine, repressions are growing against those who do not want to fight and die for the masters or plans of the capitalists. The Russian courts have already received more than 500 cases against servicemen - they were initiated under articles toughened after the start of mobilization. Thousands of cases have been initiated in Ukraine in cases of unauthorized abandonment of units, desertion, disobedience to commanders, etc.**

"Mediazona", which has studied criminal cases against military personnel in Russia, reports that contract soldiers and mobilized en masse go AWOL, directly refuse to carry out orders to be sent to Ukraine or desert from the front. The garrison courts have already received 536 cases under articles toughened after mobilization: this is unauthorized abandonment of a unit, failure to comply with an order, desertion and others. 247 of them have already been sentenced. There are more and more cases every month, the incomplete

March of 2023 has already become a record. The most common accusation is the unauthorized abandonment of the unit: 471 cases in court; in more than half of the cases the soldier was absent for more than a month (249 cases). As of March 21, 14 people were accused of desertion, 21 - of using

violence against the commander. Most criminal cases were received by the courts of the Moscow region (40), Kaliningrad (27), Samara (23) and the Rostov region.

Trials of refuseniks and fugitives are held in "demonstration" - to intimidate other military men: soldiers are detained in front of the ranks, sentences are announced in military units, and judges conduct "preventive conversations." On the contrary, such cases are hidden from society: sentences are usually not published, often not even the terms of punishment are reported, statistics are deleted under the pretext of secrecy. Many in the military - more than a third of known AWOL convictions - receive suspended sentences. This allows you to send them to the front again.

Those who do not run, but openly refuse to go to war, are accused of disobeying the order - the number of such defendants is also growing (there are already 25 such cases in the courts). This is the best option for refuseniks: the terms for non-execution of an order are lower than for other mobilization articles.

(<https://zona.media/article/2023/03/22/500500>).

In recent months, the repression has





continued and intensified, announcing new verdicts.

So, the Tambov garrison military court sentenced a mobilized man to 5 years in prison for leaving his place of service without permission and going home in November. He was arrested in January.

Prior to this, the Crimean garrison military court sentenced a contract serviceman to nine years in a strict regime colony for desertion. At the trial, the serviceman stated that he had left the unit because he did not want to participate in the "special operation".

At the end of March, the Barnaul garrison military court sentenced reserve major Mikhail Zhilin to 6.5 years in prison. He was also accused of desertion. The major, fearing that he would be sent to the war zone, lied about feeling unwell and left the unit, after which he packed his things and tried to leave the country. He was detained by border guards.

At the end of February, a court in Kamchatka sentenced Sergei Vladimirov, a serviceman of the Pacific Fleet, to eight years in prison for desertion and the use of violence against a government official. In October last year, he left his place of service, and when members of the repressive services raided his home, he sprayed pepper spray and tried to hide.

(<https://newizv.ru/news/2023-04-07/v-tambove-mobilizovannogo-prigovorili-k-pyati-godam-za-samovolnoe-ostavlenie-chasti-403678>).

In Sevastopol, a garrison military court in February sentenced 2 servicemen to more than 3 years in prison for refusing to redeploy to a combat zone. At the end of March, the Crimean Garrison Court passed a 9-year (!) sentence for desertion to a contract soldier who left a military unit in Sevastopol in September because of his unwillingness to participate in hostilities and was hiding in Crimea.

(<https://sevastopol.su/news/kontraktniku-iz-sevastopolya-dali-9-let-za-desertirstvo>)

In Kursk, at the end of December, two mobilized (Yuri Degtyarev and Alexei Selivanov) were each sentenced to 3 years in prison for refusing to comply with the commander's order to participate in hostilities. They were called up after.



the announcement of partial mobilization at the end of September last year and were recognized as fit for military service in category "A". In October, Degtyarev participated in the hostilities, but after that he was returned to the military unit. In November, he and Selivanov, while in the barracks, did not comply with the order of the head of the unit to receive personal armor and weapons and to leave for the places of special tasks to fill the shortage of units. They refused first verbally, and then filed reports. In November, both were arrested while lining up on the parade ground.

(<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5915055>).

On March 31, it was reported that in St. Petersburg, the garrison military court passed a sentence on a Russian contract serviceman who fled from a military unit during the period of mobilization.

