

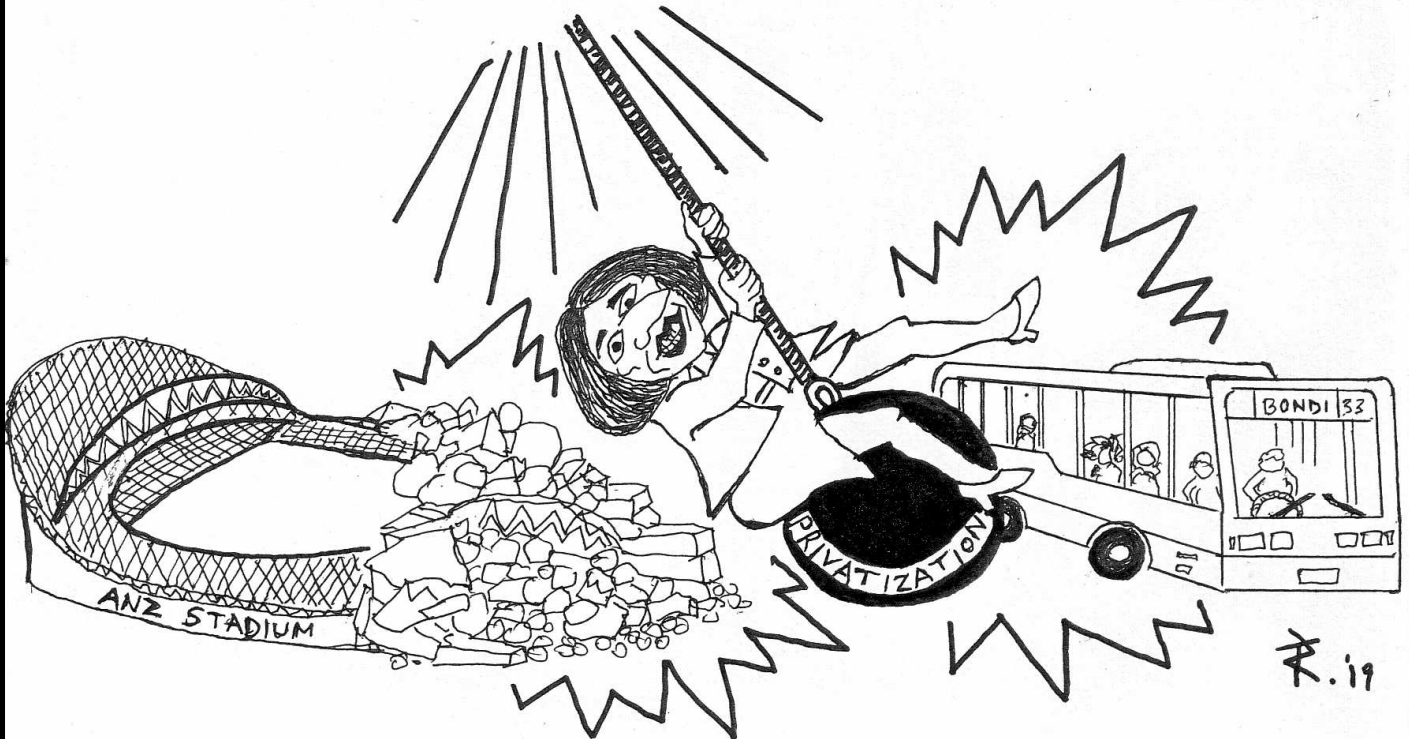
REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia
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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

GLADYS IS BACK! MORE CUTS TO COME! MOBILISE NOW TO FIGHT BACK!



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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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Publishing is not a crime – it is a fundamental constitutional right. The bringing of criminal charges against Julian Assange for publishing is an extremely dangerous path for a democracy to take.

The CIA has openly said that it is working to “take down” WikiLeaks following its release of thousands of files on the CIA – the largest leak of CIA documents in history. In April 2017, then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions said that arresting Assange was a priority while then CIA Director Mike Pompeo said: "Assange has no First Amendment rights."

The US government will use all its resources to force Assange's extradition from the United Kingdom and bring him into US custody. By contrast, WikiLeaks is solely funded by supporters and relies on personal donations to promote its journalism, which has a 100% record of accuracy.

Human Rights organizations are completely opposed to Assange's extradition while the United Nations has repeatedly called for his safe passage to another country.

