

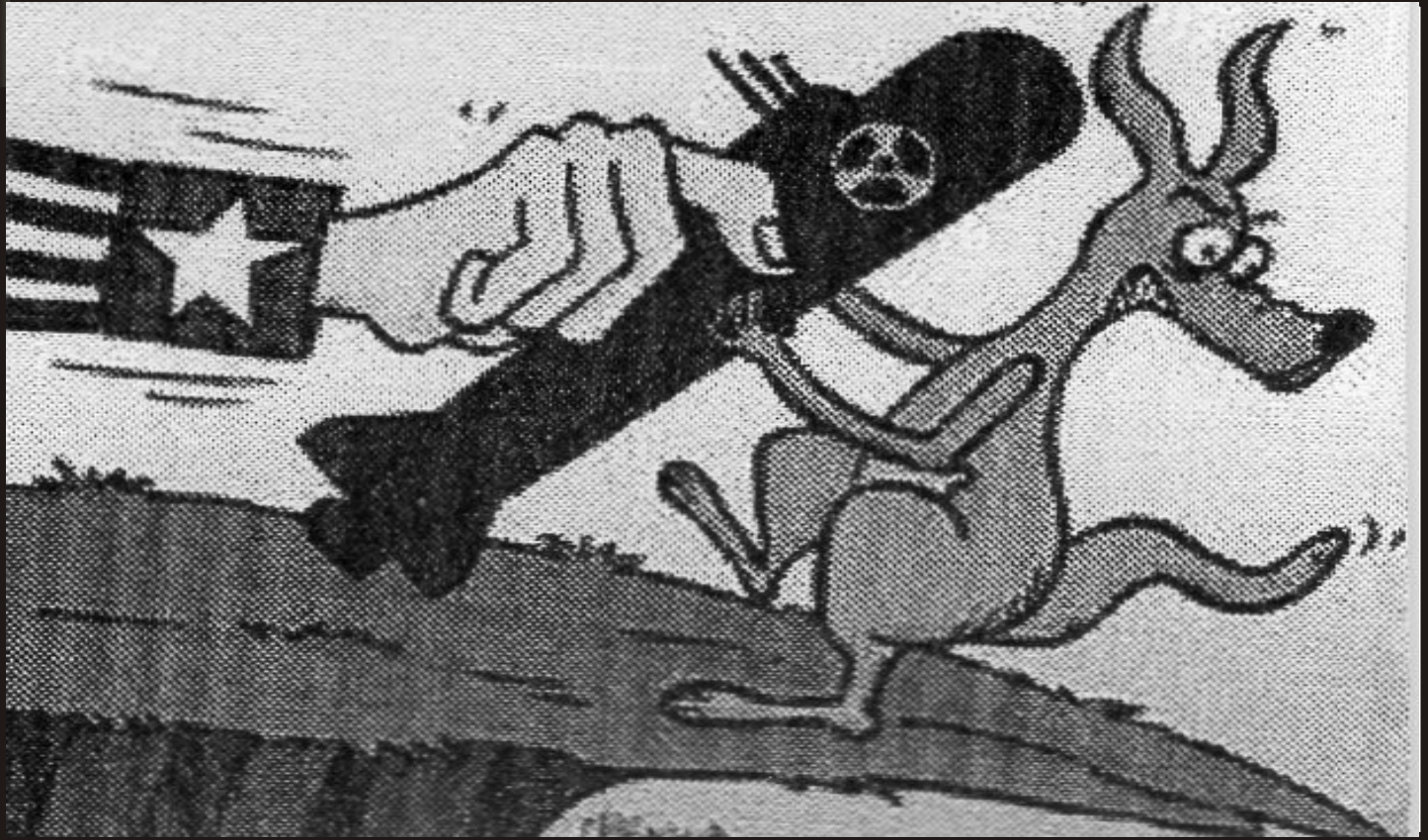
# REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia  
Vol.41 No.2 (234) \Sept. - Oct. 2023

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

**Govt. Squandering of Billions in Tax Payers' money on AUKUS Nuke Killer Subs power drives the Neo Liberal Push! Organise on the Job to Fight Back with Direct Action & Defy the Union 'Yes Men'! Don't Accept Guns before Butter!**



**NSW Health News P.2; NSW Railway News P.3 ; Letters P.5;  
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P.6 ; Victorian Railway News P. 8; Ukraine War & Crisis P.10;  
Britain Today: Report on the Troublemakers at Work Conference  
P.12; Greece P.14; Debate on the NSW BLF & Syndicalist  
Industrial Strategy P. 14; 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.

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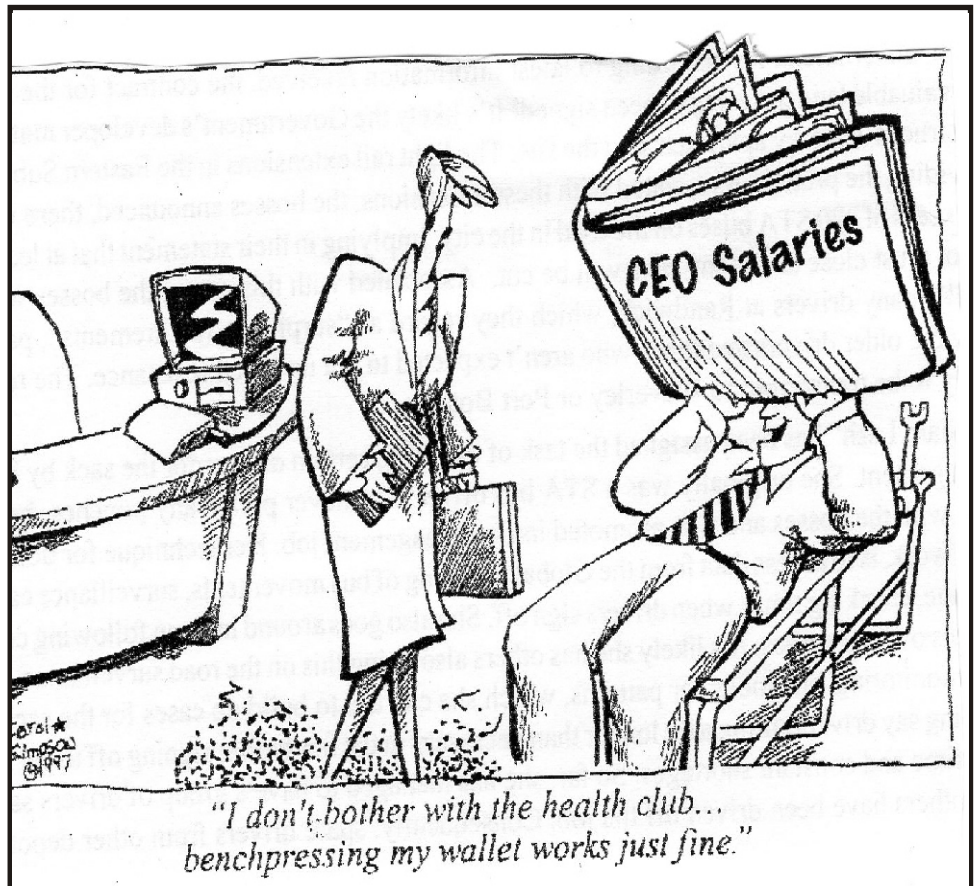
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## NSW HEALTH NEWS

### A change of the weather for NSW Health

*By a Rebel Worker*

It has only taken the better half of a decade, a global pandemic, strikes, strong allegations of workplace bullying, backhand deals with a multi-billion-dollar private industry for jobs for their workers (QANTAS), a burnt out, unrelieved workforce and a change in the NSW government, for there to finally be a credible finger levelled at the top brass of NSW Health. A finger, which points directly at the head of the Sydney Local Health District. A serious allegation that strikes at the heart for what many employees within the district have been feeling for many years. That, within this government service, a network of corruption and bullying within the upper branches has bled its way down through to middle management to the supervisors,

passing the buck straight down to the lowest paid employee, creating a workplace of fear and dishonesty. A fear for people's job security, a fear for what they can and can't say, and a fear for not being granted the necessary conditions to do their job effectively and safely.

#### **And where does fear reside?**

Fear resides where people believe the power is. And in this case and in 99.9% of cases, this comes straight from the

top. The Chief Executive Office.

The policy of "just get on with it" and "do as your told" is receiving some serious backlash. At the start of July of this year 2023, 250 senior medical staff working at Concord Hospital, a hospital under direct jurisdiction of Chief Executive Theresa Anderson, held an emergency meeting to discuss the ongoing situation, in relation to cut backs in the radiology department and the culture of workplace bullying in

## 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.**



the hospital. The result from the meeting was that 60% of the staff had voted in favour of a no-confidence motion against the Chief Executive. And this was just one hospital and one department from that hospital.

Other hospitals and other departments share similar sentiments. For a fact in one other hospital, those working in the clinical services also hold experiences with the Chief Executive Office, ranging from the forced removal of any furniture within their tea rooms that had been deemed to provide "too much comfort" for their hard working bodies, a distinct failure of inaction to handle any complaints made against those who were at a supervisory, management or executive level, and a series of cutbacks and roster alterations that had led to the departures of experienced staff and left a department of faulty equipment.

A spotlight has been shone into the workings of the Sydney Local Health District with the Health Minister Ryan Park even saying that there would be a review into the matter. A scarce sight from the days of old under the previous health minister. Where there is one rotten apple, you're sure to find a bloody barrel.

Mind you not that the Health Services

Union has anything to say on the matter. They're too busy picking a fight with their ex-partner the Labor Party, who they dramatically split up with back in 2020. I'm sure all union members love being brought into relationship squabbles, between their day to day working lives and their family lives; but making comments to the media that "HSU members had been better off under the former Perrottet government" is an insult to the dedication and hard work that those members, and all health workers demonstrated under a straining healthcare system, where the leadership in government had abandoned them and only their experience, professionalism and strong sense of duty of care kept the system intact and the public of Australia safe from rampant disease. What planet have you been living on?

