

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia

Vol.39 No.2 (229) Nov.-Dec. 2021

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

**Rail, Tram, Bus,
Truckies & others:
Strike when the Iron is
hot! Not in the Bosses'
down time in Covid &
Holidays! Time to step
up the 'Real' Demands!**

Strike threat over bus drivers

'Essential part of life'

ERIN LYONS

NSW bus drivers have pledged to take strike action if necessary to improve their conditions.

Workers say they're driving while fatigued and want hours cut and longer breaks between shifts.



Telegraph 22/5/21: TWU talk of strike in privatised STA likely during the bosses' down time' in 2022 such as in January.

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REBEL WORKER

P.O. Box 92

BROADWAY 2007 NSW

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The good, the bad and NSW Health

By Clark Kent

As the COVID-19 pandemic Rolls on and NSW calls for a State of emergency, its health department has shown no Second Solutions to their problems with the State's population now labeled as Prisoners of society. Inside the chaos are the front line workers, who have been held ransom by their managers, told lies by their bureaucrats and even bullied and harassed by their co-workers. An imposter stands at the helm. In a conference on the 7th August 2021, after 319 cases and 5 deaths, they can be seen flapping documents around, calling the deceased 'Unfortunates', belittling their crew and failing to follow their own medical advice, stating that they would often walk around the block talking to people; this is no HMS Victory...

On one side, there has been a strong sense of discord and lack of clarity with the vaccination roll out. Starting back in February of 2021, the staff in NSW health were told and assured that the

vaccination was not mandatory. After a month this changed to, only those working in direct contact with Covid-19 patients. As July came by, the directive was changed again, all those working in Intensive Care Units as well as Emergency needed to be vaccinated. As of now, after 8 months of the vaccine being readily available, it is now mandatory for all NSW Health employees to be vaccinated. Brilliant! Let's fight the Virus! But hang on doesn't it take over a month to get fully vaccinated? So what happened to all those workers who now, by the flick of the skipper's fingers, are suddenly ineligible to work? Well, in one particular hospital, they were removed from their positions, told they weren't allowed to work there until they were vaccinated and within a few hours, all the departments in the hospital were left short staffed. Employees who got themselves vaccinated early in the year were now with double the workload, and the ones who didn't were left out of work. Seems fair.

A wise one would think, perhaps it could have been made mandatory from the start then, when there were zero cases, with a realistic cut-off date giving enough time for the workers to be vaccinated by so as to avoid this problem. But wisdom doesn't float through the ears of the leaders of NSW health. Nor does empathy and fairness. They are losing a battle against a virus and in the process have turned on their

own while keeping their faces clean for the cameras".

At the end of July, a prominent supplier of medical equipment to a hospital had found that one of their employees at their warehouse had become positive with Covid-19. As they were now a close contact, the warehouse had to close. The result of this meant that the hospital was now without their major supplier, and within a day the shortages were felt. Wards were suddenly having to fend for themselves, responsibility fell on the store people as the wards were looking for urgent supplies elsewhere; other hospitals. Workers on less than 60k a year were now going above and beyond to support the hospital, while the executives mulled over what to do for four days. According to the stores, "Communication from above was poor; we weren't told what was happening, what to do or when we would next be receiving supplies". When the stock finally did start arriving again, many of the employees in the stores were working 7 days straight to play catch-up, to refill the hospital with life-saving equipment. Their thanks? On one of those days, an executive came down, and started yelling at them.

Hypocrisy and double standards is a common theme in hospitals. With an image of looking after society, one would be fair to assume that the staff would be looked after too. The state is facing its greatest threat with cases on

ASN APPEAL

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the rise, hospitalisations increasing and deaths on the verge of becoming more frequent, all due to a killer virus that is highly transmissible” pretty frightening. So when a staff member, visitor or patient comes in and unknowingly turns out to be positive, what is the procedure for those who have been in contact with them?

According to the Health NSW Government website “If you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19 you must self-isolate from other people for 14 days since you were exposed”.

However it would appear they have a different message for their staff. One that says “You are ours to use at our will”.

Whenever there has been a Covid-19

incident or breach at a hospital or clinic, any of the staff who had been a close contact were told from management to get tested but told they must continue working afterwards... This was followed by an incessant bullying and scrutinising of the staff should they start to ask about even feeling the need to isolate.

It's a sad sight when NSW health rears its big ugly head, power and friends and friends in power and family friends in power feed its appetite, and always it's the working class that suffer. And the ones that do actually want to do good and fight for what's right get pushed out after a couple months secondment the name of the game.

But to all the workers out there on the

front lines: The nurses, the surgeons, the doctors, the paramedics, the porters, the ward assistants, the ward clerks, the ward administrators, the linen services, the PPE stores, the environmental services, the storepersons, the biomedical engineers, the engineers, the food services, the morgue assistants, the lab assistants, the technicians, the cleaners, the vaccination workers, the Covid-19 Screeners, the security services, the support workers and the aged care carers.

These are the people who keep health in NSW afloat, not the greasy ladder-climbing, pencil pushers who like to put their name on it.

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

RAIL EBA CAMPAIGN

The most important news in the NSW Railways in recent months has been the RTBU's Rail Tram & Bus Union 'set up to fail' Sydney Trains and NSW Trains EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) campaign. The union hierarchy's claim for 3.5% pa wage rises would certainly not meet the rate of inflation and would involve cost saving in the organisations/trade off's of conditions for the rise above 2.5% pa. Associated with the NSW Labour Expenses Cap imposed by the NSW ALP Govt. back in 2008 and the RTBU officials 'legalistic' approach. Likely trade off's are increased flexibility for management in rostering involving removal of limits on weekend work, night shifts and minimum lengths of shifts. Another key demand of management is the introduction of Driver Only Operation (DOO) with the New Interurban Fleet (NIF). For many years management, the Govt. and the union hierarchy have conspired to introduce DOO. Most significant was the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) on DOO on the NIF way back in early 2017. It was only uncovered by militants back in 2020. A copy is on web site www.sparksworld.org As the

RTBU officials are too frightened to put it up on their web sites. The MOU would have over ridden EBA 2014. However the union bosses had cold feet due to raised expectations of drivers and backed off. Direct action involving a wildcat strike by interurban drivers in Nov. 2020 also compelled management and the union officials to back off with a renewed DOO/NIF push. The introduction of DOO on the new trains would open the door to sacking the guards later down the track after transfer to a customer

lock down, when 40% of rail staff were stood down and industrial action such as the 4 hour off peak rail strike on 28/9/21 would have minimal industrial impact. The lock down restrictions provided a pretext for the officials to not hold a mass meeting during the strike and head off any push by militants for serious action. A 'virtual picket' via zoom was held during the strike. The motion passed during the cyber meeting provided for no further plans for industrial action. Some steam stemming from grass roots



service type role and then 'facilitated' to metro trains. Opening the privatisation flood gates.

Outrageously the RTBU officials have conducted the EBA industrial campaign mostly during the COVID-

disgruntlement was released ineffectually in the bosses 'down time'. With the end of the lock down, its likely industrial action will be called off by the RTBU officials after the strike only affecting foreign made train

types so as to reduce the industrial impact on 20/10/21 to let off further steam. Intriguingly a major motivation for the strike apart from the EBA was stopping further rail privatisation. So the union officials can claim a fake victory assuming the Govt. makes the promise not to proceed with further rail privatisation. The union bosses will allow via okaying clauses in EBA documents for DOO to be introduced on the NIF and generalised on the false basis that it won't now lead to privatisation. However once fully generalised via the EBA 'facilitation clause' to metro trains, the Govt. can then welsh on its promise. Following the end of industrial action to release steam, the big sell out back room negotiations can proceed to finalisation. Why not develop a log of 'real' demands, grass roots organising committees and plans for direct action when the 'iron is hot'?

The Enterprise Bargaining charade! A blatant pretence and deception!

It is a genuine struggle to take this round of enterprise bargaining seriously and even more difficult for me to write seriously about this blatant charade. The only reason this farce is being played out is that everyone else is too panicked and worried about what will happen if they take an experimental drug (also known as a vaccine) and what will happen if they don't? Will they be sacked? Neither option looks good, and both overshadow the bargaining charade. What should be of concern to everyone is the fact that not only the RTBU but all unions appear willing to simply stand back and allow government to effectively sanction not only the sacking but banning of some workers from keeping and getting a job anywhere and by extension preventing people from earning a living and feeding their families. There is no democratic entity on this earth where this idea can stand. If this blatant state sanctioned segregation and discrimination is allowed to stand then we are no longer in any type of democracy know to this world, but we



have entered a medical dictatorship, a 'medical apartheid'. And if that be the case then certainly no enterprise bargaining or agreement will have any value or offer any protection to any worker or person against whom the dictator chooses to array the massive weaponry of the state. "Government, like fire, is a powerful servant but a fearful master".