Julian Assange needs your help to campaign against extradition: please donate to the WikiLeaks Defense fund today. Please also share this post widely and encourage others to donate.

Your contributions go solely to the campaign to support WikiLeaks public de-



fense. The Fund is fully audited by the Courage Foundation and is the only official fund endorsed by WikiLeaks. Monies raised will be used for the public, media and political campaign, not legal costs.

Thanks to Free Julian Assange Sydney

Solidarity for Julian Assange

Julian Assange's safety is in serious jeopardy. He has now been arrested and facing extradition from the United Kingdom to the United States where he faces life in prison. He and his campaign team urgently need your help. Elements in the US government have aggressively pressured Ecuador to withdraw his asylum status - the time for action is now!

Since 2010 the US government has pursued a secret Grand Jury investigation into WikiLeaks and the US government has already charged Assange in a sealed indictment. These charges are an attack on freedom of speech and the right to publish. If Assange is to be persecuted for publishing truthful information, then other news organizations and even individuals could be next.

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.

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

Do Elections Change Anything?

by *Crimson Coconut*

Another election in N.S.W. and soon another Federal Election. For us, as workers, nothing really changes. Change does not come from the people we elect. It comes when we, as a mass of people, believe and act together with desire to make change happen.

Labor failed in the NSW election despite the massive corruption, privatisations and cronyism of the Berejiklian Government. We are now saddled with 4 more years of job cuts, outsourcing and privatisations. The situation is desperate but not hopeless.

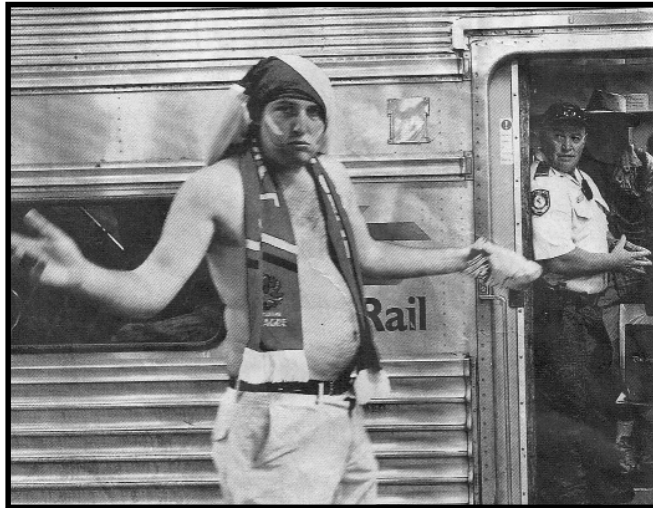
The problem for Labor was that it never stood for anything really. The West-Connex Motorway was not opposed, there was no real action aimed at stopping the privatisation of public transport and they were all for the Western Sydney Airport at Badgerys Creek despite a considerable amount of public opposition. The glaring failures of the Berejiklian Government were not opposed in general.

Except for one issue, Labor concentrated their campaign on the tearing down of Sydney's 20 year old Olympic Stadium at a total cost which could approach \$2.5 billion (source ABC News). During the election they pointed out the poor prioritisation of the project and the waste of public money which could be better spent on things such as transport, hospitals and schools which are in dire need of significant funding. There was no mention of the privatisation and outsourcing of services and loss of jobs already instituted in our hospitals, public transport and across the public sector.

The Transport Minister, Andrew Constance, in a highly contested election, for his seat of Bega, announced during the election that if elected he would remove drivers from all trains and continue the privatisation of public transport. This is despite a commitment from the RTBU that a deal has been struck on retaining train crews. Clearly Constance has a particular hatred for train crews, maybe that is because of their potential for bringing the system to its knees. That fear of the Trans-

port Minister is probably misplaced, as the power of trains crews in the union has not been used for several decades. How though will they react as their jobs disappear?

Will they just roll over without a substantial industrial campaign just as nothing in the way of a campaign was organised for the private operation of Inner West Buses. Luke Foley (previous Labor Opposition Leader) was there for a short while in the campaign to stop private owners operating the buses with some broad, vague, promises on reversing the private operation, yet nothing was organised with the workforce affected. Foley resigned as leader over a sexual assault matter and disappeared into



the ether along with the issue of privatisation of the buses.