In the meantime, information continues to spread in Russia that it is planned to switch from handing draft summonses in person and against receipt to mailing summonses through electronic networks and the Gosuslug website. Although lawyers doubt the legality of such a procedure being mandatory (at least until the law on conscription is changed), some military registration and enlistment offices have already embraced the idea with enthusiasm. So, the military commissar of the Rostov region confirmed that the project is being considered. He stated that digitalization is gaining momentum and military commissariats are not standing aside.

(<https://161.ru/text/gorod/2023/04/03/72187082/>). Similar plans were

discussed in Ukraine, but it was promised to postpone them until at least the end of the year.

Repressions against those who do not want to fight are growing on the other side of the front line. The number of criminal cases initiated in Ukraine on crimes against military service in January-November 2022 alone more than quadrupled compared to the same period in 2021: from 2,835 to 12,263. We are talking about criminal cases on facts of desertion, unauthorized abandonment units, failure to comply with command orders and evasion of mobilization. In particular, according to the statistics of the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, for 11 months of 2022, 2887 criminal proceedings on desertion were registered in Ukraine (Article 408 of the Criminal Code). For comparison, for the same period in 2021, only 110 were opened under this item, or 26 times less. However, Ukrainians are much more actively persecuted under Art. 407 of the Criminal Code ("Unauthorized abandonment of a unit or place of service"): 5306 proceedings in 2022 against 1850 in 2021. In addition, the number of cases on facts of open disobedience to commanders (1140), evasion of mobilization (1089), threats or violence against commanders (195), voluntary surrender (20) and other military crimes that govern articles of the Ukrainian Criminal Code.

(<https://rtvi.com/news/vedomosti-na-ukraine-chislo-ugolovnyh-del-o-voinskih-prestupleniyah-vyroslo-v-4-raza-za-poslednij-god/>)

# BOOK REVIEW CORNER

**Print Culture and the Formation of the Anarchist Movement in Spain, 1890 - 1915' by John Michael Yeoman Published by Routledge Studies in Cultural History Series. Chico: AK Press, 2022. Reviewed by Jon Bekken**

## Print Culture and Anarchism in Spain

**We have seen growing attention to the role of regional and transnational print networks in sustaining the anarchist movement, with important work exploring their role in the Caribbean, France, the United States, and now Spain. James Michael Yeoman's *Print Culture and the Formation of the Anarchist Movement in Spain* is an important contribution, both to this emerging literature and to the broader history of the anarchist movement in Spain - the country where the anarchist movement built its largest and most durable organizations, with more than a million members during the Spanish Revolution/Civil War.**

After a substantive introduction that reviews the historiography on the Spanish anarchist movement and the vital role of print networks in an anarchist movement that often lacked formal structures to coordinate activities and debate strategy, Yeoman's first chapter offers an overview of anarchist publishing in Spain from 1890 to 1915. Chapter 2 explores debates over the role of violence in the 1890s and the damage the movement suffered in response to failed insurrections and a range of actions justified as 'propaganda by the deed' (p. 66). (Yeoman accepts that 'propaganda by the deed' refers to violence' often indiscriminate terrorism intended to shock the working class into revolutionary action. But early uses of the term were as likely to refer to public demonstrations under the outlawed red flag or the burning of property deeds as to insurrection or the assassination of brutal officials let alone Ravachol's random acts of violence or the 1893 bombing of Barcelona's Liceo Opera

Theatre.) The authorities drew little distinction between insurrection and attacks on ordinary citizens, responding to both with brutal repression of advocates of education and movement organizing and the few who imagined that bombs might light the fuse of social revolution. Chapter 3 addresses the movement's revival as the repression eased in 1899 and its shift to education as a revolutionary



strategy. This educational thrust extended well beyond Cataluña and Francisco Ferrer; anarchists opened free schools and workers' centres across the country, and their publications prominently featured articles on scientific developments, anarchist theory, and other educational material. Finally, chapter 4 focuses on the return to labor organizing, culminating in the launch of the