For the sake of clarity, the definitions of: Apartheid - a policy or system of segregation or discrimination, Apparatchik - a full-time, professional functionary of the Soviet Union or the Soviet government apparatus. Charade - an absurd pretence intended to create a pleasant or respectable appearance and farce - a comic dramatic work using buffoonery and horseplay and typically including crude characterisation and ludicrously improbable situations. Without straying too far from the theme of this article, in many ways this round of so-called bargaining is simply an extension of the comical and condescending emails and messages workers are forced to endure on a weekly and monthly basis from overpaid politically correct appointees, clueless as to their true reason for being. They parrot empty platitudes and like to call themselves leaders! Yet we all know their scripts are written for them and their true purpose is to lull workers into a false sense of value and security while secretly contracts and memorandums of understanding will strip public assets from the public and destroy jobs for ever, through privatisation and automation. But don't worry these overpaid and glorified useful idiots are so proud of you, how you turn up to

work every day and face the challenges from the heart. If you believe any of that nonsense, you'll believe anything! And in the red corner we've got the unions, specifically the RTBU.

The State Secretary is of course an ALP apparatchik who has and always will put the agenda of the ALP ahead of his obligations to the RTBU membership. His primary concern being to get the ALP elected to government, at any cost, never mind what their policies may be. As many of you may know the ALP was created by the original union movement with the intent of enabling workers a voice and political representation. Over time the ALP became infiltrated by various vested interests not least of which are the Fabian socialists, who's emblem was until recently a wolf in sheep's clothing and the ALP effectively became an organisation that siphons money out of the union movement for its own agenda. The finer details of which will be covered in a future article. However, it is sufficient to say that it is a globalist agenda that aligns perhaps a little too well with the agenda of the elite and fits perfectly with the imagery of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

What is interesting here is that out of this globalist agenda comes the idea of 'super unions' and more interesting still is the very real possibility of a secret deal (in true ALP/Fabian socialist style) to amalgamate the RTBU with the TWU. This duality of purpose is nowhere more evident than in the bus privatisation. Outwardly the RTBU State Secretary makes a public show of standing 'in solidarity' with its membership by organising useless petitions while secretly working with

and facilitating the representation and the collecting of membership of private bus drivers/workers by the TWU. We wrote about this duality of purpose in a previous article entitled 'New Inter City Fleet (NIF) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a memorandum of betrayal'. In this article we revealed that the RTBU state secretary had secretly entered a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with management on the New Inter City Fleet (NIF), without the knowledge of most RTBU members. In brief we argued that the MOU is a memorandum of betrayal, a Trojan Horse designed to dismantle and weaken the Enterprise Agreement from within. And how relevant it is in the current enterprise bargaining charade, where management useful idiots have been given an agenda, by law firms specifically commissioned for the task, to dismantle critical sections of the enterprise agreement, like for example the attendance management procedure, by attempting to remove it entirely from the EA, just as they did with the MOU on the NIF back in 2017, with the complicit knowledge of the RTBU State Secretary. Back then it was done to set the precedent! Once the MOU was discovered and made public the RTBU State Secretary attempted to claim that there was no secret after all, and that the MOU was presented to members at various meetings, and they put out various attendance sheets that allegedly proved their case. But the only thing the attendance sheets proved was that at some point there were meetings about something or other but nothing specific. We said however, even if the RTBU leadership did show it to members, as they claim, wouldn't that be promoting a document that seeks to work against the best interest of union members? Wouldn't that be contrary to Objective 5(a) of the rules of the union? 5 OBJECTS (a): "to uphold the rights of combination of labour, to maximise the amount of labour employed within the rail, tram and bus industry and to improve, protect and foster the best interests of its members" And doesn't the MOU seek to violate the terms of the Agreement and enter into or

attempt to enter into an agreement contrary to the provisions of an applicable Agreement"? If the union leadership did in fact meet with management, in early 2017, to agree to present the MOU to members at various meetings and solicit their support for the MOU, as they claim their signed attendance sheets prove, then they are in violation of union rule 15 (x)? RULE 15 (x) "A member of the Union shall not: - violate or attempt to violate the terms of any applicable Industrial Award or Agreement or enter into or attempt to enter into any agreement with any employer or an employee thereof contrary to the provisions of an applicable Award or Agreement;" We also alleged the possibility that if there was one MOU very likely there were and are more and that leads us back to the current Enterprise Bargaining charade! A blatant pretence and deception! As explained previously the ALP and the elite agenda are basically aligned and privatisation and automation is baked into the cake. The only thing that remains is to slowly delude workers into the false belief that this can be changed by the worker accepting virtually zero pay increases (while the useful idiots and politicians get 5% to 9%), because apparently there is no money while simultaneously billions are being spent and lost shutting down workers livelihoods. And of course, the old chestnut that workers must give up some or all workplace rights to be competitive. Competitive with who? You may ask. And this is an obvious deception as the transport network was set up and is being run as a public sector 'SERVICE'. The idea that it's a business is a false narrative designed to create the impression that it must be run like a business i.e., that it must make a profit and most important of all to give credibility to the idea that public sector employees who are in management positions have 'management prerogative'. This is of course another deception, because public sector management only have 'delegated authority' but like the business narrative it is designed to give credibility to the idea that management are not bound by law or the enterprise agreement i.e. they can

act outside their delegated authority and not only seek to undermine and destroy lawful workplace rights and indeed safety standards but can engage expensive law firms to develop strategies that push the boundaries of legality and sometimes cross those boundaries to attack workers, workplace rights and conditions. As a side note I would argue (and the RTBU State Secretary should also, if he were serious) that these expensive law firms were in fact acting as bargaining agents for a fee and in terms of the enterprise bargaining process that may contravene the Fair Work Act. But of course, the RTBU State Secretary won't even consider that, he's too busy parroting the narrative (like his comrades in management) that the public sector 'SERVICE' is actually a business and that public sector management have 'management prerogative'. Is it any wonder workers have made no gain and only LOST pay and conditions under his dubious leadership?

The Enterprise Bargaining charade! A blatant pretence and deception!

On the one side we have a collection of useful idiots spoon-fed a narrative developed by expensive lawyers, from which they have no authority to deviate and on the other a collective ideology driven recently graduated inexperienced lawyers who have nothing in common with the average worker they claim to represent, nor do they understand the workplace. But as we have argued the whole thing is a charade designed to lull the worker into semi-consciousness so that they will not realise that their fate is already sealed with a secret MOU or two.

By A Concerned NSW Rail Worker

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

Upcoming Fake TWU EBA Industrial Campaign in Privatised STA!

Some of the most important 'behind the scenes' news in the buses is the TWU's industrial campaign over an EBA for drivers in the privatised STA likely also in the bosses 'down time' during the holiday period in early 2022, most likely in January. See article reproduced from the Telegraph 22/5/21 "Strike threat over bus drivers". As in the case of the RTBU's lame duck rail EBA campaign, another industrial campaign 'set up to fail' is on the agenda. The holding of industrial action during the holiday period would ineffectually release some steam from grass roots anger just like the rail strike during the lock down. It would also be in line with the TWU officials developing a fake militant profile as part of the TWU's phased takeover of the RTBU Bus Division as part of an ALP back room deal. It would also be used to divert attention away from the privatisation of the Eastern Suburbs bus depots.

Wildcat Unleashed at Smithfield Depot!

On Thursday 9/9/21, 180 drivers at Transit Systems Smithfield depot in Western Sydney went on a wildcat strike following one driver at the depot being tested positive for COVID-19. The drivers were protesting the cessation by management of regular COVID-19 testing of workers. The industrial action affected 20 bus routes. The TWU officials were able to pressure the drivers to return to work less than 24 hours after the start of the wildcat with the promise from management that regular COVID-19 antigen testing of drivers would resume. The wildcat followed two-hour stop work safety meetings held by TWU members at four Western Sydney bus depots on Monday 6/9/21 over the NSW Govt.'s decision to end workplace COVID testing. Typically,

Strike threat over bus drivers

'Essential part of life'

ERIN LYONS

NSW bus drivers have pledged to take strike action if necessary to improve their conditions.

Workers say they're driving while fatigued and want hours cut and longer breaks between shifts.

Delegates from privatised bus companies have come together to demand the NSW government take action and improve industry standards to pay, superannuation and safety.

The Transport Workers Union revealed several bus companies had unanimously voted to endorse a plan to lift standards or industrial action would be taken.

The union says the Berejiklian government must take responsibility for wages and conditions within the contracts it awards to private bus companies.

Among their demands are realistic timetables so drivers aren't forced to rush, reducing work hours to combat fatigue, and improving safety and pay rates so employees don't need a second job to make ends meet.

"Bus drivers are essential for the travelling public.

"We ensure people get to school, hospital appointments and supermarkets," TWU NSW branch secretary Richard Olsen said.

"They are a vital part of this community.

"But they have not been treated well and have been neglected by the state government."

On Friday union members passed a log of claims dealing



Bus driver Manish Kumar.

superannuation, Mr Olsen said. "Industrial strike action will be played out if and when it is required to do so. What we're seeking is modest and affordable," he said.

According to the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport, 113 people have been killed in bus crashes in Australia in the last five years.

Bus drivers are frequently subjected to attacks by passengers and members of the public, the union claims.