Several public meetings, which included the Unions, Greens and Labor were held in Leichhardt Town Hall a while back to condemn the Berejiklian Government, but little else eventuated. At no stage was the general membership (those the most affected) of the union mobilised to create a movement which could have halted the proposals by bringing the Government to its knees by way of industrial action. By the time of the election Labor had a new leader and these issues which were ongoing were largely forgotten.

During the NSW election the RTBU produced a wish list called "State Election

Priorities 2019" which, while commendable, realistically was not going to be acted on by the Union, the LNP Government or the ALP.

It called for:

- The stopping of privatisation of public transport,
- The restoration of public operation of region 6 bus routes
- Saving the Bankstown Line by keeping it in public hands
- retaining train crews
- building trains and buses locally instead of overseas

..and so forth, all good aims and wishes.

F o u n d here: <https://www.rtbuexpress.com.au/rtbu-nsw-election-priorities/>

For the first time ever, that we can remember, the RTBU never openly advocated a vote for the ALP, so union members were left to decide who would best serve their interests. A wish-list it remains, without action by the community and union members.

It is clear that the unions cannot enunciate a clear plan to bring about the changes that they merely talk about. At the heart of the general malaise within the transport union leadership is their willingness to work with anyone except their own members.

The challenges ahead are considerable with a Government of vandals and wreckers re-elected. The privatisation project of public transport will continue now at an accelerated pace in wake of LNP statements during the election. That they have been returned will be all the justification that the Government needs. This is at a time when the ALP opposition is hamstrung and paralysed. The Greens and smaller parties have said that they will

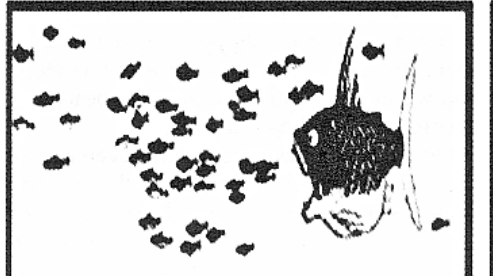
continue the fight for better and bigger public transport although the real fight must come from the community and those directly affected.

It is important for union activists and the workforce in public transport to keep abreast of developments that are likely to be raised in the further privatisation of public transport. In a way the failure of the union leadership in NSW to confront privatisation by mobilising is disappointing. While we all might also lament the election outcome, a Labor Government to save the day is also unrealistic considering their track record.

Class consciousness (workers realising their own strengths and where they stand in relation to the owners and bosses) only comes about through engaging in the struggle. For example, the failure of the union movement as a whole in effectively confronting the building of private tollways, at public expense, instead of investing in public health, education, public transport and so forth sets us all back. Only a full mobilisation of communities and the union movement, which must include all members, from the ground up can halt the wholesale selloff of publicly used services. A mass campaign is needed also to save public service jobs.

The failure of Labor and the unions in NSW to confront the reality of what is needed in NSW takes away the class ele-

ments so essential for understanding the situation from a worker's point of view. The ALP has become a poor imitation of the conservative LNP government. As some people in the press have said, the voters of NSW elected the real neo-liberal party rather than the pretend LNP. The tactic of union leaderships mobilising union

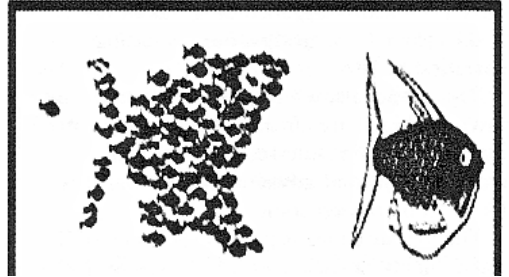


members to elect a Labor Government rather than fight what they are confronted with is fraught with danger. As we have said in the past, what if the ALP lost? Even if they won wouldn't it be capitulation to a new boss, a lesser evil?

It is we, on the shop floor, who must take up the fight for ending such things as the salary cap on public sector wages, fighting for our jobs and confronting the monster that is privatisation. The LNP have a renewed vigour after winning the election so comprehensively. The task ahead is going to be a difficult one. There are no union

elections in the pipeline during the majority of the remaining term of the Berejiklian Government. So there is no chance of getting a union leadership that is willing to confront the Neoliberal juggernaut.