The puff of smoke at Concord is not the only sign of changes for health in NSW. There is also a national referendum under way that will have an impact on the health and well being of all Australian Indigenous people across the country. Many of whom are burdened with life effective illnesses that a voice to parliament would no

doubt be able to address in a more informed and efficient manner. Another step in the direction of equality and fairness, and a step towards a better healthcare system.

With the annual "People Matter Survey" being fluttered around the workers faces, and the continually growing sense of discord around the hospitals that surely must amount to an inferno by now, it will be interesting to see where the future will lie for the employees of NSW health and their managers. And interesting to see to where the future will lie for those who reside in the Chief Executive Office now that the finger has found its mark for all to see, plain as day, where this culture of workplace bullying and ill-informed decision making, has come from."

**Editorial Comment:** *The above Indigenous Voice may just mostly benefit a small elite of Aboriginal bureaucrats and polities with various positions/jobs. While those doing it tough on the lower rungs will be hard hit due to massive Govt. expenditure on the AUKUS nuke subs. The Voice will be used to divert attention from the Govt's support for the US war drive and soaring cost of living.*

## N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

### The New N.S.W. Minns Regime & Claassens's N.I.F. Lies

The most significant news in its ramifications for the NSW Railways was the election of the Minns ALP Regime in the March 2023 elections. Latest developments such as the new 'Regime' okaying moves to rip up the Bankstown rail line and replace with a Metro and the other Metro developments points to the Minns Regime continuing the pro privatisation policies of the previous Liberal Regimes of Baird, Gladys and Perrottet and a continuing drive to cut wages, conditions and jobs. This push is likely to even worsen with Albo's support for the AUKUS Nuke Subs

commitment which will involve the shocking squandering of half a \$ Trillion of tax payers money for the Subs and ancillary expenses such as the proposed Subs base in Pt. Kembla and the Nuke waste dump. So there will be a major push to gouge and

corner cut as much as possible to pay for this lavish expenditure to help out Uncle Sam and the Brits and facilitate a future nuke war with China. As part of this drive will be a renewed push to introduce D.O.O.(Driver Only Operation) with the N.I.F. (New





Intercity Fleet) without the renos likely introduced with the new timetable in early 2024. Followed by the replacement for the XPT also 'secretly' set up for D.O.O. This D.O.O. push will open the floodgates for privatisation as the new operators as

part of franchising of Sydney and NSW Trains will significantly reduce their wages bill.

Increasingly information is coming to hand that Claassens's and Perrottet's claim to have achieved a break through in the Rail EBA 2022

negotiations with the NSW Govt's agreement to renos on the N.I.F. To maintain the role of the guard in safe working is a brazen lie. As no work has ever been done to do the renos on the N.I.F.

## Mainstream Media Cover-up of New D.O.O. push with the N.I.F. (New Inter City Fleet)

My analysis of SMH 22/6/23 article "Intercity train fleet delayed again" page 7 is that the article is again disinformation to camouflage the introduction of the NIF with DOO(Driver Only Operation) toward the end of the year late Nov.- Dec. 2023. Its introduction in services was likely intended last year 2022 following the fake break through in Rail EBA

changes to the guards cabin already made. In reality they are preparing for running the unrenosed trains for the new timetable early in the new year for the new push.

The article is a means to counter Sparks on the job re enlightening the grass roots about the fraudulent nature of the renos and fake EBA break through. In line with launching the



negotiations. Revealingly the article admits that as yet no work has been done re the supposed renos on the trains to maintain the role of the guard in safe working. Despite now 7 months since the making the supposed deal - the bogus NIF Deed between Claassens and Perrottet re doing the renos! The SMH doesn't raise any issues with this suspicious inaction regarding the renos. Nothing has been done and as we know nothing will be done! But the article refers to talk by TfNSW that the trains would be operating in services 'vaguely' sometime in 2024. So creates the illusion that renos will still have time to be done eventually. Also the article talks about 'trials' on lines of the unrenosed NIF trains, but if they were genuine, they would have to trial renovated NIF trains with the

surprise attack - introducing the unrenosed NIF for the 2024 timetable.

Also revealingly Minns since gaining office as Premier has talked about new legislation to protect Sydney Water from privatisation but no such legislation to protect the railways from privatisation is being considered. Meanwhile the Minns Govt. is intending changing the TAHE (Transport Asset Holding Entity) which owns all the railway infrastructure to become a non-commercial state owned corporation. Similar to Transport for NSW which played an important function in the privatisation of Sydney Buses via franchising.

**STOP PRESS Latest News:**

## Intercity train fleet delayed again

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**Matt O'Sullivan**  
Transport and infrastructure editor

The rollout of NSW's new intercity passenger trains has been delayed until 2024, with the state government saying it was working with the main rail union and the safety regulator to implement an operating model that would allow the fleet to be rolled out next year.

"This includes changes to the trackside infrastructure, and surveying and testing the new fleet," the agency said. "It has not previously given an updated timeframe for the trains to start services."

The new Korean-built fleet was at the centre of a protracted dispute last year between the Rail Union and Bus Union. The standoff was settled last November when

the government agreed to union demands to modify the trains to allow guards to monitor passengers getting on and off at stations. Despite the deal seven months ago, modifications to guard cabins "working closely" with the train manufacturer and the union to progress the modification work on the fleet as "quickly as possible".

The new fleet had undergone testing on several rail lines to extend the fleet to the south coast, and preliminary testing of crew doors was taking place. "These tests are needed to inform the detailed design of the modifications," the agency said.

Opposition transport spokeswoman Natalie Ward said the previous government invested billions in new intercity trains, but the city fleet and now after industrial action by unions last year, they were still not servicing customers.

Under the original plans, the trains were to start services on lines from Sydney to the Central Coast and Newcastle in late 2019, and to the Blue Mountains and Lithgow in 2020. The hold-up to the rollout of the new intercity fleet is delaying the retirement of decades-old V-set passenger trains, and the transfiguration of Oscar trains to Sydney's suburban lines.

The delays come as the government's new chief executive, lead by NSW's Global Infrastructure and Transport agency.

Long-time senior bureaucrat Howard Collins is acting Transport for NSW secretary and is regarded as the leading internal candidate for the top job. The agency, which is heavily unionised, whether NSW did not say whether Allaway would be permanently replaced, confirming

only that chief operating officer Dale Merrick was now acting TrainLink CEO.

Labor set a goal - matched by the Coalition - during the state election campaign to increase the number of public servants by 15 per cent through attrition.

After winning power in March, the Labor government commissioned a review into Sydney's rail network. Among 12 recommendations accepted by the government in an interim report released last month was a recommendation that it should shift responsibility for the intercity trains.

If adopted, it will place all electric trains under Sydney Trains' control and effectively re-establish the old CityRail operations bounded by Bomaderry in the south, over the border to the north and Lithgow in the west. The previous Coalition government created Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink in 2018.



Daily on-lines notices have been received about testing the NIF without the guard controlling the doors. The new timetable due early next year is

dependent on the NIF running. 6/9/23 Further news on the NIF is that the traction interlocking modifications haven't been done for the guards to be

able to work trains from the platform so the trains don't stop at platforms. Except where they terminate of course.

## Sydney Trains Customer Service Marshals

Management is looking at the revival of the customer service Marshals, but won't say in what capacity and are keeping it quiet. These used to be sent to a station and do duties like stand around and help people with directions

etc.

Management used to say . "we'll use them in degraded modes on stations to help with crowd control etc." The problem was a lot of these were P/T staff that didn't know how to deal

with a lot of situations. These marshals were paid extremely well, not sure what the regular marshals were but Team leader = SDM3.

*By Railway Johnny*

## LETTERS

### RAIL EBA 2022 & Covid

Dear RW

It seems obvious to me that the whole EBA charade was orchestrated to coincide with the Covid charade. The delaying tactics, starting with the idea of just adopting the 2018 EA and forgo any negotiations.

And of course, the Covid charade was a test to see how much of their civil and political rights people were willing to lose/give up. Obviously, people are willing to give up all rights, as the test showed, and this includes workplace rights.

As I said this was a test in preparation for "the great reset" that according to the "world economic forum" and regurgitated by politicians everywhere, we all need. Also called the "fourth industrial revolution" and perfectly timed to coincide with the climate charade.

All designed to condition people into accepting even more industry being shut down and exported to some new location with a slave workforce, who know nothing about civil and political rights let alone workplace rights. And/or to accept their jobs being automated in AI run factories.

"The great reset" and the "fourth industrial revolution" along with climate alarmism are planned operations to normalise the taking away of all civil and political rights along with workplace rights because there will be no jobs.

And lets not forget land rights. This is where the "voice" comes in. They need a referendum to change the constitution and strip away any ideas of land rights, but it won't be returned to the Aborigines. It will be managed by an unelected cadre of useful idiots who will do as they are told, for money. Just like the politicians. People will be packed in to "smart

were permanent.

*Regards*

*Railway Kenny*

### Cronulla Station OH&S Issue



cities" also known as 15-minute cities and most will receive "a living wage". These are being built around the world in plain sight, but mainly in developed nations. In reality, these are high-tech open-air prisons until Mr Gates can perfect his vaccines, because he says there are too many people in the world. So, you see, we won't be needing an enterprise agreement soon and perhaps the useful idiots and order followers jumped the gun a little in 2020 and thought the mandates and lock downs

Dear RW

Workers at Cronulla station, have been victimised over their concerns with mould in the office, which is significant, and has made them ill.

A certain CAM, who is now female, has constantly fobbed it off. This has been going on for a long time. It is the same CAM that gave all the office space to train crewing. Now station staff have only this tiny little room to work with and have to go through the crewing area to use the toilet. Latest

# One Day Sydney Anarcho-Syndicalist Conference

## "From Corporate Bureaucratic Unionism to Grassroots Controlled Direct Action Unionism: Lessons from the 1970's and Perspectives for Today."