Bus driver Manish Kumar said he was forced to do 13-hour shifts, leaving little time to spend with his children.

"(I wake up) feeling tired and then I'm going to hit the road with a 20-tonne bus," he said.

He wants shifts to be reduced to 12 hours with at least a 10-hour break in between.

Fellow NSW bus driver Marta Folkard said she would never have enough money to retire.

She said she had spent many years out of work while raising her children.

"I have two options: I work until I drop dead or I sell my house and move in with my twin sister, which isn't the best

the RTBU officials made no public comment about the Smithfield depot stoppage, despite members in the Buses, Trams and Sydney and NSW Trains being affected by the issue.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: What has been the situation at the depot under the COVID-19

restrictions?

Leichhardt Driver: Initially the Transit Systems bosses were getting up to something nasty. They were intending not to pay those drivers from the ultra locked down areas of the South Western suburbs such as Fairfield who initially had to remain at home despite being involved in an essential service. However within 24 hours the bosses

backed down. It seems they were pressured by Transport for NSW and the Govt. Subsequently, the restriction rules in these areas were changed allowing those involved in an essential service to work outside the ultra locked down area but they required regular COVID-19 tests.

RW: What are your impressions of the impact of the new cut backs on bus services as part of the toughened COVID-19 restrictions?

LD: The Govt. and the bosses have shown quite poor planning in regard to the further lock down restriction of imposing a 50% to 30% reduction in public transport services. In the buses from Monday 19/7/21 the Sunday roster and timetable has been imposed until 2/8/21. According to the Govt.'s rationalisation for the measure, more people would be encouraged to remain at home and avoid mixing. So reducing the spread of the virus. However we have noticed that there doesn't seem much change with the number of commuters wanting to catch buses at peak hours. With the reduction of allowed numbers of passengers on our normal buses reduced to such as 12, we have often noticed a line of passengers still left after reaching the allowed number of passengers and leaving the stop. However, now the bosses are increasing the number of buses on the road from the early afternoon on week days to meet the commuter demand. At the depot on Sunday 18/7/21 there was under staffing of drivers of 42 and on Monday 19/7/21 there were 80 spares. However in contrast to the Sunday roster before the new restrictions with such runs as the 470, there would be one bus which runs all night to meet demand. Now with the roster/timetable change associated with the new restriction measure there is no provision for such a bus.

STOP PRESS: On Wednesday 11/8/21 two depot staff were reported COVID-19 infected with the majority of depot staff including drivers considered casual contacts and put in self isolation awaiting COVID-19 test results. 19 routes have been heavily affected with cancelled runs for two days. Coaches and buses from other companies have been operated to make up for the cancelled runs from the

depot.

RW: What have been the latest developments with the COVID outbreak at the depot?

LD: Those who were made to go home and self isolate due to the COVID outbreak, were paid their normal average Mon.-Fri. weekly wage. Now management has advised that those who won't wear the mask due to medical exemptions will also have to go home but will be paid the weekly average wage. Those not wearing the mask without such an exemption will also have to go home but won't be paid their wages. The Govt. and the bosses are requiring from 30/9/21 that we all have to have the jabs for the COVID vaccine with a week of grace if you still have not been able to get the jabs. Many of us at the depot are very opposed to wearing the mask and getting the jabs. **STOP PRESS:** There has been a series of legal challenges against the mandatory vaccinations.

From 23/8/21 an amended Saturday timetable was introduced except that Sunday continues with the Sunday timetable/roster. Associated with this move, management has introduced a new working set up across Transit Systems Region 6 for both ex-STA and new drivers. They have introduced a 'Team A' and 'Team B' system. Those in 'Team A' get paid their normal average Mon.-Fri. wage for a fortnight but also get weekend work. While 'Team B' stays at home for the fortnight but only get paid their normal average wage for Mon.-Fri. Its not clear if there is a short staffing of 'Team A' drivers, will 'Team B' drivers be called back to work? Other news is that many in management are now working from home.

'HOME & DUTY' OPAL ENTITLEMENT

RW: What has been the situation with the 'Home & Duty' Opal entitlement since privatisation?

LD: Since Region 6 STA privatisation 3 years ago on 1/7/2018, ex-STA drivers have still retained the Home & Duty Opal though no interstate pass. However new drivers coming on the job since this date of privatisation have had no such entitlement. Now the Govt. and the bosses are continuing

this entitlement for ex-STA drivers for a further two years. In early Sept. the RTBU officials have issued a circular stating that they want to have the 'Home & Duty' Opal entitlement included into our Award not just in our RTBU EBA. As they imply this entitlement will then be completely secured and can't be traded away like occurs with EBA's. The Govt.'s decision to extend this entitlement seems in line with the delay in the privatisation of the rest of the STA associated with the renewed COVID-19 outbreak.

RTBU Officials 'Smoke & Mirrors' Performance & 'Home & Duty' Opal!

Editorial Comment: This is a dangerous illusion the RTBU officials are peddling in regard to securing this entitlement. The award system which was introduced in the early 20th Century associated with the establishment of the Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Commissions was never set up to preserve conditions, but to avoid industrial disruption. Even in those days in certain sectors, award entitlements had to be enforced by industrial action. In the Post WWII period until the advent of the ALP Whitlam Federal Govt. wages indexation policy in 1975 and the ALP-ACTU Prices & Incomes Accords 1983-96, award wage increases won by industrial action by the bureaucratic Metal Trades unions 'flowed on' to the awards of unions in other sectors. Given the RTBU officials legalistic lame duck record, fake strike threats, lame duck, ineffectual industrial action and avoidance of effective industrial action in regard to fighting privatisation and associated savage attacks on wages and conditions, any such award condition may become a dead letter.

RW: What are your impressions of the recent COVID-19 scare at the depot?

Leichhardt Busie: As a result of several infections at the depot, the bosses have sent many of us home to have COVID-19 tests. The bosses have had Murrays, Hills and other private bus

companies running shuttle services on many of our routes. We are particularly angry that management seems likely to compel us to have the COVID-19 vaccine jab. We are intending to approach a solicitor to legally challenge any such move by the bosses. We consider that we have the right to exert control over our own bodies.

Waverley Depot News

RW: What are the latest developments at the depot?

Waverley Busie: There has been a significant change in early July. Since this time there has been notices put up in the depot advertising vacancies for new drivers and refuellers. For many months there was a freeze on recruitment of drivers except for Mona Vale which is 34 km's from the city. The reason given by the STA bosses for the freeze has been the looming privatisation. As a result the depot has been run effectively on skeleton staffing levels. With huge amounts of overtime imposed on existing drivers, causing the likely burnout of many due to overwork. Resulting in the need to recruit new staff. Any meetings and training courses away from the depot remain abolished. Its likely we will only get a trickle of new drivers just to keep things moving, given the low patronage of bus routes provided by the depot due to the COVID-19 outbreak and lock down restrictions. Prior to the lockdown there would be huge numbers of commuters on bus services going to Bondi and other beaches. Now there are very few commuters on these bus runs. From Monday 19/7/21 until Monday 2/8/21 bus services from the depot and other STA and Transit Systems depots have been put on Sunday rosters/timetables by the previous Berejiklian Govt. using the pretext of toughened COVID-19 lock down restrictions.

RW: What have been the ramifications of the imposing of the new Sunday timetable during the lock down for commuters?

WB: It has definitely disadvantaging some commuters. Recently one commuter was extremely angry over the change. She was a nurse working at

a local hospital and was unable to catch her normal bus to arrive at her job on time. Consequently she had to pay \$40 a day for a Uber, which she can't afford. The Govt. had taken a one size fits all approach and has seriously disadvantaged many commuters who work in essential services. The service cuts are presented for your safety but are certainly in line with other revenue raising and budget saving measures of the previous Berejiklian Govt. such as speed cameras. Until recently when the issue became a political hot potato and seized upon by the ALP, the previous Berejiklian Govt. kept the cameras location a secret to catch motorists and raise revenue. In contrast to other States such as South Australia which have normally advised the location of the cameras with signs in the area and through media outlets. Then the previous Berejiklian Govt. had signs put up to advise the camera locations.

Where is our OH&S?

RW: What are your thoughts on the impact of the renewed COVID-19 outbreak at Waverley?

WB: There are some disturbing aspects of the previous Berejiklian Govt's role in the renewed outbreak. The Delta strain originally broke out just 1 or 2 kms from the depot. A non-vaccinated hire car driver not wearing a mask had contracted the delta strain from overseas travellers in quarantine causing the virus to spread in Sydney. Despite the highly contagious and dangerous nature of the virus and the outbreak a short

distance from depot, why didn't the Govt. impose an immediate lock down at Waverley, Randwick depots and a ring around the surrounding Eastern Suburbs? Why the soft lock down approach? This seeming incompetent approach is emblematic of how the previous Berejiklian Govt. handled crises. This virus is very dangerous unlike the flu. Safety was not put on for drivers. The attitude of the STA bosses and the Govt. seemed to be 'business as usual' under the pressure of big business. Many drivers at the depot seemed unaware of the looming threat of virus infection.