Instead we need to organise and be prepared to build a movement of our own, with the general community, that is pre-



pared and capable of confronting the attack on all our services and all of us. If the unions come to the party and pitch-in all's good and well, but don't hold your breath waiting. Start talking to your fellow workers and get their ideas. Discuss and work together on the common objective of liberating us once and for all. We all have nothing to lose at this stage and everything to gain by working together.

A Tale of a Cover-up!

"A cover-up is an attempt, whether successful or not, to conceal evidence of wrongdoing, error, incompetence or other embarrassing information".

So, let's begin, it is first necessary to set the scene. About 30 years ago (mid 1980's) real business, the multinational corporations and their management gurus developed a management model to decentralise operations and create standalone business units focused purely on each area of expertise in a particular product and/or service. This required that a certain portion of the decision-making process be pushed down to the lower ranks of management. The idea being that this would provide a sense of ownership and management would be more inclined to feel as if they were running their own business rather than just working a job.

Decades later, along come our politicians and their lackeys in management, thinking in true deluded style that they've reinvented the wheel and they start creating

"business units" out of what are our public sector services, owned and paid for by the taxpayer. Of course, the idea was doomed from the start because government organizations are created by legislation to provide a service, including those that specifically override the profit motive in favor of a public good. The idea being that services are provided as a public good and not as a profit-making enterprise. A minor technicality in the minds of our politicians and their lackeys in management. They would simply visualize the future and make it so and of course when you don't really need to make profit and tax revenue never runs out, well anything is possible right, you can even pretend you're running a business.

To give this "new" vision the facade of credibility, low level managers had to be given fancy real business-like titles like director, executive director, lead manager etc, inflated salaries and of course certain

decision-making authority so that they would act and behave as though they were business owners and not just overpaid lackeys, in public sector jobs.

As you might imagine this in itself requires a certain amount of manipulation of the laws, but we might cover that another time.

For now, our tale focuses on low level managers being given high levels of discretion in their decision-making and wouldn't you know it, that is exactly a "condition which may allow corruption to occur"

And so, it begins, "flight crew" and "team members" are recruited into fancy titled management roles and given high levels of discretion in their decision-making. They soon discover that their ineptitude is rewarded as long as they toe the line fed to them by the higher ups. Not only that the higher ups say that they will support all their inept decisions and they do! This is a win – win, the consequence of their ineptitude is reward! As long as they mouth the "business mantra" Happy days!

Pretty soon they discover that they can get away with pretty much anything, like intimidation and bullying, misrepresentation and coercion, maybe even timesheet fraud! Because after all, they're running a

business, right! You wouldn't expect business owners to be tied to a clock or a Kronos device! That's for the plebs on the front line not for "the management team".

Hmmm, timesheet fraud! Did someone say "timesheet fraud"? Now we all know that one will get ya! And we all know there's no honor amongst thieves!

Out comes a whistleblower! Usually, one of the in crowd someone they think they can trust, or at least don't need to be too careful around, until that long awaited and promised promotion goes to the wrong person and then boom! - ICAC. But despite all the pretense of running a business, it's still one government department talking to another. And at the higher levels they tip each other off.

Time for damage control!

A couple of managers get put on BS plans, quietly of course. One even gets promoted and yet another gets "an unexpected opportunity" at Transport, which just

coincidentally happens to be for 6 months. (6-month "regression" to a better job – now that's punishment) A classic move in



government damage control.

But despite the facade, they know that you can't really keep things secret and talk of managers committing fraud and not being sacked for it would spread like wild fire. Not to mention the dent it would put into the façade that covers up the whole secretive, authoritarian mess with many communication and technology problems. The cavalier culture, the broken systems and poor management. A management style

and culture that is secretive, authoritarian, silo-based and non-consultative. And of course, they reject any feedback they don't like as negative comment!

That's a recipe for disaster!

And as the old saying goes – never let a good crisis go to waste.

So, they deflect attention away from management wrong doing and coverup by scapegoating frontline employees for tapping off 4 min early. And they claim good governance as a pretense for doing so!

Focus is now deflected away from management wrongdoing and coverup and they continue with their attack on workplace right, pay and conditions,

with greater invigoration, because now they have the conviction of and ICAC investigation to back them up! Never mind that the investigation was targeted at management.

Oh, and the "minor technicality" of a 4 min "paper" saving across a few thousand employees will go a long way towards padding someone's resume!

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

Leichhardt Depot News

RW: What were your impressions of the wildcat strike "mass sickie" at the depot in early December?