Saturday 18/11/23 11am - 4.30 pm at the Gadigal Room, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre 11-13 Darley St. South Newtown, just off King Street, NSW Australia.

### Program:

**11am-11.15: Registration**

**11.15 am -1pm:** A panel on the NSW BLF and Green Bans/Workers Control in the 1970's: a talk by Mike Matteson Anti-Vietnam War Draft Resister and then grass roots anarcho-syndicalist industrial activist in the 70's: He will talk on his experience and lessons from the NSW BLF Green Bans/Opera House Work-in. Centre for Workers Control/Workers Control Conferences/ The Link (Sydney Western Suburbs Metal Workers Paper).

Followed by Jefferson Lee, former 70's student activist and editor of Tharunka on the the Old Spaghetti Factory dispute.

**Lunch 1pm-2pm**

**2pm - 4.30pm:** "Herding the Cats" Sydney Taxi Driver organising with Mike Hatrick, a long time former Sydney Taxi industry grass roots activist and then a talk :Anarcho-syndicalist activity and strategy in Australia Today for 2pm-4.30 pm.

**Entry Free. However Donations Welcome to cover costs.**

**Other appropriate talks for the conference will be considered contact <http://www.rebelworker.org> It will be a great opportunity for networking and comrades to meet up to turn the tide.**

news is that the mould problem has been fixed but this doesn't help workers' health issues which hasn't

been resolved.

Also there's an interim T/Table coming out in a coupla weeks but the new full T/T is on hold as they were

looking at dropping services instead of adding.

*Sydney Trains reader and supporter*

## SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

### Tempe Depot News

**RW: What are your thoughts on the Two Tier RTBU/TWU EBA campaign?**

Tempe Driver: In the middle of July 2023 the EBA campaign was finalised. I heard we secured 3.2% pa rises. (Editorial Comment: the current CPI is 6% pa and the likely actual rate of inflation being much higher due to spiralling rents, food prices, power charges, etc. The official inflation rate for the 12 months ending in March was 7 percent, while the Wage Price Index

increased by just 3.7 percent over the same period. So in reality there is no wage rise, but real wages cuts. Also the Federal Budget in May 2023 maintained the Super Guarantee legislated increase to 12%. From 1 July 2024, the Super Guarantee will increase to 11.5%. It will continue to increase by 0.5% on 1 July each year until it reaches 12% in 2025. So the real wages cuts is much worse taking account of the Super increases.) No mass stop work mass meetings of all union members in Region 6 were held. The deal was voted upon at depot

union meetings. According to the union officials allegedly 90% approved it. In terms of its contents, from what I have heard it will mainly favour the Transees (those who were recruited to Transit Systems following the privatisation of the STA) rather than the ex-STA drivers. An interesting development with NSW Public Sector wage rises, is that according to latest news ALP NSW Premier Minns has now reneged on his election promise to abolish the NSW Public Sector Wage Rises Cap. He is reintroducing it through the back door.



In the case of the Teachers' EBA he gave the nod for a 4% pa pay rise and .5% for Super for the first year of their 4 year EBA, but from the 2nd year onward the 2.5% pa wages Cap is to be reintroduced. (STOP PRESS: According to ABC TV Report: Latest news is that the Govt. agreed to between \$4,000 to \$9,000 increases for different teacher grades but only for permanent teachers which amount to about 60% of the workforce. It is for the first year of the EBA which extends to the end of 2024 with likely nasties in the EBA clauses fine print and foreshadowed budget cuts to recoup the pay rise. The corporate media and union bosses have conjured up the illusion all teachers will receive the pay boost. However with all the cut backs in the EBA fine print and budget cuts it may mostly be an illusion as well. Pay rises for the rest of the EBA period have not been determined.)

**RW: What are your impressions with the shifts?**

TD: There has been quite a bit of discrimination against ex-STA drivers at the depot by management. As a result of the better conditions of the RTBU/STA EBA which has been in force since privatisation and the Traineeship system whereby new drivers conditions are much worse, than for the older/ex-STA drivers. For some time now the Transees were getting the much longer shifts rather than the ex-STA drivers. Now with the shortage of drivers the ex-STA drivers are now getting their share of these much longer shifts and so improving their wages.

## Leichhardt Depot News

**RW: What are your impressions of the latest developments with the Two Tier EBA campaign?**

Leichhardt Driver 1: In mid July the EBA campaign was finalised following a vote approving it. As part of the EBA we receive the alleged pay rise without making major concessions to the bosses. Management backed off from their initial demands to attack our 5 weeks per year recreational leave and sick leave entitlement. They also backed down from demanding that we clean our buses after our runs. So many of us weren't so opposed to the EBA. However it is unclear to me about the

situation of the so called traineeships in regard to the new EBA. It was introduced under a previous RTBU EBA before the privatisation of the STA whereby the traineeship was extended from 6 months to 2 years. Resulting in much worse conditions and pay for these drivers. They have been heavily exploited by the bosses.



**RW: What are the ramifications of the approval of the EBA?**

LD1: Currently there are two rosters in operation. One for the ex-STA RTBU members and the Transees who were recruited following the STA's privatisation and often TWU members. Both rosters will now be merged. So consequently all the PM's and other rosters will become one roster. Seems the new rosters are likely to disadvantage ex-STA drivers in regard to wages.

**RW: What is other news?**

LD1: Following our previous rep Tom going on sick leave and leaving the job, a new guy was elected. He is continuing to do a good job and is very approachable. Electric buses are continuing to be introduced into the depot fleet. It seems likely the bosses and the Govt. intends for the fleet to become eventually completely electric buses.

**RW: What are your impressions of the EBA?**

Leichhardt Driver2: Many at the depot amongst the ex-STA drivers went along with voting for its approval as the campaign had gone on too long. The union rep also encouraged us to agree to it as he indicated we were unlikely to get anything better. Associated with

our voting for the EBA was the payment of a lump sum bonus. However, the bonus to entice us to agree to the EBA gross amount is likely to be significantly depleted due to income tax. It seems likely the EBA provisions will disadvantage those on the broken shifts in regard to wages. There certainly should be equality on

the job. Currently the new drivers only get 4 weeks annual leave. As of mid August the EBA has not been implemented.

**RW: What are other issues?**

LD2: For many years now and associated with the complete implementation of the cashless Opal system which replaced the 'green machines', the bosses have imposed on us a cut back to our sign on/off time as we now don't do cash handling. Prior to the change we had 10 minutes. This time has been reduced to 8 minutes and with staff buses to 9 minutes. As this corner cutting involved thousands of drivers the bosses would be saving a considerable amount of budget money. The bendi shifts are still continuing at the depot.

## BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

**RW: What are your impressions of the RTBU/TWU Two Tier EBA campaign?**

Burwood Driver: As of early August, the new EBA provisions had not been implemented. Regarding the issue of wages associated with the campaign, this situation for us has been

ridiculous. There have been numerous Opal fare increases over the last 4 to 5 years. However, we have only received one pay rise in this period.

**RW: What's the latest with the union?**

BD: For some years the TWU has been fighting the RTBU for coverage of drivers in Transit Systems Region 6, prior to privatisation, the STA (State Transit Authority). We have been advised recently that the TWU has won this fight in the Industrial Court. We have been directed to join the TWU. Meanwhile on the depot level the RTBU has done nothing much for us with the EBA campaign being very long and drawn out and a range of depot level issues. So as of late July I and

many other former RTBU members at the depot have joined the TWU.

**RW: What are other issues at the depot?**

BD: We are continuing to have serious problems with the cleaning of the buses at the depot. In the early morning, the buses are supposed to be sparklingly clean. In reality the buses are often still dirty. It seems this poor level of cleanliness stems from budget cutting by management and their attitude of seizing any opportunity for corner cutting to save money. Other news is that we are continuing to face a significant shortage of drivers at the depot. We lost several routes to Kingsgrove such as the 480 and 483. While the 439 was cancelled.

## STOP PRESS: 3/9/23 Free Opal Cards for all NSW Bus Drivers

To help overcome the crippling shortage of bus drivers, the NSW Bus industry Taskforce is recommending free Opal Cards for drivers. So as to encourage the recruitment of new drivers and the retention of existing drivers at Bus companies. While in the Northern Beaches 500 bus runs have been cancelled in one week due to driver shortages in mid Sept.

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In this issue of RW we will discuss the latest fare reductions plus the number of freight lines that have been booked out of service. Conductors, Drivers and Station Staff will discuss these issues. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.*

**RW: Can you explain to our readers the reduction in passenger trains fares since March 31st?**

Shem: As a result of promises made by both Political Parties in the last State Election, fares on V/Line services have been reduced. If the Liberals had been returned the fares were to be reduced from January 1. The Labor Government was returned and set March 31st as the day to commence the new fare structure.

**RW: What is the new fare structure?**

Archie: The new fare structure is on average \$10.00 single to anywhere in Victoria and \$5.00 for Concession. The zone extends 60 kms over the State Border. Return fares are double single fares.

Forsyth: There is a catch with these new fares.

**RW: What's that?**

Reggie: Peak and Off Peak is now abolished and Family Savers have been discontinued. Children under 18 no longer travel free being charged half fares.

Shem: The boundaries interstate are Merimbula, Holbrook, Berrigan, Deniliquin in NSW. Mount Gambier, Bankstown and Pinnaroo in South Australia. The reduced fares are not available on V/line Bus Services beyond these points. We do not know if these fares are available to Bombala or on XPT from Melbourne to Albany.

previous issues of Sparks we drivers feel sorry for the conductors. They have to sort out the problems and if there is a complaint they cop it from Human Resources.

Sheona: If a passenger complains he is usually given a free ticket.