At Waverley there are many opposed to being jabbed with the COVID-19 vaccine. However inoculations for various diseases have been compulsory at schools over the years without any noticeable ill effects for the students. Why hasn't the STA approached the Health Department to send their people with equipment to depots to provide COVID-19 vaccinations? In this way drivers and other staff could avoid wasting time at Doctors' surgeries and vaccination centres on their day off.

Kingsgrove Depot News

RW: There's been talk in the buses about a deal made by the RTBU and TWU officials to give coverage of regions 6 and 9 to the TWU in exchange for RTBU keeping coverage of 7 and 8. Can you confirm whether this is true and if there is any other relevant info?

Kingsgrove Driver 1: These deals between the RTBU and TWU are the reason why membership of unions and



the Labor Party are in decline.

Handshake and Back Room Deals

Bus drivers talk about a past when unions were strong and ask "what happened?"

Unions talk about, "Look what we have achieved in the past." Union membership is in decline.

Today, the Labor Party and Unions have lost the confidence of the workers and members. This is reflected in State and Federal elections.

Acting like Mafia cartels, dividing up territories, memberships, properties. On the pretence of acting for the members best interests.

Anybody asked the members? NO!

Over 800 RTBU members and 400 potential members were gifted to the TWU in region 6 on the pretence of peace between the unions.

Workers in region 6 went to court to change our rules so we could choose which union we wanted to belong to.

We stood in the dock. Shoulder to shoulder in the battle and won.

Our Bus and Tram Division put up a

resolution to fight and were abandoned just as we were winning the battles.

The battle was about choice. Freedom to choose association. Freedom to choose our destiny. Our brothers and sisters that had the courage to stand and fight at the Eureka Stockade. Stone masons had achieved the 8hr day.

All that we have achieved by making a stand for what is right is slowly being dismantled by the political elite.

BRING BACK THE POWER TO THE WORKERS! THE ONES THAT HAVE THE COURAGE TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS!

RW: What are your impressions of the talk of the TWU takeover of the RTBU Bus Division as part of a ALP back room deal?

Kingsgrove Driver 2: At a late May RTBU executive meeting our union rep was even thrown out for loudly criticising State Secretary Claassens over complicity in the dirty deal. The deal comprised a trade off of region 6 and 9 comprising the Eastern Suburbs with union coverage taken over by the TWU. Whilst the TWU won't dispute RTBU coverage of regions 7 and 8 on

the Nth Shore.

SYDNEY LIGHT RAIL NEWS

On Tuesday 28/9/21, around 60 drivers and RTBU Bus & Tram Division members from the Inner West Tram Line took strike action from 7am to 9am and again from 3pm to 5pm. The union officials refused to publicise this action during the rail strike digital picket on that day and on their Facebook page seeking to maintain divisions amongst public transport workers.

The workers are seeking similar pay and conditions as drivers on the CBD and South East tram line. Its also run by Transdev. Inner West tram workers wages are up to 15 percent less per hour than their counterparts on the South East Tram line and advance more slowly. through pay grades. South East tram line drivers can reach the highest pay grade after three years, while those on the Inner West tram line have to put in at least five years of service.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW we will discuss the issues of nepotism and dismissals at V/Line. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.

RW: What is the current situation at Southern Cross?

Archie: New starts are being dismissed a couple of days before the six months probation concludes.

Rastus: The same thing is happening with the drivers. Some drivers who have come from other Train Operating Companies have been terminated on trivial issues.

Forsyth: When new starts commence their employment with V/Line, they are on probation for six months. If management considers they are not suitable they are terminated.

Sheona: We will give an example of a recent case. One of the Customer Service employees on probation signed on for an early shift. The employee had worked into their sixth hour of their shift and was informed on their work

mobile phone to report to the office. The employee reported to the manager. Clarence: In the presence of the manager and a Human Resources consultant attached to Southern Cross the employee was told their services were no longer required. No reason was given and the employee was marched off by a security guard to clear their locker and escorted off the station.

RW: What of the other employees?

Jethro: The other employees at Southern Cross found out 72 hours after the dismissal occurred. No employee is allowed to discuss the dismissal or disciplinary action is taken.

Clarence: The position was filled after a few weeks. As we have said in previous issues, V/Line has a talent pool of applicants hoping to obtain a position.

Rastus: We Drivers wonder if any of the new starts are related to managers in Head Office. We know of an incident

at a Country Depot when a person who was a friend of a Supervisor obtained a position as a Station officer at a station over internal applicants. Unfortunately this person failed the safe working classes and was terminated.

Ichabod: The union is unsure what is happening but they cannot do anything for employees on probation. The union should be notified when a dismissal is to happen. The union should defend the employee and demand that the probation be extended while the employee fights for a permanent position.

Rastus: With the drivers a person on probation is defended by the union with the result most probations have been extended with most of the trainee drivers keeping their position.

Ichabod: Unfortunately at Southern Cross Customer Service employees have no union representative. Employees are frightened to nominate for the position as when asked to take

Supermarket Chain where he was a logistics manager and the Conductor Service Manager came from another part of V/Line where he was hated.

Herbert: The previous CSM was promoted to the Health and Safety and the position was advertised. One of the applicants was the previous person who held the position. This person was promoted to the Training Department but due to a restructure was declared redundant.

Ichabod: This is another story which will be reported in a future issue of RW.

Harriet: These two Managers have no experience in managing a railway and they will not listen to advice from employees. It is either their way or no way.

Rastus: The drivers in Bendigo hate this manager. He started to interfere with Train Rostering and he ordered a Velocity Train to run to Melbourne with two defective toilets.

Archie: If a train has defective toilets it is usually attached to another unit and runs as empty cars with the other unit taking the passengers.

Harriet: The CSM soon made his mark by bullying conductors. One conductor was made to front over an incident and the argument became heated with the conductor telling the manager where to go.

RW: What happened?

Herbert: The CSM ran bleating to Human Resources.

Harriet: The incident could have been settled when things cooled down. But no, the CSM had to run to Human Resources.

Herbert: The conductor was told if he did not retire then V/Line would terminate him and he would not get the retirement benefits.

Harriet: The conductor who had 44 years in the job retired. There was no retirement function.

Herbert: The CSM showed what a dunce he was. Due to a shortage of conductors he had to run a train to Echuca. He asked if Echuca was in the MYKI area.

Rastus: In other words he had no knowledge of the V/Line fare structure.

RW: What is the story of the dismissal of a manager?

Harriet: The two individuals clashed from day one with the new manager being at fault.

Herbert: In October 2020 the manager was stood down over a trivial issue.

Roscoe: We do not know what the issue was but as soon as employees in the area heard of the stand down, they resorted to social media with support of the manager.

Harriet: Disciplinary action was threatened but as employees used their own IPADS and IPHONES no disciplinary action could be taken.

Sheona: The manager was stood down for over five months. V/Line was told by its integrity officer that there was no grounds to sack the manager.

Harriet: During the time the manager was stood down, managers from other areas were sent to Bendigo to do the manager's job.

Rastus: Think of the relieving expenses that would have to be paid.

Archie: V/Line knows how to waste money as in one instance an employee was stood down for over twelve months.

Harriet: In March 2021 V/Line made a decision. The manager was called to V/Line Head Office and sacked.

Herbert: The same day a senior V/Line manager travelled to Bendigo to praise the new manager for the wonderful job he was doing.

Rastus and Roscoe: A couple of weeks after the manager was sacked V/Line sacked the Integrity Officer. It is obvious V/Line wanted a Yes man in the position.

Ichabod: As soon as it became known the manager had been sacked, messages appeared on Social Media getting stuck into V/Line over his treatment. You see he had 45 years in the job.

Archie: The employees in late April held a function for the manager. This was attended by over 100 people. Included were retired employees, managers and employees from all over

the state.

Harriet: Human Resources became unnerved over the toxic environment at Bendigo and sent a representative to interview the employees.

Rastus and Roscoe: We hope these employees tell this person what they think of these two managers.

Herbert: The matter is before Fair Work Australia and we expect V/Line to dig up dirt on the manager.

Harriet: V/Line employees have made a vow that when the sacked manager travels by train he will be treated as a retired employee.

Herbert: During the last six months a clerical employee was employed as a secretary to the new manager. We do not know why she left after a few weeks.

Harriet: The rumours circulating are she was being harassed and resigned. On her resignation she demanded an exit interview which was denied.

RW: Unfortunately we have run out of space, but thank you to Harriet and Herbert for under threat of dismissal having the courage to come forward.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the way the sacked manager was treated is disgraceful. We drivers hope he wins his case of Unfair Dismissal. As for Tweedeldee and Tweedeldum we have one word for you. Get out of the Rail Industry. You are not wanted.

STOP PRESS

“As this issue goes to press word has reached RW that the V/Line Board has been sacked and the V/Line is now directly controlled by the Victorian Government. Also sackings of Staff with less than six months service is still continuing.” Details next issue.

NEW BOOK PUBLISHED ABOUT SYDNEY BUSES:

‘LIFE and TIMES On SYDNEY BUSES’ by Mary-Jane Field.