anarcho-syndicalist union federation, the CNT, and the first Spanish anarchist daily, *Solidaridad Obrera*, in 1915. (Yeoman terms this 'the movement's first stable daily publication,' presumably referring to the Spanish movement since the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung* sustained publication as an anarchist daily from 1883 to 1910) continuing and succeeded by publication as a socialist daily [p. 27]). The scope of this book is ambitious, seeking to account for all Spanish anarchist newspapers published across a twenty-five-year span. Yeoman's research supports a series of charts, tables, and maps that show the dispersion of publications across Spain, the number of titles and issues published in each city and province, the number of societies participating in key anarchist and labor congresses, distribution patterns for *La Protesta*, and the total numbers of anarchist papers published in Cataluña and in the rest of Spain. Periodicals played a central role in the movement, offering "a middle ground between the theoretical depth provided by books and pamphlets and the immediacy of *hojas* [broadsides]" (p. 41). Discussion and debates were carried out in their pages, discussions that often continued in local workers' circles and propaganda groups. The anarchist movement took form through these publications and their distributors and readers. Anarchists debated strategy and refined their ideas in the pages of their newspapers, which also built and sustained networks of propaganda and action across Spain. Cataluña played a vital role in this network, but Yeoman demonstrates that the movement was much less concentrated than many historians believe perhaps contributing to its ability to survive and recover from the waves of repression unleashed against the anarchists. Nearly two-thirds of the anarchist publications published during this era were published outside of Cataluña, though papers based in the province tended to last somewhat longer. Anarchist publications were precarious. Few owned their own



presses and so were forced to rely on commercial printers. This both increased their expenses and could lead to printers succumbing to official pressure. And, of course, there was the constant threat of arrest and forcible closure. Yeoman argues that a circulation of at least four thousand was required to make a publication financially viable, though many US weekly newspapers certainly survived for decades with much smaller circulations. (There is relatively little in this book about the finances of anarchist publishing. Workers' publications in other countries often published financial accounts as part of their accountability to the movements they served, but Yeoman notes that this was less common in Spain: "those that did publish their balances reveal a common theme, with printing costs outstripping income from sale for every issue" [p. 51]. The deficits might be covered by local workers' societies or remittances from abroad. While repression played a stronger role in silencing anarchist publications, precarious finances posed a continual challenge.)

Yeoman's count of titles and publication runs is based on surviving archival holdings and mentions in other sources. Yet despite the evident care that has gone into compiling these statistics, the precision with which he states the number of issues for each title is open to question. In my own work on the New York-based *Cultura Obrera*, I found that many more issues had been published than the handful of scholars who had previously written about the paper realized. This was due to their reliance on the archival holdings, which are demonstrably incomplete. The weekly suspended publication at some point during a bitter 1912 coast-wide strike by the immigrant marine firemen who published it; however, although the archival holdings only run through March 23, an article from the July 20 issue was reprinted in the *Industrial Worker*. Precisely how many issues were published that year cannot be determined, as the holdings resume with the November 30 issue, labeled vol. 2 #1. The file stops again with the October 6, 1917, issue, although a federal agent seized the June 22, June 29, July 20, and August 10, 1918, issues

from the mail, complaining that publication had continued even though *Cultura Obrera* had been barred from the mails in March 1918. (His reports survive in government archives, but the newspapers he forwarded appear to have been discarded.) More than two hundred issues (likely dozens more) are missing from the archives across the paper's fifteen-year run. (I can provide a table documenting this to anyone who is interested.) Several of the newspapers studied in this volume were published under fiercer repression than *Cultura Obrera* faced, and it seems likely that many issues were published that did not make it into the archives.

these borders,... developing flows of information and exchange.... The term I believe best encapsulates this activity is trans localism. This concept aims to explain the process by which individuals and groups prioritise action in their immediate environment, while at the same time aspiring to transcend boundaries both within and between nations" (p. 20). The pages of their newspapers bear witness to the vitality of the movement and to the connections forged and maintained through print and on the ground. In later years, publishers organized speaking tours to build the movement, provided materials for local propaganda, and at least as important reaffirmed the



Workers and activists flooded publications with material, including theoretical reflections, poetry, calls for solidarity, denunciations of employers and police, and news of local meetings and campaigns. Many local groups served as distributors and designated a member to serve as local correspondent. Many publications circulated across Spain and to Spanish emigrants around the world. Yeoman prefers to conceptualize this as a trans local movement, noting that the borders anarchists confronted went far beyond those imposed by nation-states: "Anarchists faced borders at these junctures as well: borders of language, culture, history, class, gender and race, as well as between urban and rural contexts.... In the process of building a mass movement in Spain, anarchists were constantly attempting to cross

vitality of the cause and offered examples of successful activism that could inspire local efforts.