**RW: What about the V/Line bus services?**

Forsyth: Fares on these services have



Archie: Train units are still the same and as usual some Bairnsdale and Albury trains are reduced to 3 car Velocity trains if a unit is defective. In one instance an Albury train arrived at Seymour as a three car Velocity train, over crowded. We don't know how the Conductor managed.

Rastus and Roscoe: As we have said in

been reduced. These bus services are under the umbrella of Public Transport Victoria.

**RW: What are the main freight lines that had been booked out of service.**

Rastus: The lines are Toolamba to Echuca, Castlemaine to Maryborough and Eaglehawk to Inglewood.

Roscoe: On a number of these lines the



main traffic was grain and due to consolidation of Grain Received areas, VICTRACK who owns the lines say they are not viable. In other words if these lines come up for major works VICTRACK says they are not worth repairing.

Archie: If these lines are closed V/Line hands the line back to VICTRACK to dispose of the assets. This has happened in the Strathmerton to Cobram line. No hope of the Passenger service returning. Shem: Track can be removed from these lines booked out of service. All V/Line has to do is to get permission from the Minister of Transport to remove sections of track and Point work to use elsewhere. As these lines are laid in heavy rail, it saves V/Line the cost ordering new rail.

Ahmed: With the Castlemaine to Maryborough line there is a group based in Maryborough that wants a passenger service restored from Geelong via Ballarat and Maryborough to Castlemaine then Bendigo. This group was active in both 2014 and 2018 State Elections about restarting the services and the local radio did mention the removal of infrastructure.

Roscoe: With the Eaglehawk to Inglewood line a group is campaigning to run a local passenger service from Bendigo. A Container Terminal was proposed for Marong for an inland port. There is Housing developments around the area.

Forsyth: Despite the Boom Barriers being intact along the line the junction at Eaglehawk has been removed plus sections of track between Bridgewater and Inglewood. What hope is there for a return to service?

Archie: The Echuca line is closed for the next six weeks for track upgrade. We do not know if the Deniliquin Rice train will operate. If there is rice to clear at the mill it will have to be sent by road as the line to Toolambu is out of service.

**RW: What about the line between Ballarat and Wendouree?**

Shem: This line was singled from Wendouree to Ballarat with the second line extended to service local industrial sidings.

Roscoe: The situation in 2023 is all industry served by rail has closed down. The old Down line is still intact but sections of Pointwork and Rail have

been removed for use elsewhere.

Roscoe: When the major works were carried out on the Ballarat line the Double line should have been restored from Warrenheip to Wendouree. This did not happen so as to save money.

Forsyth: If a train is delayed you have to wait at Ballarat in the train until the other train arrives. Sometimes trains for Wendouree arrive late at Ballarat and the train terminates and Wendouree passengers wait for the next train.

**RW: Once again we have run out of space. VICTRACK and V/Line due to budget cuts are forced to remove infrastructure from lines that are mothballed which makes return of services a later date difficult.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, removing points and sections of track are a false economy. We hope that community groups keep campaigning for the retention of these lines.

## WEST COAST RAILWAY

*In this issue of RW we will discuss West Coast Railway who operated the service from Melbourne to Warrnambool between the years 1993 and 2004. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.*

Alvin: In March 1993 rumours were circulating about this as well as withdrawal of services on Country lines, two lines were to be operated by the private sector.

Rastus and Roscoe: This was confirmed at the end of April 1993 with an announcement that South Geelong to Warrnambool was to be operated by a company named Victorian Railway Company Pty Ltd trading as West Coast Railway. Seymour to Shepparton was to be operated by an old established Company Hoys Roadlines, but only from Seymour to Shepparton with the service to Cobram being replaced by Bus.

Ahmed: The two operators had to operate the same number of trains that were operated by V/Line per week.

**RW: What was the difference between the two companies?**

Shem: Hoys had operated School Bus,

Charter and route services around Wangaratta for over forty years. Hoys were to hire carriages and locomotives from V/Line with their own on train staff plus station staff at Shepparton.

Rastus: West Coast Railway said in a press release they were to operate their own trains with train crews based in Warrnambool and Geelong where their operations were to be based.

**RW: What was the attitude of the Union?**

Ichabod: The union was opposed to the two services going out to tender but the union was in a dilemma. If they opposed private trains, buses would replace them and the union would be hated by the communities of both Warrnambool and Shepparton. The union commenced negotiations with both companies.

**RW: Who owned Victorian Railway Company?**

Ichabod: Victorian Railway Company was formed by a group of Railway Enthusiasts who were board members of a Tourist Railway who operated a Tourist Railway from Queenscliff to Drysdale. From day one they stated their operation was to be Customer oriented and would provide a superior service to V/Line.

Shem: West Coast went shopping for a number of Locomotives and Carriages on winning the tender which were declared surplus by the PTC due to service cuts.

**RW: Were V/Line staff made redundant?**

Rastus: Drivers who were made redundant were transferred to Freight operations. Some drivers decided to take redundancy or transfer to other depots.

Ichabod: It was the same with conductors and station staff. Some were picked up by the New Company mostly conductors and station staff. Others transferred to depots where there were vacancies, while others decided to take redundancy packages. Staff who worked in freight divisions at these locations kept their positions.

Rastus: V/Line decided that both companies could run their services from both Warrnambool and Shepparton to Melbourne. No V/Line or train staff were to operate these services. V/Line drivers were to

operate the trains.

**RW: What was the story about West Coast planning to use Retired Drivers to operate these trains.**

Roscoe: This rumour was circulating but the Drivers' Division knocked it on the head. It was mentioned in a Union newsletter, but V/Line drivers operated the trains through to 2004.

**RW: What was the story of West Coast obtaining a lease of the former Ballarat Loco Depot?**

Shem: West Coast was able to lease Ballarat Depot at a peppercorn rent. They obtained publicity in the local media but what was not mentioned was Ballarat Depot was closed with staff being made redundant.

Rastus: When the PTC announced Ballarat Locomotive Depot was to close as a maintenance depot. A manager tried to force the staff to take a Voluntary Departure Package. The staff refused and wanted redeployment. Some were redeployed but the

majority were given a Targeted Separation Package which was superior to the VDD package but not superior to the Package that was given to Ballarat Tramway Employees when the Ballarat Trams closed.

Ichabod: As well as a Govt. subsidy to operate the service West Coast Railway was given a Govt. grant to commence the operation. This Govt. grant was unique because the British Railways were being privatised and the companies in Britain were not given a start up grant. When the PTC was privatised in 1999, no start up grant was obtained.

Archie: The grant was questioned by the Auditor General in one of their reports. This and other reports led to the Auditor General having his powers stripped by the Kennett Govt. in 1997. The Auditor General's powers were restored after the 1999 State Election.

Forsyth: The date for the major above cuts to V/Line plus transfer of trains to

West Coast and Hoys was set for the week end of the 21st and 22nd of August.

Archie: The 22nd saw Hoy's take over of the Shepparton service, but due to issues of Accreditation, V/Line continued to operate the trains with West Coast taking control of the attended stations on the line. On train catering was taken over by West Coast from 29/8/1993.

Ichabod: With the exception of Drivers, West Coast commenced full operations on Sept. 19th. This was given large publicity along the line with a Headboard on the locomotive and a send off by the Minister of Transport.

**RW: Unfortunately we have run out of space but the West Coast and its relationship with V/Line will be discussed in a future issue of RW.**

## UKRAINE: CRISIS & WAR

### Refusals to fight from both sides of the front: entering the second autumn of war 3/9/23

The bloody counter-offensive dragged on for months, which turned into a new meat grinder on the Somme after the new Verdun battle near Bakhmut, is being noticeably reflected in the social atmosphere. The interlocutor of Assembly, driving trains in the Kharkov subway, anonymously told back on June 25:

"My brother is fighting near Bakhmut, the 31st assault brigade. Last week they went on the offensive - got such fight back that retreated further than they were before the offensive. The next day, the colonels arrived with threats. And where to attack, there are cannons, mortars, aircraft. The day before yesterday, two battalions refused to fight at all. They didn't feed the guys, they threatened to imprison them. Three battalions laid down their arms, because they were driven to the



slaughter without support. 30 people were immediately laid on the ground. They gave a new commander, but it's all the same. They barely took some village. There are no tanks, there is no Bradley, they are taking care of it, in order not to upset the West. But they are not taking care of the infantry - they gave two Polish sniper rifles and took

them away. There is no food, only one dry ration. Were threatened to imprison, they answer: imprison, and who will come to our positions? Now they continue to fight somehow, but on the spot, without mood. Such things."

The same informant confirms the June article by Der Spiegel about tankers in the Armed Forces of Ukraine who



imitate tank damage to avoid their going on the southern counter offensive. "They stand still. They gave them a combat vehicle with a plastic hood. Once they went somewhere, it stalled, they barely dug it out. These vehicles are standing, no one wants to drive them, a death capsule," said that driver on August 5.

Also in the first half of August, a video interview of political blogger Yuri Romanenko, close to Zelensky's Office, with sniper Konstantin Proshinsky, who is fighting near Bakhmut, appeared. It received a resonance, including in the Western media, with the words that the army would not be against the "Korean scenario", as well as criticism of "tough mobilization" and a ban on leaving Ukraine for men, because "we will never win a war against Russia by numbers." But besides this, Proshinsky confirmed the Assembly's information about saving Western heavy equipment by infantry attacks in the style of Russian "meat assaults" and about refusers in the Ukrainian army. According to the military, among the recruits recently sent to Bakhmut, the youngest was 52 years old. Among the rest were men with tuberculosis, hepatitis and diabetes. They were mobilized, allowed to spend the night in the enlistment office, and the next morning were sent to the front. Many of such fighters after the first battle write a refusal to participate in hostilities. This is not desertion, therefore it does not entail criminal liability - the applicant should be transferred to a supply company, and soon such companies "will number thousands of people," the guest of the program said.