Check author’s personal Web Site to order copies.

Reviewed in issue 144 of the Magazine ‘Trad and Now’

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' NEWS

BRITISH BUS NEWS: Manchester Bus Drivers' Strike

23/5/21 The ACG (Anarchist Communist Group) website has previously carried reports on the long strike of Manchester bus workers employed by Go North West. This has now ended after 85 days of a continuous strike. But have workers won?

Whilst Go North West's plans to install fire and rehire were withdrawn, two sacked workers were reinstated and disciplinary action was dropped against 37 other workers, the situation is far from being as complete a victory as the Unite (UK bureaucratic corporate) union claims it to be.

In fact, Unite allowed the bosses to make meal breaks unpaid and to impose compulsory overtime if buses are running late. In fact, before the strike, Unite was in negotiations with Go North West bosses to implement 1.3 million pounds worth of cuts as an alternative to fire and rehire. When the strike broke out, Unite made sure that it was limited to the bus depot, and failed to spread it to other bus garages.

The bus workers showed great courage and determination in pursuing a strike for 85 days, but Unite has sabotaged what could have been a complete victory. This points to the lessons that need to be learned. Workers must increasingly look towards creating their own organisation at the grass roots, and not rely on the union bureaucrats, who will attempt to obstruct and hinder effective strike action.

STOP PRESS 4/10/21 Unite the bureaucratic/bosses union has confirmed that private bus operator Stagecoach is facing 20 separate pay disputes across its UK workforce. Unite officials are currently working with management to head off a national strike.



The strike was ended by the union bosses by the end of the day.

BRAZIL: Rail Workers' Strike

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL - The Sao Paulo railroad workers have been on strike since midnight Thursday, July 15 over increased wages demands and money owed from a profit sharing scheme. It is part of a strike wave launched by public transport workers over low wages and unsafe working conditions related to COVID-19. According to Companhia Paulista de Trens Metropolitanos (CPTM), lines 7-Rubi, 8-Diamante, 9-Esmeralda and 10-Turquesa are affected this morning. The 11-Coral, 12-Safira, and 13-Jade lines are operating normally. The strike announcement was made by the labor union the night before.

The trains on the 8-Diamante line are running between the Palmeiras-Barra Funda and Barueri stations. The 7-Rubi line is running between the Palmeiras-Barra Funda and Caieiras stations.

At certain stations such as Grajau there was spontaneous support for the rail workers action from local residents with blockades at gates over high fares.

German Train Drivers' Strike

Around 700 trains at a standstill on Wednesday morning. Union demands improved wage offer. Only one in four long-distance trains operational

BERLIN, Aug 11 - A strike by train drivers over pay severely disrupted services across Germany on Wednesday, adding to pressure on European supply chains and frustrating passengers at a time of high demand during the summer holiday season.

With around 190 freight trains standing idle, Deutsche Bahn (DBN.UL) said in a statement the strike could have a major impact on industrial supply chains in Germany and across Europe, which have already suffered bottlenecks because of COVID-19.

Passenger demand is also high as many people are on the move during summer holidays following an easing of corona virus restrictions.

Deutsche Bahn spokesperson Achim

Stauss said the company was trying to keep one in four long-distance trains running and to have at least a trip every two hours between large cities.

"We are doing our best to get people to their destination today," Stauss said, urging travellers to postpone unnecessary trips.

The strike is due to run until the early hours of Friday.

A survey by Forsa for television broadcasters RTL and N-TV showed that 50% of respondents were opposed to the strike, while 42% viewed it as reasonable.

Stranded travellers stood waiting for their delayed trains at stations across Germany.

"The strike is understandable. I support it, but the problem is that there is hardly any information on the internet about it," said David Jungck, a traveller stranded at Berlin's main railway station.

Germany's VDA car industry association said the strike could add to problems in the logistics industry as it struggles to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

"If the strikes last longer, considerable costs can arise for companies because

interrupted supply chains quickly lead to production stoppages," VDA president Hildegard Mueller told Reuters.

The GDL union, which represents some train drivers, will decide next week whether to continue the strike, its chief Claus Weselsky told broadcaster ZDF on Wednesday.

Weselsky said the strike, which started at 0200 local time (0000 GMT) for passenger services on Wednesday, had been successful so far, bringing around 700 trains to a standstill.

"Our colleagues went on strike in a very disciplined manner," Weselsky told Reuters, adding the union would only return to the negotiating table if Deutsche Bahn made an improved pay offer.

GDL is demanding wage increases of around 3.2% and a one-time corona virus allowance of 600 Euros (\$700). Deutsche Bahn had offered wage increases in two steps for the next two years, but the union wants the raise to take effect earlier.

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After reporting a loss of 5.7 billion Euros in 2020, the state-owned railway said business had recovered since April, as COVID-19 travel restrictions eased and cargo traffic improved.

The firm said it expected to edge back to profit in 2022, but floods that hit western Germany last month had caused around 1.3 billion euros (\$1.53 billion) in damage.

The last railway strike was called by the EVG workers union in December 2018 and lasted only four hours.

STOP PRESS: This industrial campaign involving strikes and involving other grades in the railways continued for five days until closed down by the union bosses of the GDL (Train Drivers Union).

BRITAIN TODAY

NATIONAL UBER WORKERS STRIKE

National strike and demos in eight UK cities: London, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds & Glasgow.

Strike over pay, failure to implement Supreme Court ruling to pay waiting time and unfair dismissals.

ADCU condemns Ubers attempt to gag the union and interfere with its independence.

ADCU critical of Ubers attempt to distract from impending strike action by re-announcing pension arrangements.

The App Drivers & Couriers Union (ADCU) will stage a 24-hour strike of Uber drivers with demonstrations organized at Uber offices in 8 UK cities on September 28th. Strikes and protests will be staged in London, Bristol,

Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow and will run from midnight to midnight.

All Uber drivers nationwide are asked to not log on to the app during the strike. Passengers are likewise asked to support the strike by not crossing the digital picket line to book the service.

?There are three key points of dispute which has now led this to latest strike action:

Uber's failure to implement the Supreme Court ruling and pay waiting time which makes up around 40% of an Uber drivers working time.

· The introduction of fixed price fares and the abandonment of variable fares which were based on actual time and distance travelled. This has led to reduced driver incomes and greater financial risk.

Unfair dismissals without recourse. Ubers introduction of a flawed real time identification and surveillance system

in particular has led to many drivers being wrongly dismissed without right of appeal.

The union is making three key demands of Uber to immediately remedy the situation:

Uber to pay all working time including waiting time and respect the Supreme Court ruling.

· An end to up front pricing, an increase of fares from £1.25 per mile to £2.00 per mile and for Uber to reduce its commission take from 25% to 15%.

An end to unfair dismissals without right of appeal. Uber must also withdraw the use of the so-called Real Time ID surveillance and facial recognition system.

The ADCU is aware of Ubers announcement today that it will now finally pay pension contributions for drivers after operating in the UK without doing so for almost a decade. This is a rehash of a previous similar announcement in a cynical attempt to distract attention away from the strike and from addressing the legitimate demands of drivers.

In March this year the ADCU won

default judgements against Uber at the Amsterdam district court over claims that the company had robo-fired 6 drivers unfairly by algorithm. Uber vowed to challenge the courts default judgements. However, on August 8th Uber offered to settle the case with the individuals involved only if the ADCU and all of its members agreed to be gagged about the details of the case. We considered this to be a highly inappropriate demand and an attempt by Uber to interfere with the independence and integrity of our trade union. The ADCU immediately rejected the terms and ended negotiations. Uber has since bowed to the inevitable, reinstated the drivers and paid all of them material and pecuniary damages as ordered by the courts.

Yaseen Aslam, ADCU President said:

It is shameful that Uber continues to defy the highest court in the land to cheat 70,000 workers out of pay for 40% of their true working time. The drivers know they deserve and are

legally entitled to much more than Uber is offering. Ubers offer to set up a cross app common pension scheme just proves that it must also be possible for these companies to apportion and pay driver waiting time between them. This strike is just the beginning and there will be much more unrest until Uber does the right thing and pay drivers all that they are owed, both pension contributions and working time.

James Farrar, General Secretary said:

Uber has continued to intensify its use of junk surveillance tech and algorithmic management control to maximise profits. The results have been catastrophic with hundreds of people unfairly dismissed and accused of unspecified fraudulent activity. Instead of trying to gag unions from exposing the flaws in their tech, Uber should instead guarantee all drivers protection from unfair dismissal and the right to access a proper, human led appeals process.

The ADCU is a new union which was formed after a recent split in the IWGB union. The United Private Hire Drivers, the IWGB (Independent Workers of Great Britain) branch covering drivers, does not seem to be endorsing the Sept. 28th strike call.

Their demands for that strike are:

"Better rate per mile"

15% max commission

Transparency of charges on customers "No fixed rate trips

50% surcharge on out of area trips

No more unfair deactivations

Re-nstatement of unfairly deactivated drivers.