Yeoman argues that the press was vital to sustaining a movement that repeatedly collapsed as repression silenced anarchist papers only to revive once publication was resumed. And yet the speed with which periodicals were launched and movement activities resumed once the repression eased suggests that this may have been reciprocal. There were dangers to this reliance on print culture. When the nascent CNT was outlawed shortly after its 1911 Congress, police raided *Solidaridad Obrera* and seized its subscription lists as part of their efforts to track down and arrest hundreds of militants. But publication was resumed in 1913, after the repression had eased and the number and reach of anarchist

publications increased dramatically. The CNT was revived in 1915, and Solidaridad Obrera converted to daily publication. Its growth "marked the ascendancy of a more organised and coherent movement, and a waning in importance of the anarchist print network" (p. 249).

For Yeoman, Spanish anarchism between 1890 and 1915 "relied upon the fragile, contested, informal structures created by publishing groups and distributors." But while local publications persisted, they now played a secondary role: "After this point, anarchists in Spain were not only part of a movement, but also an organisation; as well as a local periodical, they now had a paper. The consolidation of these two institutions cemented Barcelona's position as the focal point of the movement" (p. 274). Yeoman's conclusion argues that the way anarchism was culturally constructed and maintained through these informal publication networks has significant

parallels to modern movements and their reliance on social media and decentralized networks, "illustrating the ways in which bottom-up movements operate across boundaries within and between nations. In Spain, the anarchist press provided a forum in which local struggles were used to articulate universal truths. Print networks also made trans local action possible, creating and managing networks of exchange, which gave a practical significance to ideas such as solidarity, unity and organisation" (p. 276).

AK Press has performed a useful service in making this book available to a larger audience. However, although it asserts a 2022 copyright for "this edition ... published by arrangement with Routledge," the text is identical to the 2020 hardcover edition, down to the type and the line and page breaks. Other than the copyright page, the only changes are the omission of Routledge's short description of the

book, a slightly expanded author description that now appears on the back cover, the addition of four blurbs (one on the front cover, three on the back) by eminent historians praising the book, and the use of a slightly heavier cream stock instead of the white paper in the original. As a result, a few words missing from the original are still absent. For example, on page 73, "the handful [of] anarcho-communist [newspapers] published outside Catalonia at this time." But while one might have wished for a corrected edition and a postscript addressing advances in the study of transnational anarchist networks, *Print Culture and the Formation of the Anarchist Movement in Spain* is a major contribution to its immediate subject and our understanding of the broader evolution of anarchist thought and organization across Spain in the movement's formative years.

*Thanks to H-Net-Socialisms*

## Critique of Anarcho-syndicalism in Melbourne and Sydney by Conal Thwaite

*G o o g l e      S e a r c h*  
[Http://libcom.org/article/anarcho-syndicalism-melbourne-and-sydney-thwaite](http://libcom.org/article/anarcho-syndicalism-melbourne-and-sydney-thwaite)

Reply: ASN: The thesis presents more of a fantasy than an adequate discussion of the development of a-s in Melbourne and Sydney. There is definitely inadequate research and a focus on organisational 'formalism' informed by vanguardism and sect building perhaps informed by the author's immersion in the leftist milieu. He doesn't discuss the profound impact on the left in Oz of the CPA (Communist Party of Australia) in its high Stalinist phase for 3-4-5 decades in the 20th Century and subsequent mushrooming of Trot groups informed by this legacy. Surrounding and heavily affecting so called anarchist groups and the ASF No.1 (Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation) particularly in Melb. often composed of few militant workers but mostly students/middle class/long term unemployed elements in sharp contrast to the social base of