Meanwhile, the advance of the Russian Armed Forces in the territory from Kupyansk to Kremenna, apparently, is even less successful than the Ukrainian attempts of breaking through to Azov Coast and Bakhmut. The fighting spirit of the occupiers is so-so too. Our colleagues from ASTRA published on August 9 and 11 new evidence about a clandestine basement for Russian refusers in Zaytsevo, northeast of the Lugansk region. Mobilized of the "Storm" detachment (military unit 31134) complained to their families how they were being forced to go to certain death. Relatives of several

servicemen told ASTRA about this, submitting their complaints to the Investigative Committee, as well as an audio recording of a conversation with one of the mobilized. On the recording, the fighter says that they will have a fourth assault in a row, they are thrown into attacks without weapons and rest: "We are only 20 out of 100 left from "Storm". That's almost 20 minutes of combat.

We are being forced to go into the minefields. Why are we so driven there? Because the authorities have already reported that they have already taken everything. For those who went into denial, the commander personally shot through the legs." All 24 survivors were sent to the basement in Zaytsevo, contact with them disappeared. As the editor of the channel, Anastasia Chumakova, added to us, the inmates there are constantly different.

The Siberian opposition resource "People of Baikal" posted on July 25 about a mobilized resident of Irkutsk named Alexander, who served in the "Storm" unit of the 90th tank division. In early March 2023, he, along with three mates, left the position and went to Alexandrovsk, where they rented an apartment and drank alcohol. There they were detained and sent to the commandant's office. After that, Alexander was found dead near Chervonopopovka (also on the Lugansk-Kharkov borderland) with traces of a noose around his neck. "I realized that this is not the war that I imagined. This is extermination, we were prepared as a bait. Let them put me in prison, I won't die for this," his brother Sergey retells the words of the deceased. He is trying to clarify the circumstances of death through the military prosecutor's office and Investigative Committee.

And the timing for both states is running out. More or less warm

September, and that's all - again cold, mud and positional clashes. Judging by the sharp tightening of the Russian conscription legislation, a new wave of open mobilization is coming there. However, until the presidential elections in 2024, their authorities are trying to limit themselves by forcing the signing of contracts of the most bonded social strata - convicts, conscripts and Central Asian migrants. Along with those who refuse to fight, both on the Ukrainian and Russian side it is already easy to meet a front-line soldier who vaguely suspects that he is being used as expendable material, but is afraid to admit it to himself. They like to ask random civilians why they are not in the trenches and are not going to go there, but somehow they do not ask the owners of life anything about doing business with representatives of the enemy and corruption in army purchases. How many of them will come to anti-war positions is still a question. It is only certain that if everything continues as it is now, then someday both states simply will not have the strength for new offensives.

The front line may not even change much compared to the current one, but it may also move to the Ukraine borders of 1991. The defeats of one army from another are not capable of ending the war on their own - they only force the losing regime to more actively pour new tons of human chips into the funeral pyres

Recently, we have already told about the growing disappointment of Ukrainians in the prospects of overcoming poverty and corruption that feeds the desire to leave Ukraine at once after the war or even before.

In addition to this, you are welcome to take a look how at the enterprises in our Kharkov male workers are being replaced by women and pensioners like in Europe 1916 due to mobilisation.



## BRITAIN TODAY

### TROUBLE MAKERS AT WORK CONFERENCE

**A conference entitled Troublemakers at Work seemed like an obvious place for anarchist communist workplace militants to be. So, some of us went. This is what we found.**

The conference, which took place in Manchester on the last weekend in July, was called by a number of activist groups focused either on struggle in the workplace or helping to organise unions. The former included Strike Map and Notes from Below whilst amongst the latter, Organise Now!, which operates as a kind of clearing house for people looking for a union. Co-sponsoring the event were the great and the good of the British left, from Trotskyist groups through to trades councils and a number of individual union branches, mostly Unite and the National Education Union, via various campaigns and auxiliary labour movement organisations.

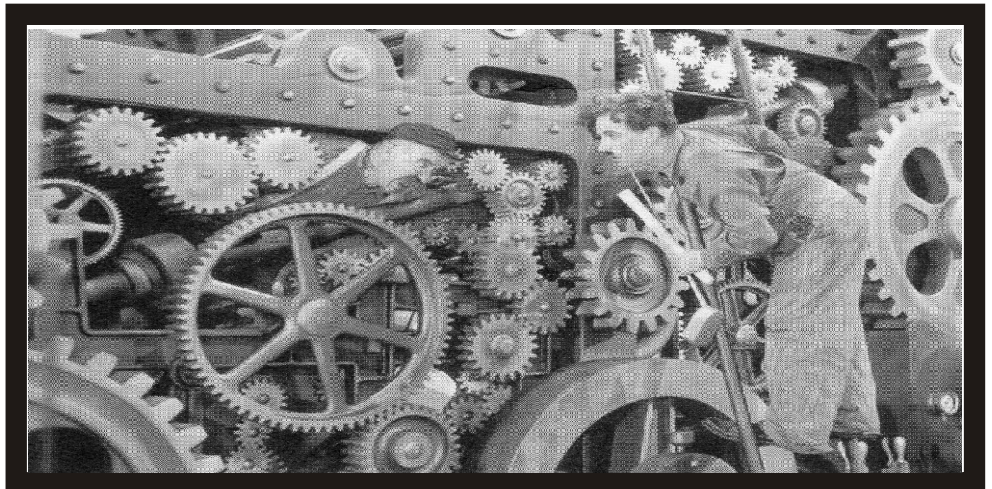
Organisers put the numbers at 180 including a small number joining by Zoom and the atmosphere was generally energised with a various Leninist tendencies being mostly on their best behaviour. Certainly, there was a sense that this was a coming together of grass roots union activists.. The Conference was organised into a series of sessions, the first being Building the Rank and File Today, which featured trade unionists who had recently been involved in industrial action speaking from the top table before the assembled were divided into sectors; health and social care; education; transport etc. to discuss the situation in their sector. ACG members took part in the education and health and social care 'breakouts'. In the former, UCU and NEU members talked about the strengths and weaknesses of their own struggles and the place of the rank and file in them. These sector meetings felt informal and fluid.

The Nurses' union, the RCN were the dominant presence in the health and social care group, grouped around the

NHS Workers Say No! campaign. Some mention was made of the autonomous action the Greek health workers' assemblies but the meeting ended without much of a conclusion. ACG members then attended the Fallen Out of Love with your Union? Session. Now, we've never been in love with our trade union, so we were just hoping to

become enculturated into the union way of operating, casting off their previous commitment to their members and integrated into the lower levels of the machine.

This highlighted a stark contradiction of many attendees at this event: an acknowledgement that TUs are often an obstacle to representing members'



meet other workers who are angry or disillusioned with their unions and might want to think about alternatives. What we heard from the main speaker was a call for a return to the tactic of the mid-1920s British Communist Party – the National Minority Movement, which attempted to organise militant workers and officials for revolutionary class struggle and endorsed Industrial Unionism – one industry, one union. That the National Minority Movement was the brainchild of an increasingly Stalinised Communist Party and entirely unable/unwilling to challenge the TUC's (Trade Union Council – UK version of the ACTU) leadership of the 1926 General Strike...calling for All Power to the General Council i.e. the bureaucrats at the top of the unions, was not mentioned.

Credence was put in the vague notion of a 'Combine' to facilitate pressuring Full Time Officers. Exactly how a combine would be constituted and engage with the union proper was not explained. As much credence was given to electing "real" rank & file members to union positions – even though it was acknowledged that many "good" members becoming officials

interests but little in the way of an alternative as to how grassroots networks and/or groupings should react to this. Other aspects covered in the subsequent discussion was the role of Labour undermining unions in general and what is perceived as militancy in particular; the funding of Labour of by the TUs; Labour's lack of appetite to address 'Tory' anti-union laws. Again, much huffing but no puffing in the form of concrete suggestions to challenge any of this.

The general feeling of this session was that working within existing union structures was the only way to do things: "with the officials if they are on our side, and without them if they are not". This was actually the slogan of the pre-WWI syndicalist Miners' Next Step. Similarly, there was promotion of the idea that we must find a way to "use the bureaucracy". There was opposition to splits in the unions and breakaways (Trotskyists have always opposed alternative unions) and a belief that the trade unions must be "captured" by the rank and file – again, an approach that failed dismally when the Trotskyist movement was much, much stronger in the 70s and 80s.



### **We attended two of the Post Lunch Sessions.**

This session was addressed by a CWU activist and an eco-activist who is oriented towards class struggle and was involved in trying to link up industrial action with climate activism, with some success. In the mix were an assortment of older union activists, the proper old lefties who have been around since the 80s and whose rhetoric hasn't changed much and who seem to live in a lefty trade union bubble, younger middle class activist types and some very disgruntled working class rank and file union members. The activist types spoke a lot, in what was a very small room with multiple conversations ensuing. The disgruntled Unite members were criticising two things: the failure of the union to give any meaningful political training to members and also the narrow focus of most members on strike who don't see beyond the struggle for wages and wouldn't appreciate the 'intervention' of activists from other campaigns. They were also very realistic about the democracy in their union.

The discussion had actually started with the abject failure of Enough is Enough, the campaign launched by a number of trade unions, campaign groups and Labour MP that gained almost zero traction. There was also a strong anti-Labour Party vibe and nobody who spoke in this session seemed to have any belief that the Labour Party could be expected to do anything but continue the work of the Tories. Which was a positive.

Some people in the workshop complained that, in the recent strike wave, the unions had failed to meaningfully co-ordinate the industrial action across the various unions. Nobody was saying that the unions, being sectional organisations, were uninterested in co-ordinating action or that they were intentionally working against linking up the fights. There wasn't an explanation of why co-ordinations of the strikes hadn't happened. Overall, the conversations in the room were rather rambling and unfocused although there seemed to be some consensus that when the new Minimum Service

employment laws came into practice and the first workers were arrested for refusing to work, that the union movement would respond with a mass movement in the streets and the workplaces. This seems like wishful thinking as the likelihood of there being a union mobilisation seems very distant given the weakness of the rank and file and the likelihood that the union bosses will not want to go beyond 'legal challenges'. Whether a grassroots rank and file movement can be developed to lead such a mobilisation 'from below' remains a moot point.