The IWGB/UPHD are also planning a public protest in London to coincide with their strike, asking supporters to: "Bring your car & join us to strike & protest together on 6 October at 10am. Meeting point: 10am at ASDA Car Park, Stepney Green, 123 Mile End Road, E1 4UJ Then drive to protest location at: Uber HQ, Aldgate Tower, London E1 8QN for 11am."

ITALIAN GENERAL STRIKE

The leaflet which follows was distributed by the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista) in demonstrations across Italy last Monday.

It was the first time that all the rank and file unions had united to call such a strike but as the leaflet makes clear it was only for a day and they gave the bosses plenty of warning. According to one of them (the Union Sindacale di Base or USB) there were one million on strike with demonstrations in over 40 places across the country involving 100,000. This is impossible to verify or contradict but comrades in Milan reported no more than 2,000 on the demonstration there, whilst comrades in Florence said that there were 3,000, a number reinforced by workers from GKN (see: The GKN Struggle and the October "General Strike" In Italy) and Texprint (see Italy: Class Solidarity

with the FedEx and Texprint Workers). In Rome the numbers were boosted by sacked workers for the bankrupt Alitalia airline as well as another GKN contingent which brought participants to about 5,000. In Trieste the demonstrators numbered 20,000, the higher numbers here due to the strong opposition to the Green Pass which allows workers who refuse the vaccine to be sacked. The bulk of the demonstrators were made up of former members of the unions and the reformist left in their various ideological components, without a significant involvement of broader sections of the working class. In short it looked more like the union rituals of the past than to any new form of resistance to the continuing attacks of capital. As the leaflet suggests any real mass strike will be one without time limits, and not just against this or that boss, but the system as a whole.

For a General Strike!

Yes, we are for a general strike, but a real one, an indefinite one, one with no

time limit and without warning!

All the rank and file trade unions have called a general strike by all categories of work on 11 October.

Let's start by saying that the pandemic has added to the economic crisis, severely aggravating it. The end of the moratorium on sackings has produced thousands of lay-offs and intensified, for those who still have a paid job, inhuman rates of exploitation, causing daily deaths at work. In short, capitalist murder!

The boss class, via its armed wing, the State, devises every possible way to make profits out of us: it imposes closures, sackings, and forces us to work illegally, without job security for ridiculous wages. It also condemns us to wage labour until we are almost 70 if you get there, of course ... and we have not even mentioned working conditions!

Every day capitalism, the social system under which we live, increasingly shows that it is the worst society for humanity (climate change, deforestation...).

To date, the working class, when it opposes this bourgeois offensive (see GKN workers at Campi Bisenzio,

Texprint in Prato, workers at Fedex, etc.), does so generously with occupations, pickets, demonstrations, etc: we know only too well, however, that as long as we remain isolated, with each one absorbed in the immediacy of their own dispute, sooner or later we will be crushed.

In disputes like GKN the workers in struggle do not ask for alms, but for solidarity, however, whilst this is necessary, it is not enough, because it remains within the framework of demand struggles, that is, within the capitalist-bourgeois framework.

The struggles to improve working conditions, even if correct in the short run, must always be accompanied, indissolubly, by a revolutionary political perspective: for the overthrow of capitalism in favour of a communist society!

For us internationalist communists, the first practical step is to unify the struggles and disputes on the basis of immediate needs (wages, employment, etc.), starting at least from uniting workers in the immediate area, in order

to put on the table relations of strength with very different counterparts from the current ones.

It is not "enough" to unify the rank and file trade unions, to call a strike, with months' of notice (and then, probably, to go different ways after the strike), to



draw up a list of demands that do not

affect this company in the least, but, on the contrary, they reinforce the devastating illusion that within the capitalist system, moreover in deep crisis, major reforms are possible for the benefit of wage labour! The time for "worker" reformism has long since disappeared, for a long time the bourgeoisie has not only been unable to concede anything, but, on the contrary, is on the attack to take, that is, to worsen the living and working conditions of the proletariat in order to seek to raise inadequate rates of profit. Let's repeat and stress that the political criticism of the theory and practice of so-called alternative unions does not in any way concern the willingness to fight, the determination and sacrifices of those sectors of wage/dependent work that follow this or that union.

Yes, we are for the general strike, but the real one, the one to the bitter end, with no time limit and that appears without warning!

Battaglia Comunista
6 October 2021

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Workers' Inquiry and Global Class Struggle: Strategies, Tactics, Objectives Edited by Robert Ovetz Published by Pluto Press

The Workers' Inquiry Heritage

The editor of the volume traces the heritage of Workers' Inquiries back to Karl Marx's 101 question survey published in *La Revue Socialiste* in 1880 inquiring into the position of the French Working Class. This Workers Inquiry approach was unearthed in the post WWII period by a range of ultra left/Workerist groups such as Johnson-Forest Tendency and later the Zero Work journal in the US, *Socialism ou Barbarie* (SouB) in France, and *Quaderni Rossi*, *Classe Operaia* and other Ultra Leftist Italian publications of the 1960's, 1970's and then such groups as *Midnight Notes* in the 1970's and *Hotline* in Germany in the 1990's. A contemporary group also engaging in this activity not mentioned or participating in the volume is 'Angry Workers World' which has focused on organising drives in factories and warehouses in West London in recent

years.

'Workers' Inquiries', Corporate Unionism & Global Class Struggle

These 'Inquiries' fail to focus on the critical role of the formally 'reformist' bureaucratic unions, now 'corporate unions' in precluding genuine international workers struggles and their role in facilitating the global employer offensive. In contrast to the above groups most contributors to the volume have no revolutionary perspective and certainly no strategy for building revolutionary industrial unions. A focus of many of their 'Inquiries' is to identify choke points and weaknesses in corporate strategies/operations in various industries to facilitate workers struggles. In contrast to the Italian 'Workerist' Leftist groups who focused on this approach but also its role in exposing the chaotic nature of capitalist control of industries to

workers and so emphasise the importance of workers control of industry and the revolutionary project. While the editor focuses on approaching 'outspoken' workers as part of the Inquiry, the Italian groups focused on linking up with the 'collectivity' of workers in workplaces. (1)

A key problem with this focus on 'choke points' is that workers through their own experience are aware of them but due to low self confidence, low morale, divisions and a constant worsening terrain for grass roots organising associated with new waves of work restructuring/speed ups/new de-skilling technology, they don't often take advantage of these vulnerabilities to effectively pursue the struggle against employers. This grass roots inertia is particularly facilitated by the corporate union bureaucracy interwoven with the corporate set up and Deep State such as ASIO, CIA etc through innumerable threads in maintaining low morale and encouraging these divisions amongst the grass roots and isolating worker struggles to facilitate the employer offensive. Consequently precluding

internationally co-ordinated workers' direct action. (2)

'Workers' Inquiry' & Workplace Newspaper

The group from this heritage which had the most likely impact on the global class struggle was the French SouB but not with any academic 'Workers Inquiry' activity but what they viewed as an 'active' Workers' Inquiry through involvement with a work place newspaper. Together with the anti-Stalinist and anti-bureaucratic influence exerted through their review on key militants and ultra left groups which played a prominent role in the student and worker upsurges in France and elsewhere in the long 1960's. This workplace activity by the 'SouB' group entailed its assistance in the publishing and distribution of an industrial agitation bulletin and republishing articles from it in their review. The paper 'Tribune Ouvrière' was initiated in 1954 by a group of militant workers including one 'SouB' member (the only blue collar worker in the group) at the Renault Billancourt factory in a suburb of Paris. The plant complex was a legendary focus of French workers militancy. It employed 30,000 workers and had been a major stronghold of the French Communist Party for several decades. The appearance of this paper was associated with the publication of other such work place newspapers in other firms in Paris and in regional centres some inspired by its example and some not. In 1958 they decided to work together. (3) Such papers and groups would become an important proponents of the spread of the May 1968 strike wave, general strike, factory occupations and pole of opposition on the shop floor to the French Communist Party controlled CGT (General Confederation of Labour) bureaucracy and network of shop stewards.

Misinformation about Workers Struggles

Several of the contributors pursue their alleged 'Workers Inquiries' through contacts with representatives of the union bureaucracy and perhaps unintentionally peddling corporate union misinformation and covering up for their corrupt bureaucracies and so spreading mystification. Some examples of misinformation peddled

by some of the contributors to the volume in regard to different countries workers struggles was uncovered by 'Angry Workers World' who have established contact with revolutionary groups and grass roots activists involved in them and even admitted by the authors in the essays are the following:

ITALIAN LOGISTICS WORKERS

In regard to the essay focusing on Logistic Workers struggles at Mr Job in the Po Valley in Italy. According to Angry World World researches: "As far as we understand, the contact with SI Cobas (a base union, allegedly grass roots controlled but works within the framework of Italian Labour Law) was established before the strike started, not afterwards, like written in the text. We heard that workers were not able to overcome their minority position inside the warehouse and that, in the end, the strike was not very effective." (3) Despite misinformation spread in the essay, the author does shed light on new management strategies involving structuring company operations as fake workers cooperatives which are sub contracted work so outflanking legal protections for wage workers.