syndicalist movements in the early 20th century mostly amongst blue collar workers and peasants. The author provides a completely inadequate discussion of the industrial scene in Melb. and Sydney in these years and before. An important reason for the impact of Melb. based Sparks is the militant traditions of public transport workers in Vic i.e. the 1946 Vic. Rail Strike and Melb/Vic PT was the focus of the 1969 Clarrie O'Shea jailing/ Atlantean bus dispute general strikes, with the left ALP faction being predominant in the Vic. Unions. Whilst in Sydney and NSW the situation in PT was much harsher with little militancy since the Great Strike of 1917 defeat and the Right ALP Faction controlling most of the unions. A certain former ASF member came to Sydney and while working in the most militant STA bus depot as part of Sydney based Sparks - he put his name on an article in it and was immediately harassed by the bosses and the union rep presumably a stooge of the ALP Right aligned union bosses refused to help him. With regard to the Melb. based Sparks workers had

articles in it with their names on it without any harassment except one in the railways. The impressions of many in Sydney of those in Melb. which formed the ASF after the 1986 Congress was that they had little knowledge of the subject and little or no interest in doing any research into its history and associated historical precedents! Definitely they displayed no grasp of a realistic strategy for establishing an a-s union movement in Australia. Many seemed to have a grossly simplistic Trot sect like approach based on "build the ASF" and recruitment to the ASF micro bureaucracy. A more realistic strategy which the author seems oblivious due to inadequate research and lack of industrial experience would focus on long term strategic industrial organising to facilitate the launching of strike waves across industries leading to major splits from the corporate unions and transitional steps toward the formation of an a-s union centre. With a-s's

**See Page 20**



## NEWS & NOTES

In this edition of RW we look 'behind the scenes' at NSW Health. We expose the grim worsening conditions associated with increasing staff shortages for those working at the 'coal face'. It emphasises the importance of direct action, grass roots controlled industrial unionism and ultimately 'workers' control' to tackle these problems. (See article page 2.)

In the last edition of RW, we reported upon an important, dazzling victory in the NSW Railways involving the defeat of a new push in early Dec. to introduce DOO (Driver Only Operation) of new trains interwoven with the NSW Govt.'s privatisation agenda in which the ASN assisted grass roots militants. In this edition we throw new light on the management/Govt./union hierarchy DOO strategy. We also look at the nasties in the recently 'railroaded' Rail EBA's and present a way forward for public transport workers to fight the wage cuts and attacks on jobs and conditions associated with the EBA's. (See article page 3.)

A sector which has received a lot of coverage in parts of the corporate media lately has been Sydney Buses and the nefarious effects of privatisation facilitated by the previous NSW Liberal Govts./union hierarchy/political establishment of the ALP/Greens and nasties in the tender contracts. In this edition of RW, we look at the worsening conditions imposed on Sydney bus drivers and new savage attacks associated with the RTBU/TWU bogus 'Two Tier' EBA campaign and particularly management demands for the EBA. (See article page 7.)

Help Build Rebel Worker! Your help with distro is most welcome. Why not consider ordering copies of RW to sell on Saturday mornings in your local shopping area, at demos, leave copies at the lunch room at work, at your local cafe and cinema? Your help on the financial plane is also most welcome.

## A.S.N. Directory

**ASN Sydney Local**  
PO Box 92  
Broadway 2007 NSW

**ASN Newcastle**  
PO Box 106  
Kotara 2289 NSW

**ASN Melbourne**  
J.Dixon  
trwin@gmail.com

**Anarchist Media Institute**  
PO Box 20  
Parkville Vic. 3052

**SPARKS**  
(Anarcho-Syndicalist Transport Workers' Paper)  
PO Box 92  
Broadway NSW 2007  
Www.sparksworld.org

**MEMBERS' VOICE**  
Grassroots NSW Public Transport Workers' Organisation  
Email :  
Membersvoice2010@yahoo.com

**Rank & File First**  
Grassroots NSW Public Transport Workers Organisation  
Rankandfilefirst@outlook.com

**STOP**  
Sydney Transport-Users Opposing Privatisation  
PO Box 703  
Leichhardt 2040  
Facebook STOPPrivatisation  
@STOPPrivatisation