In the parallel NHS Workers Say No session a number of questions were put to the group:

- 1. What are the Main Challenges to building a Rank & File network?**
- 2. How can a R&F Network be Built?**
- 3. How should R&F networks engage with the TUs?**

Health Trade Unions were identified as the main block to organising Rank and File workers – or indeed Rank and File workers organising themselves. The lack of accountability of officers and their negative engagement with branches and branch officers was repeatedly highlighted. Additionally, geography, partnership agreements and outsourcing were also identified as problematic to organising by fracturing/atomising the workforce. Whilst there was general agreement in accepting the limited means of pushing back against TUs or that workers have a stark choice between striking or accepting current working conditions: these notions were challenged and examples provided (e.g. working to rule/ contracted hours, etc., forming different unions as per IWGB, etc) which were well received by some.

The final, 'Plenary', session was interesting. In a sense it was more of the same except for the speaker from the RMT speaker, Clayton

Clive, a Branch Secretary. He began by saying that he had become less conservative as he got older, rather he had become increasingly anarchist. Subsequently, he recommended that we keep an eye on even the 'left' leaders, that the best leaders were "dead leaders" and that the working class had the capacity and must lead itself and not rely on leaders. This got some claps from the floor (ours included), but not many. And when the discussion on the floor opened, he was attacked at tedious length by a Workers Power Trotskyist. Other than this, the day ended with a certain, fuzzy, unfocused 'unity'. So, overall, what was there to take away from this gathering of would-be Troublemakers? Well, the gathering brought people together from the rank and file and the lowest ranks of the union movement (Branch level), many of whom had recently been involved in actual struggles, including the recent strike wave to share experiences, whilst few drew useful lessons. Amongst those attracted it included some militants from groups like Notes from Below (who were actually involved in the organisation of the event) and individual anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, Wobblies and the Angry Workers -whose own report of proceedings is worth reading [www.angryworkers.org/2023/08/08/notes-from-the-troublemakers-conference-in-the-uk-the-problem-with-the-rank-and-file/](http://www.angryworkers.org/2023/08/08/notes-from-the-troublemakers-conference-in-the-uk-the-problem-with-the-rank-and-file/)

It was, generally, conducted in an open and non-sectarian manner. The mood of the conference was that current TUs and Labour in particular cannot be trusted to support R&F members and there was an expressed view that this must change. However, there was little analysis, beyond the usual leftist mantra that the trade unions played a contradictory role, with some of the speakers defending the standard Trotskyist analysis of the

trade unions: as organisations ripe to be transformed from below, through activism, into authentic workers' organisations/"fighting unions". This didn't come as a surprise; this current dominates the left. There was some bemoaning of the demise of the influence of Trades Councils. Our own experience is that Trades Councils are often talking shops for low level trade union officials and have no real relationship with rank and file workers.

It mostly reflected a sort of division between the older Leninists who have been in the trade unions for decades and younger activists who are perhaps a little more critical of the unions and who favour building broad alliances with social movements (particularly the eco movement) and want to support direct action. They seemed to be a minority and there was a sense that the dominant voice in the hall was a more traditional one, even if this perspective was not universally shared.

It was notable that the majority of those present worked in unionised workplaces and industries: generally, Education, Healthcare, Transport, and Manufacturing. There were some new initiatives such as the Amazon workers in Coventry, the Pan African Workers Association, and the Migrant

Agricultural Workers initiative. But they seemed to be the exception and there wasn't a sense of the syndicalist/industrial unionist movement being present—as unions the likes of the Industrial Workers of the World or the United Voices of the World were not involved. Nor was there even much greenfield organising or much discussion of the fact that outside the sectors represented (and even within some of them such as social care and hospitalities) unions barely exist. Nor was there any indication of what means would be employed to change the status quo beyond keep organising at grassroots level and electing more Rank and File candidates: it seemed naïve to believe that TUs will not attempt to hijack these movements or use their power—in either case—to neutralise them.

Likewise, whilst there was a broad realisation that the strike wave of the last year was receding and that significant victories were few and far between, there wasn't much in the way of discussion of a way out of the impasse, of how the struggles could be extended and generalised, or of just what will be required for workers to start to manage their own struggles. Perhaps those conversations were for a future time?

What is clear is that there is a need for workers to come together, outside the trade union structures, and to start to build struggle organisations of the base and that, in part, conferences like this, for all their limitations, may be part of what brings those workers together.

*Thanks to ACG*

## GREECE

Dear RW

6/4/23 We are anarchist comrades in solidarity with the Revolutionary Struggle and we are creating this campaign of financial support for the political prisoners members of the Lutte Revolutionnaire Pola Roupia and Nikos Maziotis and their family in order to support them in the serious problems they have to solve (serious health problems, financial difficulties, etc). This is the link of Financial support (firefund): Fundraising for P. Roupia, N. Maziotis -members of the Revolutionary Struggle- and their family. Stay strong, good racing. Comradely  
Solidarity-revolution@riseup.net:  
Halo comrades for another time.  
Please look at the following link:  
<https://www.firefund.net/eamaziotisroupia>

## Debate on the N.S.W. B.L.F. & Syndicalist Industrial Strategy

### When Construction Workers Put Their Foot Down: The Story of the NSW Builders Labourers Federation By Daniel Rashid

I, like a few other Australian anarchists, was pleased to discover a small report on the green bans, published on the website of the Union Communiste Libertaire. The movement around the green bans is arguably the most significant original contribution the working class in Australia has made to the global workers' movement, and it is fantastic

to see people in other countries take an interest in it. However, the UCL's article was only quite brief, and it naturally leaves out a few important details. It is for this reason that I've written this article, in the hope that it will increase awareness of the struggles of the New South Wales branch of the Builders Labourers Federation (NSW BLF). These were not simply "ecological" or "conservationist" struggles, but a very real manifestation of the libertarian, militant tendency that exists within all workers' struggles.

### Political changes: setting the scene for the BLF

The position to the left of the Labor Party in NSW was dominated by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), which emerged in the 1920s out of the ashes of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In the 1930s, the CPA began to win official positions in a number of unions, including the dockworkers union and the miners union. The CPA's industrial power peaked in the 1940s, though it would decline in the aftermath of a



government-broken coal miners strike in 1949. However, they maintained a significant influence in the decades to come. The CPA and all its splits, which never had any electoral successes like those of the French or Italian communist parties, placed immense strategic importance on the union movement.

### Fighting for control

In the 1940s and 50s, conditions for labourers in the construction industry were bad: workers were underpaid, employment was temporary, work was dangerous, and the facilities on-site like bathrooms and break rooms were bad at best, non-existent at worst.

The CPA organised opposition to the leadership by creating a rank-and-file group. The group was led by party members like Joe Ferguson, but it also included supporters of the ALP left-wing and politically unaligned workers. They published and distributed a monthly newsletter called "The Hoist", discussing the bad pay and bad conditions, encouraging more militant actions, and supporting joint actions between BWIU tradesmen and BLF labourers. Distributing the newsletter also gave them an opportunity to come into contact with labourers and tradesmen across the city.

After a number of years of patient work, the rank-and-file was able to get into a position where they could seriously challenge the leadership. In 1958, a rank-and-file ticket for the branch elections was organised with the former Thomas-aligned figure "Banjo" Patterson. It won, and the NSW BLF now had the space to publicly begin a number of militant campaigns. They were able to link together with members of the BWIU and other trades unions to carry out joint struggle. After a corrupt election in 1958 that saw the right wing re-elected for three years, the CPA men were able to decisively win the 1961 election on a joint ticket with left-wing ALP members, taking advantage of splits among the right-wing.

Within a short period they were able to increase participation in the monthly branch meetings and launch a number of militant actions. Around the same time, the federal leadership of the union

was taken over by Norm Gallagher, a CPA member. The federal office was based in Melbourne, Victoria, where the state BLF branch there was led by another CPA man, Paddy Malone.

In 1968, CPA member Jack Munday was elected secretary. He formed a team around himself with other CPA members like Joe Owens, and Labor members like Bob Pringle and Mick McNamara. It would be under the influence of these men that the builders labourers of NSW would enter their most decisive period in the 1960s and 70s.

### A dynamic workforce

The struggles for better pay and conditions launched by builders labourers in the 60s and early 70s resulted in a radical transformation of this section of the working class. No longer were labourers at the bottom of the scrapheap. They were now being paid wages that were occasionally in excess of the wages of tradesmen. Whereas once builders labourers felt



ashamed of their job, they now walked around with their heads held high: they were no longer "just a labourer", they were now "a bloody BL"!

### Militant methods

The militancy of builders labourers in this period was facilitated by the basically federalist structure of the union at the time. Leadership positions were rotated regularly, paid staff received the equivalent of an average builders labourers' wage, all bans were to be decided on by mass meetings of union members, and control of strikes was given to member-run strike committees.

The builders labourers employed bold

strategies to achieve their aims and threaten employers into submission. For instance, if a concrete pour is interrupted, left unfinished or set improperly, then it has to be ripped up and it all has to start again. If bosses did not give in to their demands, builders labourers would simply walk off the site mid-pour. The mere threat of a disrupted concrete pour would force employers to the bargaining table before construction began.

Other means of sabotage employed by the labourers include the organising of vigilante squads to destroy work carried out by scabs, and the occasional smashing of a time-keeper's clock. Though these methods would scare many unionists, like the tradesmen in the BWIU, they were undoubtedly successful. In the late 60s, the NSW BLF had around 4000 members. By 1973, that number had sky rocketed to 11 000, influenced by the building boom, but also as a result of the NSW

BLF's effectiveness and down-to-earth structure. The practice of sabotage itself led to the development of the labourers' fighting skills: in order to coordinate their activities, the vigilantes learned to use switchboards, typewriters and maps.