Mexican Teachers Union

With reference to the essay on the CNTE, the so called Dissident Teachers Movement. The contributor initially falsely presents it as a self organised autonomous workers movement, but admits later in the essay: "In September 2016, following the Nochistlan massacre, some state leaders of the CNTE made opaque deals with local state governments, after returning to work without having gained concessions from the government. These under-the-table deals were made over the heads of the CNTE members and without respecting the assembly and direct participation methods of decision making". (p.186) (5)

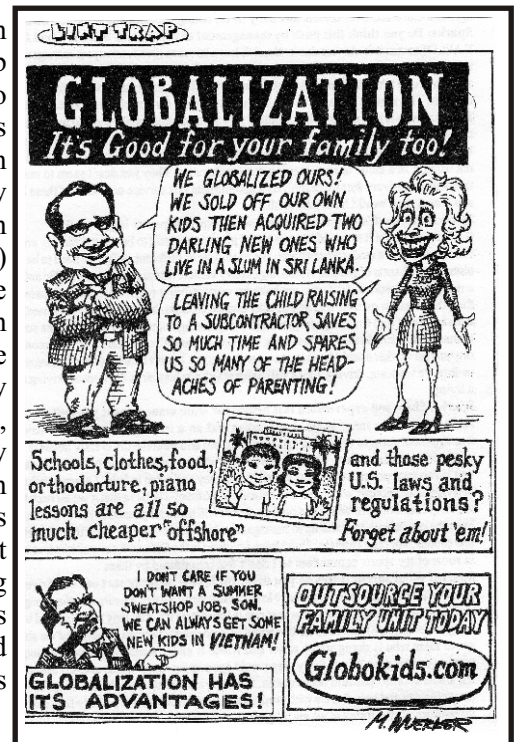
Indian Auto Workers Struggles

In the essay on auto workers in India the contributor spreads corporate union misinformation which mystifies grass roots workers struggles. The Angry Workers World through their contacts with a local ultra left group Kamunist Kranti/Faridabad Majdoor

Samachar, have been able to uncover this duplicity.

According to the author: "The strike also inaugurated a period of fierce repression starting with a supposed accident on July 18, 2012, followed by a fire in the Manesar plant in which a human resources manager died." (p.271)

However, Angry Workers World



uncovers: "In parroting the line of the permanent workers' legal representatives on this issue, the author fails to mention that we aren't dealing with 'an accident' here, but a mass riot of hundreds of workers who burnt down parts of the factory and beat up dozens of managers. It is clear that union representatives want to portray workers as victims, not as agents. But this comes at a cost of neither seeing or portraying a qualitative shift in workers struggles. When workers all over India saw workers in Maruti uniforms attacking their own factory, they knew something else was happening. These were seen as some of the best paid workers in the country. Millions of young workers in the hinterland want to become a Maruti worker. We can see that the system and its drive to casualisation is not just a 'race to the bottom', but it creates its own grave-diggers yet again. The system is fragile."

Angry Workers World uncovered

further misinformation in the essay, “Most of the recent struggles, from the Hero Honda occupation in 2006 and the wildcat actions at the car parts manufacturer Delphi in 2007, were actually driven by casual workers. In this regard the authors’ assertion that, “the large participation of contract/casual workers, struggling with the permanent workers, in an unprecedented display of solidarity” in the Maruti struggle is not so accurate. In the case of the Maruti factory occupation, it was only under the (physical) pressure of hundreds of casuals that permanent workers actually rejoined the occupation.” (6)

Turkish Logistic Workers

In regard to the essay focusing on Turkey and TUMTIS (Road Transport Workers Union) which the author shows has been involved from 2009 onwards in organising drives in various multinational logistics companies with the assistance of international corporate union organisations such as ITF (International Transport Workers Federation). Needless to say the ITF being a corporate union front, did absolutely nothing to organise international workers direct action to facilitate these organising drives in Turkey. The on-the-ground organising consisted largely of symbolic protests and long drawn out court cases. The author admits tellingly: “During and since its organising campaigns in large companies such as UPS, DHL, and Aras, TUMTIS has never gone on strike in these firms either formally or informally. This is not only because a strike requires much larger funds.” (p.95) In other words TUMTIS is very much a corporate union acting as an industrial police force for the multinational company bosses!

Argentina's 'Camioneros'

In the essay on Argentina, the author focuses on the 'Camioneros', the truckers union, National Federation of Truck Workers (FEDCAM) which organises roughly 70% between 160,000 to 210,000 of the 300,000 employed in trucking and has the capacity to paralyse the country. The author fails to mention whether it organises just waged truckers or also self employed truckers. The author shows the FEDCAM has all the hall

marks of today's corporate unionism. It has very much a dictatorship by a 'Caudillo' without any internal opposition, and linked to Peronist union traditions.

It is very much integrated into the state via its health insurance scheme based on pay check deductions and contributions from employers and the State. The author as part of a white washing effort, omits to mention the Camioneros 'Caudillo' involvement in massive corruption in the so called 'union' and involvement with high up politicians. According to Angry Workers World research: “The text doesn't mention that Moyano (the Caudillo) is very close to the political class, in particular to Duhalde and Kirchner and that he was charged with laundering over 100 million USD using the trade union's account and assets.” (4) The author shows Camioneros has achieved better wages and conditions than other unions and led to flow on to other sectors such as Banking. As the Australian experience shows such bureaucratic unions which have had militant traditions can take a rightward shift and turn savagely against even their most 'elite' members such as the case of the AMWU (Manufacturing Union). Some of the officials of unions which merged to form it had been very supportive of the workers control movement in the 1970's, such grass roots work place papers as the Sydney and Melbourne 'Link' magazines and metal workers pace setting role in wages campaigns. However from the early 1980's onwards it became a key force behind the 'ALP-ACTU Prices & Incomes Accord' and now today's 'unofficial' Accord. Its collaboration with the ALP and Liberal Governments and employers led to the closure of innumerable factories in the manufacturing sector and eventually the entire auto industry, resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs.

UK: 'Notes from Below' & Workers' Inquiries

One of the more interesting pieces focuses on the UK based 'Notes from Below' journal and group activity. It highlights the problems with the 'Workers' Inquiry' approach. It examines class composition in the UK across numerous industrial sectors

and associated workers' struggles through the mediation of various so called unions varying from the large bureaucratic/corporate British Labour Party aligned unions to 'new start ups' such as the allegedly democratic 'base unions.' Its editorial board has closest associations with the higher Education and Platform Capitalism sectors. It has particularly intervened in the UK Higher Education strike in 2018 over changes to pension schemes through issuing the 'The University Worker Bulletin'. In the Bulletin, the group presented arguments for different tactics and strategies. It has also assisted the organising drives of the 'base union' IWGB (Independent Workers of Great Britain) in the Gig economy. They falsely present the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World - WIRES (Wales, Ireland, England and Scotland) also involved in organising in the gig economy and hospitality as 'syndicalist'. However it is in breach of key syndicalist principles such as 'direct action' as it's registered with the UK IR racket with major restrictions on the right to strike and 'internationalism' as it supports 'regional nationalism'.

In attempting to do everything, the group fails to get anywhere in regard to affecting the tempo of the employer offensive and tackling the corporate unionism phenomena. In particular their support for 'Base Union' organising/recruitment in the course of workers struggles is likely to lead to eventual recuperation in corporate unionism though 'Base Union' collaboration with the UK IR set up and bureaucratisation. However the contributors' research spreads light on new aspects of the employer offensive. Particularly how the gig economy aspect of 'Platform Capitalism' is used as a laboratory for new management techniques which are later generalised to other sectors.

SOUTH AFRICA

The essay on South Africa looks at the resurgence of self organised workers struggles and wildcat strikes associated with the activity of the the CWAU (Casual Workers Advice Office) and the SWF (Simunye Workers Forum). These outfits have emerged in response to bureaucratic 'corporate unionism' associated with

the COSATU union confederation aligned with the ANC (African National Congress). However due to workers inexperience, these new bodies may face rapid bureaucratisation and being drawn back into the corporate union fold.

USA: CREDIBLE STRIKE THREATS

The essay on the USA by Robert Overtz is "Making Threats: Credible: Strike Threats in the US, 2012- 2016". The author particularly looks at the strike threat of the CFA (California Faculty Association) as part of its 19/5/2015 contract campaign which achieved a 5% pa pay rise although no mention is made of the rate of inflation so likely a fake pay rise with give backs such as increasing productivity, increased casualisation, standardisation of curriculum and growing class sizes. The author bewails that the CFA officials for inadequate research and grass roots organising to achieve a better result. However, the CFA certainly displays all the hall marks of 'corporate unionism' and the smoke and mirrors techniques to sell out workers struggles to facilitate corporate agendas. The so called campaign was very much bureaucratically run with typically no mass meetings of the members and paid union workers doing much of the so called organising.