## Where we stand:

1. Our aim is to create a free and equal society.
2. We are a revolutionary labour movement that uses as its only means of struggle, direct action in all its forms: occupations. Strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc. We are independent from all reformist and hierarchical unions and political parties, and we are creating an alternative to these and existing society. We do not seek to gain political power, but rather to see it distributed amongst all.
3. We are a network of anarcho-syndicalists practicing co-operation and mutual aid. We have an equal part in making decisions. Responsibilities within the network are subject to agreement by the members.
4. We are engaged in struggle where we work and where we live, to develop self managed production, distribution and servicing for the world community to meet human needs rather than profit. We give solidarity to others in their struggles.
5. We are fighting to abolish all authoritarian institutions such as the State (including its communist variety), capitalism, all hierarchical and oppressive divisions between people.
6. We have no country and are organised on an international basis in opposition to oppression everywhere. The ASN is striving to build a viable revolutionary syndicalist movement in Australia as part of a world wide movement able to meet the challenge of the global employer offensive.

## TO FIND OUT MORE:

I would like more information about the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network. Please send me information.

Name.....

Address.....  
General Secretary  
PO Box 109 Kotara 2289 NSW.

**REBEL WORKER**  
**Web Site:**

**www.rebelworker.org**

### Continued From Page 18

acting as "catalytic" networks assisting militants on the job and subsequent breakaway unions. After the Jan. 1990 Melb. Tram Workers Lockout/depot occupations/Jan. 1st 'Workers Control' and subsequent defeat and the ASF split - which showed the increasing influence of Trot/Stalinist legacy ways - a fake local North Melb. ASF was formed. It appears as part of "stacking" the coming ASF Congress - very much in line with notorious manipulative Trot ways. Also there seemed a "Stalinist legacy informed climate" regarding aspects of industrial activity - associated with the unrealistic notion in today's situation of only workers editing or publishing industrial papers e.g. such as Sparks. This notion was seen as quasi sacred and "beyond debate and discussion" like the line of the Stalinist CPA after coming down from Moscow. Following the Trammie defeat - most of the few ASF public transport workers dropped out of the industry. They couldn't cope with shift work. Lacking much understanding of A-S - many dropped out of alleged a-s activity and became involved in rural alternative life style stuff and single issue activism, etc. As a result of such factors the Melb. based Sparks ceased publication. It should have been kept going with outside the job organisation working together with on the job contacts/networks. Subsequently using this type of model the Sydney based Sparks developed a regular section for an important sector

of the Vic. railways. However the development of sections in other Vic. transport sectors has been obstructed by the above "sacred" notions and subsequent spawning of what became an extreme sect or cult - ASF No.2. heavily influenced by the Stalinist legacy - associated with the great acceleration of the above manipulative ways and peddling of duplicity re non existent industrial activity and fake



ASF unions which could meet in large phone booths if they existed at all as part of the massaging of the macro bureaucracy of the IWA (International Workers Association). The IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) in Melb. must also be seen in the sect spectrum but not in any way as extreme as the ASF No.2. The IWW has been drawn into the "smoke and mirrors" performances of the corporate unions at community pickets associated with enterprise bargaining sell outs and

assisting workers in marginal sectors also similar to ways e.g. acting as lobbyists/IR advisors (ASF No.2 has done the same e.g. the Domino's dispute some years back re underpaid workers masquerading as a-s type activity on the internet particularly to impress credulous overseas people - however there was no direct action by these workers in the dispute with ASF No.2 acting as lobbyists with community picket lines) of the corporate unions and not in anyway facilitating strike waves and major splits from the corporate unions we need to realise mass syndicalist industrial unionism. . For a discussion of this organisational formalism and vanguardist ways in the ASF No.2 and alleged a-s's in Melb: See Rebel Worker "Two sides of the coin of Class Struggle" and 'Rebel Worker pamphlet review "Anarchism is Australia Today" via google search and via archive section on [www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org) It also must be noted in the early 20th Century such 'formal' organisations like the Chicago Line IWW which existed in Oz certainly were not dysfunctional re serious syndicalist industrial organising like ASF No.2 and IWW. Because of the high level of workers militancy in those days, lack of predominance of the corporate media, before the rise of mass Stalinism and the Bolshevik Coup in Russia in 1917, etc and those militant worker elements were predominating in the Chicago line IWW locals in Oz. A different social base to ASF No.2 and the IWW today.