The officials had high standards of their organisers, who were appointed at branch meetings. In 1970 it became policy for organisers to be appointed temporarily; after they finished their term, they went back to their tools and resumed labouring work. All officials, after a maximum of six years, were to step down and return to work. In a decision controversial even among other NSW BLF activists, secretary

Jack Munday himself declined to seek re-election in 1973, returning to work as a labourer on the site of St. Vincent's Hospital whilst also pursuing speaking arrangements.

The NSW BLF was inclined to take snap action in response to grievances, rather than engage in a drawn out process of negotiation and reflection. Labourers would often take action without even consulting the union first, knowing they would be unconditionally backed up. The rebelliousness of the labourers was fostered by the structure and the practices of their union. The officials even explicitly advocated the abolition of Australia's mandatory arbitration system, preferring proper collective bargaining led by the unions; they regularly expressed their willingness to break contracts that restricted their ability to strike.

Their militant strikes were the most bold in the country at the time. By 1971, NSW BLF members had secured incredible pay rises: on many sites, skilled labourers like dogmen were earning 99% of a tradesman's wage, and "unskilled" labourers like jack-hammerers were earning 88.5%. By comparison, labourers in the UK in the same period were earning around 77% of a tradesman's wage. The NSW BLF journal never hesitated to publicise the enormous growth of their employers profits; they were always demanding more.

### Green bans by a red union

The first formal environmental ban by the NSW BLF came in 1962 when a committee of residents in North Sydney requested the BLF stop the demolition of houses in order to build an express way. The first of the famous green bans, however, was the ban on the development of Kelly's Bush. Kelly's Bush was a 5-hectare piece of public, native parkland located by the water, near to the city in the middle class suburb of Hunters Hill. It was taken over by the property developer A.V. Jennings, who wished to build medium and high density apartments on the land.

This was strenuously opposed by a committee of local housewives, who formed together in 1970 as the

"Battlers for Kelly's Bush". They began a letter-writing campaign, publicising the native flora and fauna in the parkland, and identifying a number of native Indigenous carvings. Their activism was largely ineffectual in the face of the state government's determined support of A.V. Jennings. Out of desperation the Battlers approached the BLF, who gave their support after mass meetings of local residents demonstrated that the cause was locally popular. In June 1971, a "black ban" (which would later be renamed as a green ban) was placed on Kelly's Bush, promising that no work would be done there.

Inspired by the Kelly's Bush Battlers, dozens of residents' committees would spring up in the coming years, aiming to protect heritage buildings and stop unwanted high-rise developments in their local areas. A number of these successfully approached the NSW BLF to place bans on certain local developments. It became a regular occurrence: concerned residents would approach the BLF regarding an unwanted development in their area, or a heritage building at risk. BLF officials like Jack Munday would invite local residents to attend a meeting of labourers, who would then vote themselves about whether to place a ban or not. Bans were never imposed on the labourers; they had to freely agree to it.

### Examples of NSW BLF actions

The bans were never simply about the environment, or about old buildings. The NSW BLF facilitated the involvement of builders labourers in a large number of causes. They include: A workers' control work-in even took place during the construction of the famous Sydney Opera House. Waging a non-stop campaign for health and safety, demanding the hiring of safety officers from the union, the abolition of dangerous "hook-riding" practices expected of dogmen, the fitting of noise and dust control devices on machinery and power tools, the provision of full accident pay by the employers, as well as the provision of proper amenities like bathrooms and showers on-site. Backing up members who resisted

conscription and supporting campaigns against Australia's joint war with the United States against Vietnam.

### The counter-offensive

By 1973, thirty-six black bans in Sydney were holding up an incredible \$3bn worth of property developments. Adjusted for inflation, that figure amounts to approximately €17bn. A recession was under way that ended the construction boom. It was becoming harder and harder for builders labourers to fight, and the employers knew it. Employers took the opportunity to attack workers, sacking thousands. A concerted offensive by the ruling class was under way to smash the NSW BLF: police harassed unionists and allied residents; goons in the pay of property developers assaulted workers and activists, resulting in the still-unsolved killing of conservationist Juanita Nielsen; the media ran non-stop attack pieces smearing the BLF; the corrupt Askin state government went on the offensive and claimed that the BLF needed to be brought to heel, or else chaos would reign in the streets.

In addition, the NSW BLF – which once had a decent relationship with the tradesmen of the BWIU – was now isolated within the union movement. The leadership of the BWIU under Pat Clancy had left the CPA to join the USSR-loyal SPA, and positioned themselves in opposition to the green ban movement generally. They were also strongly opposed to the NSW BLF's federalist organisational practices: whereas the NSW BLF held meetings constantly, the centralised BWIU once went fourteen years without a single mass meeting.

The only other union to show consistent solidarity with the NSW BLF and the green bans was the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association of Australasia (FEDFA), which was not only also led by similarly-militant CPA members, but also represented crane drivers. Crane drivers worked closely with BLF riggers and dog men in day-to-day work and engaged in constant united struggle with them.



### Power flows from the barrel of a gun

The NSW BLF was isolated even within their own union federation. The BLF on the federal level was controlled by Norm Gallagher, who had split from the CPA together with Paddy Malone to join the breakaway Maoist CPA ML. The Maoists also controlled the Victorian branch, which was the other strong BLF union. They were opposed to the green ban movement. Though the Victorian BLF implemented bans of their own, they were much tamer than the bans of the NSW BLF, and they never cohered into a fully-fledged movement like the green bans.

In 1973, Jack Munday adhered to the term-limit tradition and stepped down as secretary of the NSW branch. The election held to decide his replacement proved the Maoists' relative unpopularity in Sydney: the Maoist candidate lost to the Munday ally Joe Owens by a margin of two-to-one. The employers managed to use the courts to have the BLF de-registered on the federal level in response to the NSW BLF's frequently illegal industrial actions. This was the last straw for Gallagher. Not only had the actions of the NSW branch led to repercussions for the entire BLF, but de-registration also threatened his campaign to gain a seat on the executive of the Australian Council of Trades Unions (ACTU), the national Australian union peak body.

In 1974, with backing from employers groups, Gallagher launched his federal intervention into the NSW branch. All elected NSW officials were replaced with his unelected loyalists. From then on, there were two BLFs in NSW: the actual NSW BLF, and the Gallagher-aligned branch of the federal BLF. NSW BLF loyalists were intimidated into submission by Gallagher's gun thugs, flown in from interstate and put up in five-star hotels. It is a widespread belief among veterans of that era that some loyalists were even murdered, their deaths arranged to appear like workplace accidents.

#### Aftermath

With Gallagher now at the head of the BLF in NSW, employers found themselves in a much more comfortable position. The green bans were gradually removed by Gallagher over the heads of the members, despite

his own rhetorical commitment to them. Within a few years, the union was re-registered. Former officials were expelled, and it took years of court cases for them to win readmission. The majority were blacklisted and could never find regular construction work again.

The union bureaucrats of today, who would happily crush any group of workers that wanted to behave like the members of the NSW BLF, now refer to the green bans as a model of "socially engaged unionism". The union movement, which has been in a continuous decline ever since the union bureaucrats signed their organisations' death certificates via the Accords, now makes an effort to mobilise "the community" (students, the unemployed, middle-class citizens, left activists, etc) to back the few strikes that are carried out. As the NSW BLF themselves knew, a single crane driver refusing to leave the cabin of his crane in protest has more impact in an industrial dispute than a solidarity rally of a thousand students.

### One anarchist's reflections

The struggles of the BLF proved practically how wrong the Leninists are when they suggest that workers in unions can only ever develop "trade union consciousness", never advanced socialist consciousness. The "trade union consciousness" of these workers went far and beyond the established socialist and communist groups. The labourers linked their demands for better pay and conditions with concern for the effects of capitalism on the working class as a whole. The methods they used to achieve their goals, like industrial sabotage, were perfect embodiments of the spirit of direct action.

One may well notice the absence of anarchists in this story so far, despite the presence of a union that embodies anarchist principles in a significant way. The unfortunate truth is that anarchists in Australia have historically been a marginal force. Anarchists had some influence in the Industrial Workers of the World of the early 20th century, but this influence had largely faded away by the time the Second World War rolled around. The

surviving anarchist scene in Australia consisted largely of middle-class bohemians from the intellectual "Sydney Push", and a number of migrant working-class revolutionaries isolated from other workers on account of their beliefs and language.

Some anarchists were able to participate in the green ban struggles. The 1973 pro-green ban ticket in the BLF elections included one anarchist, alongside CPA, ALP and unaligned members. Some women associated with the union, like Pat Fiske, the director of the *Rocking the Foundations* documentary, had anarchist sympathies, and it was known that men like Munday and Owens had been exposed to anarchist and IWW ideas. However, libertarians remained on the margins: the process of cohering together as a greater force was slow in Australia. Even today, there is no Australia-wide anarchist federation. There was an attempt to set up such a federation in the 70s, but it splintered into nothing as a result of personal and ideological disputes.

I don't care much for "what ifs", but my strongest feeling after writing this article is that things may have been different had there been greater number of organised anarchists active in the workers' movement of the time. The latent libertarianism that had been brought to the surface in the course of these struggles could have been identified explicitly; there could have been a greater push for radicalisation outside the control of the Marxist parties; there could have been different tactics pursued when the union was fighting its defensive actions against the employers and union bureaucrats. Perhaps the dual union idea that unnerved the CPA men could have been pursued. Perhaps the union itself could have made explicit what was already implicit in their practice, and endorsed a socialist objective. Could the anarchists have helped the union secure the independent perspective it needed, away from the political sects, as people like Pelloutier, Broutchoux and Pouget did in the French movement so many years ago?