China

This essay focuses on the rise of

workers struggles and the appearance of 'autonomous unions' since the Tiananmen Square events in 1989. The author examines moves by the regime to 'legalise' these unions and so control and dampen workers struggles. Again the contributor spreads misinformation. According to Angry Workers: "The Jasic struggle, is also depicted falsely, either because of the author's distance or complicit position. This struggle was primarily a Maoist theatre act that instrumentalised workers and raised the demand for a free trade union as a political line of the intellectual leaders and not as a genuine demand of the actual workers." (7)

In conclusion, certainly many contributors to the volume spread confusion about the 'Workers' Inquiry' approach and mystification of workers struggles due to the deficiencies in their research techniques or complicity in supporting bureaucratic/corporate unionism and so facilitating the Global employer offensive and Neo Liberal push. However several essays do shed some light on new employer strategies.

The 'Workers Inquiry' approach peddled is quite misguided as the limited resources and personnel of groups and individuals are wasted on these researches and achieving little in regard to facilitating global workers struggles. Let alone the critical

interwoven issues of slowing down and turning the tide against the employer offensive, facilitating major industrial action affecting millions, developing strike wave movements and associated major splits from today's corporate unions. Leading to transitional steps toward mass syndicalist industrial union movements.

Mark McGuire

Notes

1. See, *Angry workers.org/2020/12/28/thoughts-on-workers-inquiry-and-global-class-struggle-strategies-tactics-objectives-edited-by-robert-overtz/*
2. See, Review of 'Stuff The Accord Pay Up! Worker Resistance to the ALP-ACTU Accord' in *RW Vol.39 No.1 (228) May-June 2021 in www.rebelworker.org* and See 'Without Bosses: Radical Australian Trade Unionism in the 1970's' by Sam Oldham, Interventions Inc.
3. See, 'Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group (1949-65)' by Marcel van Der Linden, *From Left History 5.1(1997)* and 'Workers' Inquiry: a genealogy' by Asad Haider and Salar Mohandesi in *Libcom.org*
4. See *Angryworkers ibid*
5. See *Angryworkers ibid*
6. See *Angryworkers ibid*
7. See *Angryworkers ibid*

In Spanish Trenches: The Minds and Deeds of the Irish Who Fought for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War, by Barry McLoughlin and Emmet O'Connor. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2020. ix + 412 pp.

Reviewed by Martin Comack

The guerrilla wars of the 1920s in Ireland, the struggle for independence and the ensuing civil war between nationalist factions, had resulted in an Irish Free State still nominally part of the British Commonwealth with the northern province of Ulster remaining a component part of the UK.

This was unacceptable to the recalcitrant and leftist wings of the Irish Republican Army who had fought for an all-Ireland republic. Throughout the following years Irish politics was dominated by what was termed the 'national question' with the activities of the militant IRA repressed by the conservative Free State regime. The

latter's eventual replacement by a centrist government under Eamon De Valera allowed the Republican militants more breathing space for their agitation.

As elsewhere in Europe, events in Iberia intruded into Irish domestic politics with the election of a secular and leftist republic in Spain welcomed by Irish radicals. Conversely, the subsequent army revolt led by General Franco was hailed by Irish conservatives and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church as a crusade against atheistic Communism.

Leftists of various stripes arrived in Spain to fight for the Republic and social revolution. Directed by the

Comintern, national Communist parties began to recruit volunteers for an International Brigade for Spain's loyalist army.

Several hundred Irish joined the more than 35,000 foreign volunteers for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, most inducted into International Brigades composed of units sharing a common language and ethnicity. Never large enough in numbers to form their own national unit, the Irish in the IB would be assigned to the English-speaking 15th Brigade and were scattered among Britons, Americans and Canadians. They would eventually be referred to collectively as the Connolly Column. Named for James Connolly the martyred revolutionary, the Column would serve as a blanket term for all Irish who served in See page 20

NEWS & NOTES

In this edition of RW we again look behind the scenes at the chaos inside NSW Health associated with the COVID-19 crisis. We particularly put the spot light on alarming levels of management incompetence, high handedness and bullying in worsening the situation for workers and patients. The current situation highlights the importance of 'workers' control' of the sector and building grass roots controlled economic combative organisations to achieve the task. (See article page 2.)

In recent weeks there have been several strikes in the NSW railways associated with a failed Enterprise Agreement (EA) campaign by the ALP aligned RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union). Its been all about letting off some steam from grass roots discontent and conning the grass roots into accepting a fake pay rise, major conditions and job losses. Together with facilitating moves to privatise the NSW railways and intensifying the employer offensive. The ASN has been doing the hard yards on the job stirring up the grass roots against the union bosses to assist militants agitation to expose the sell out character of the RTBU officials fake campaign. (See article page 3.)

Some important 'behind the scenes' news in Sydney Buses are moves afoot by the TWU (Transport Workers Union) to launch an EA campaign in the privatised sections of the STA (State Transit Authority) buses. Like the RTBU bogus campaign in the NSW railways, this is likely to be another 'campaign set up to fail' and to facilitate hidden agendas. Again the ASN has been doing the hard yards on the job to assist militants agitation to expose the TWU officials plot. (See article page 6.)

Some sad news has been the passing away in February of Mike Long. Mike had been a long time supporter of the ASN. He had been a member of the USIWW and an editor of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Review.

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ASN Melbourne
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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 to 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 practising co-operation and mutual aid. We have an equal part in the making of 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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the Spanish Republican ranks. Given what had been the Depression-era emigration of young working class men from their homeland, many Irish recruits came not directly from Ireland but from the UK, North America or Australia.

Unlike in Europe and North America, enlistment of Irish for Spain was not done by Ireland's miniscule Communist Party, but through a left wing split off from the IRA - the Republican Congress. The Congress was an amalgam of the small groups on the Irish left of socialists, Communists, trade unionists and independent radicals. Most prominent among them was the IRA veteran Frank Ryan.

Although immediately sympathetic to the new Spanish republic, initially neither Ryan's Republican Congress nor the IRA was anxious to see any of their militants leave for Spain, believing them essential for the resistance to the powerful conservative forces and clerical reaction at home, where public opinion was generally if not uniformly hostile to radicalism of any sort. What finally changed their minds was the recruitment of Irish fascists for service in Franco's army by General Eoin O'Duffy, a former commander of the national police, with the full backing of the Catholic hierarchy.

O'Duffy had assembled and led a paramilitary force, the Blue Shirts, in imitation of Mussolini's black shirted fascists, that clashed with the IRA at village crossroads and city streets. But the subsequent months-long sojourn of O'Duffy's group in Spain, characterized by poor battle field performance and internal dissension, is described by the authors as an

'tragicomic odyssey' (108).

Nevertheless Ryan and others regarded the Blue Shirt intervention in Spain as a provocation, an insult to the tradition of democracy and republicanism represented by Irish rebels since the French Revolution. Aside from a high proportion of non-Communists in their ranks, the Irish were otherwise rather typical of the other Anglophone volunteers in the International brigades. Most were young men in their twenties and thirties, unskilled and semi-skilled blue collar workers. Early assignment to the British contingent in the Fifteenth Brigade infuriated many of the Irish, several of its officers having actually been members of the Black and Tan terrorist auxiliary attached to the British army during Ireland's independence struggle. Frank Ryan, now a captain in the IB, thought little of the majority of the British officer cadre in general, and the rebellious Irish were transferred to the American Lincoln battalion.

The main battles of the war, Jarama, Brunete, Aragon and the Ebro, and the part played by the Fifteenth Brigade in them are detailed in this well-researched study. Especially in the first few months, the International Brigades were plagued by poor training, inferior equipment, shortages of food and ammunition and not least by incompetent officers, many promoted for their membership in the Communist Party or adherence to the current Party line. Initially within all the Brigades, coordination between combined arms - infantry, artillery and armor - was practically non-existent, exacerbated by language differences and rivalries between Spanish and foreign commanders. These problems would improve considerably as the

war progressed, but upgrades in training and resources (supplied by the Soviet Union) would be accompanied by greater political influence by Stalinist commissars on the lookout for 'Trotskyites', anarchists and 'defeatists.' The casualty rate of killed and wounded in the International Brigades was exceptionally high, the 15th Brigade not excepted. Some 30% of the Irish volunteers were fatalities, with nearly all survivors wounded at least once. As the conflict went on, Ryan became increasingly anxious to repatriate Irish combat veterans in order to retain a radical cadre at home as a counterweight to domestic reactionary forces.

With the Republican forces defeated, veterans returned to Ireland to a mixed reception of praise, hostility or indifference. Many would go on to join the Allied forces in the Second World War. Frank Ryan himself had been captured by an Italian tank unit and held under sentence of death in a POW compound, his health failing. In a bizarre turn of events, he was 'abducted' from his Spanish prison by German intelligence operatives who considered him an Irish 'nationalist' useful for purposes of anti-British propaganda. Interned in Nazi Germany, abortive plans to return him to Ireland failed, and he refused active collaboration. He died there in 1944 of heart failure.

The authors note that the Irish volunteers "saw the war in Spain not simply as a clash of global ideologies but as a struggle of people like themselves - small holders, farm labourers and workers - against very familiar enemies: bishops, the army, and big landowners" (374). The Connolly Column "had a nationalist heart and internationalist eyes" (373).