Regardless of "what ifs", I am confident that there is no excuse for a lack of anarchist participation in the labour movement. It is an opportunity

that cannot be wasted. The BLF only became the militant entity that it was as the result of long, patient work by committed militants, who – thanks to solidarity from fellow communists – were able to brave violence, intimidation and humiliation to facilitate some of the most impressive struggles ever seen in this country. It is exactly this kind of work that we should be doing. We should be forming organisations in workplaces. We should be writing workers' newsletters. We should be trying to bridge the divides between workplaces, places of residence, trades, industries and places of origin. We should be conducting workers' inquiries, gathering our knowledge and feeding it back to our fellow workers. We should be doing all this and more.

This is not to say that militancy is simply an issue of willpower. It would be stupid to think that the Green Bans and the NSW BLF could have survived if all the CPA men were replaced by anarchists. Munday, Owens and Pringle all made mistakes; we would've too. That's not it either: the builders labourers were the victim of the same worldwide counter-attack that occurred in response to the hot period of the 60s and 70s; there's no reason to believe that we possess some unique property as anarchists that would have allowed us to stop that tide. Rather, our activity is about identifying struggle as it occurs already within the working class, and trying to push it forward: trying to let the struggles develop as fully as possible, without being diverted or snuffed out by bureaucrats, Leninists, bosses, conservatives, and all the other people that laugh when they think about a revolution. Intervention in workplace struggles isn't a question of gaining a cult following, winning elections or capturing official positions, but about facilitating the working class' self-organisation, their own process of attaining self-knowledge.

The unions that existed in the 1950s, 60s and 70s are not the unions that exist now. I cannot speak for France, but in Australia, whatever existed of union federalism back then has since been thoroughly destroyed. Even when the BLF was under the leadership of a corrupt right-wing thug like Fred

Thomas, it still had regular elections every three years and elected its organisers. This is strikingly different from today's unions. Meetings occur rarely. Strikes are managed by officials, who refuse to endorse any wildcat actions. Organisers are appointed by the officers, who often select them based on political allegiance, not ability. Many of them have never worked in the industries they intend to organise. The organisers and officers themselves treat their union activity as a stepping-stone to a career in the Labor Party.

Organisational structure is not "neutral". To bastardise Marx, we cannot simply lay hold of the centralised union machinery and wield it for our own purposes. If the aim of our activity is to secure official positions and run the organisation for our own purposes, as countless left-wing factions aim to do, then we will inevitably become the same sorts of bureaucrats we decry. Our involvement in the unions puts change in structure and increased engagement from union members front and centre.

Exactly how we conduct ourselves to achieve our goals is an open question, depending on the many unique circumstances we find ourselves in. Whether we can even achieve these goals without forming new, separate unions is another question altogether. Whether we even need unions at all is another! My point is not to outline some one-size-fits-all strategy; it's that we must get ourselves into the position where we need to ask these questions out of practical necessity. They cannot remain hypothetical. We owe it to every rebel worker that has come before us, and to every rebel worker that will come in the future. Edited. Thanks to AWW & Libcom

#### REPLY:

asn

The author lacks the appropriate industrial experience and shows a poor level of research to adequately discuss many of the complex issues raised in the above article. Some points: 1. The article refers to the new militant group supported and "created" by the CPA getting elected to important positions in the BLF in the 1960's. How

did that really happen? We don't really know. After all even those days there was plenty of ballot rigging involving the Rightwing ALP machine aligned union officials and the Deep State e.g. ASIO and the CPA too most notoriously in the FIA (Federated Iron Workers Union). In those rose tinted days the union officials ran the elections. Since 1984 as an "unofficial" part of the ALP-ACTU Accord the Hawke Govt. introduced the Australian Electoral Commission to run elections. Allegedly it has become involved in ballot rigging (1). So its just not going to happen that some anarchist/syndicalist/revolutionary style grouping will ever get 'so called' elected to a strategically important union as occurred with the group associated with the CPA in the BLF. It would seriously threaten the corporate set up and political establishment embracing the Liberals/ALP/Greens and won't be allowed by the ALP Godfathers, Deep State, Corporate and Govt. bosses. Probably the only appropriate strategy would be the need to facilitate a strike wave movement spearheaded by a strategic sector - which could lead to major syndicalist oriented breakaways from the corporate unions.

2. Certainly anarcho-syndicalists in the 60's and early 70's could have helped with the spread of the "unconscious" syndicalist movement in the NSW BLF, the Building industry generally in NSW and other sectors e.g. helping with setting up of combined unions site committees (work place delegate committees) outside the main sites via launching an 'underground' building industry paper with the few grass roots conscious anarcho-syndicalist militants and perhaps with the support of the Munday/Owens group particularly as the 'Hoist' paper of the CPA aligned rank and file group ceased publication when the rank and file group got elected in the 1960's. The movement in the BLF failed to expand throughout the NSW building industry and into other sectors and so was isolated leading to defeat. However in those days there was little if any literature around about anarcho-syndicalism and the appropriate

*See Page 20*



## NEWS & NOTES

TV Programs such as RPA have projected a glossy and rose tinted view of NSW Health. In this edition of RW will look behind the scenes and expose a grim story of bullying and corruption. (See article page 2.)

In the NSW Railways wheels are moving on a new push to introduce Driver Only Operation via new trains secretly designed for this purpose as the Trojan Horse to cut costs and open the doors to privatisation. In early December of last year, the ASN assisted militants to defeat a DOO push, at this time associated with the fake breakthrough in the Rail EBA 2022 (Enterprise Bargain Agreement Negotiations) campaign. However the NSW Govt. and the union hierarchy are not giving up on their rail privatisation agenda. (See article page 3.)

In Sydney Buses the bogus 'Two Tier' campaign of the RTBU and TWU has been finalised resulting in massive wage cuts.. Due to below soaring inflation wage rises being delivered. (See article page 6.).

Coming up on Sat. 18/11/23 at the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre 11-13 Darley St. Sth Newtown just off King St. is a conference we have organised. It involves a look at grass roots unionism and the workers' control movement of the 1970's and drawing lessons from the experience. Together with perspectives for today for building mass syndicalist industrial unionism and tackling the challenge of the Neo Liberal push and war drive. (See page 6.)

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

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## 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.

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

**www.rebelworker.org**

### Continued From Page 18

strategy for Australia. It was prohibitively expensive in those days to acquire new publishing/printing infrastructure to put out literature/journals. The few anarcho-syndicalists who eventually acquired printing equipment in the late 70's or early 80's could only afford a 2nd hand old clapped out press and not suitable for much regular decent printing. Also there was no centre for this infrastructure to be based - there had been attempts to set up an anarchist centre with a few aligned with anarcho-syndicalism since the 1950's but were hijacked by bourgeois subcultures e.g. the Sydney Libertarians/Push in the 1950's and then an LSD hippy subculture associated with a certain Bill Dwyer in 1968 and closed down and lost. In 2013 there was the hijacking of the Jura Books building in Sydney by a cult heavily informed by the Stalinist legacy associated with Sid Parrisi and for some years a nursery for sects. Another problem was the still predominance of the CPA on the industrial front in the late 60's and 1970's which went through a "left turn" spouting support for workers control etc and later made a sharp rightward shift from the late 1970's leading to the ACTU-ALP Accord which they helped get going. The CPA in those days were much better set up on a massive scale with infrastructure, the weekly Tribune, etc than the very few anarcho-syndicalists around and their puny set up. (2)

3. Also a problem in those days of the 1970's was militant workers drawn into the so called anarchist syndicalist milieu in Sydney were often affected by drugs such as LSD (promoted clandestinely by the CIA as part of Operation Chaos) and quite mixed up mentally in some cases.

4. Also since 1990 there has been a regular anarcho-syndicalist transport industry paper published Sparks [www.sparksworld.org](http://www.sparksworld.org) focusing on NSW and Victoria. It has played an important role in innumerable workers struggles assisting grass roots militants and has helped defeat various privatisation pushes in the railways and played an important role in out manoeuvring the union bosses leading to the recent very bureaucratically run strike wave in NSW. It doesn't currently use the a-s label due to this label alienating many workers as they confuse it with leftist/Trot papers. According to feedback from contacts. It doesn't fit into the author's world of fantasy of a so called "anarchist federation" activity aping the Trot groups ways and mad sect building informed by the Stalinist legacy confused with anarchist and revolutionary activity. So I would assume it is not mentioned.

5. An important back drop to the militant and advanced actions by the NSW BL's in the late 1960's and early 1970's which the author fails to discuss is the much less blacklisting by employers in this period due to widespread BL militancy. (In contrast to other industries, black listing of militants in building and construction is

a much more significant obstacle to militant grass roots activity with the coming and going of sites.) Following the defeat of the Munday/Owens group – black listing of militants by employers and the corrupt union bosses of the Gallagher Federal/NSW BLF regime and then the CFMMEU has become rife. Causing militant networks to lie very low and the industry to be hard hit by worsening OH&S issues such as dangerous dust exposure, accidents, massive amounts of shoddy work and dangerous cladding. Critical to tackling this black listing and a large syndicalist union breakaway from the CFMMEU would be the raised morale of militants and workers in the context of a strike wave movement across industries and the industrial solidarity and direct action of syndicalist transport workers focusing at busy periods. Assisting syndicalist break away union organising drives.

#### Notes:

1. See *RW Vol.36 No.2(231) Aug-Sept 2018 "RTBU Elections 2018 Were they rigged?" and Review of "Stuff The Accord! Pay Up! Worker Resistance to the ALP-ACTU Accord" by Liz Ross in RW Vol.39 No.1 (228) May-June 2021 on [www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org) and See Paul True's book on the rank and file movement in the BLF "Rolling the R i g h t "*
2. See Discussion: "New Org in Sydney" in [Libcom.org](http://Libcom.org) and A-infos Rebel Worker Obituary for Jack Grancharoff via google search.