Leichhardt Driver1: 74 drivers were involved in the action. On the next day all drivers who took sickies were taken to the Fair Work Australia Court. Those who were regarded as taking "illegal" industrial action had their "industrial allowance" removed. Whilst some of those who had medical certificates, but regarded as taking illegal industrial action weren't paid for the sickie. The "industrial allowance" was reinstated after a month or so.

RW: What is the latest at the depot?

Leichhardt Driver2: The most important news has been a wildcat strike at Leichhardt on a Monday in early Dec. It involved mass sickies and was over all issues, rather than one specific one. It was treated by management as industrial action. Next day the drivers taking sickies were taken to the Fair Work Australia Court where those considered taking "illegal" industrial action temporarily lost their industrial allowance.

The December roster/timetable changes had led to a major tightening of running times. With many runs lacking any layover breaks, due to the unrealistic running times imposed. We have to complete our journals on the road, with the loss of the layover break. Latest news is that these running times will be reviewed in March. We still have not heard of the decision of the industrial commission regarding the dispute over coverage of Region 6 between the RTBU and the TWU. (See Burwood Depot News.) However, 70% of new drivers at Leichhardt are joining the RTBU.

RW: How have you finding the situation at the depot since privatisation?

Leichhardt Driver2: The talk by Transit Systems that there would be no changes for 18 months has proven to be just propaganda. Since day one there have been changes. When the depot had a shortage of drivers some months ago, and most running times were completely unrealistic, with drivers running late for their meal breaks, the bosses replaced the 30 minutes meal breaks with 20 minutes "crib breaks". Whilst DOC's were common. Whilst the time drivers were taking in-

creased sickies or threatening to in early Dec. may very well have precipitated management to revamp some bus running times in the drivers favour and put on more drivers.

As of late March, the situation has changed as we now have a surplus of drivers, with plenty of spares. Now the bosses have engaged in a new savage attack. They have been phasing putting most AM shift drivers onto day shifts which are mostly broken with 12 hours spreads. As a result these drivers are having their daily shifts spread over longer hours. They are stuck at work for longer hours with more layup time between shift halves. Upstairs at Leichhardt in the lounge you can see a lot of drivers who live out West and are on these broken shifts, snoozing off.

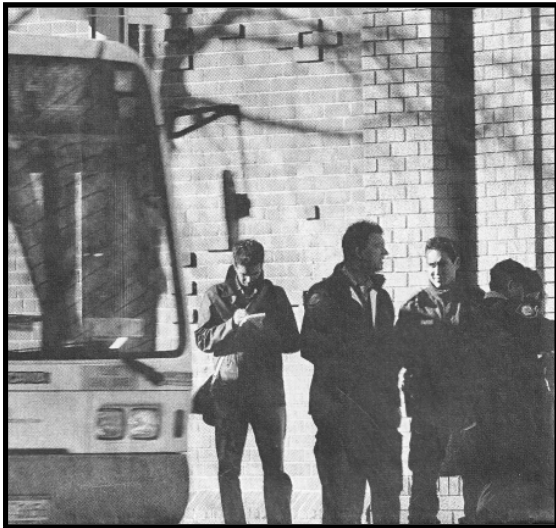
Other news is that there is a big push by management to have new drivers join the TWU. They are putting the hard word on them. However, everyone knows how hopeless the TWU officials are in servicing their members in Transit Systems. Whilst the TWU Enterprise Agreement conditions are worse than the RTBU EBA such as their broken shifts having 12 1/2 hours spreads.

Burwood Depot News

RW: What are your impressions of the wildcat strike “mass sickie” at Leichhardt in early Dec.?

Burwood Driver1: We have received contradictory information about the number of drivers involved in the action. The highest estimate made is 70 to 80. There was no wildcat action at Burwood. Latest news is that the drivers involved in the action including those taking sickies not involved, were taken the day after the wildcat to the Fair Work Australia Court for taking alleged “illegal” industrial action. Even one Burwood driver who took a sickie on that day was hauled into the Court. However he was able to prove his sickie was taken on legitimate grounds and got off the hook. The newly elected union officials are keeping us in the dark over the whole affair and its ramifications. We do receive texts from our union rep 3-4 times a week. However, he doesn't seem to be on the same wavelength as the union officials and even he appears to be kept in the dark on developments and issues.

RW: How are you finding the situation since privatisation?



BD1: Our situation has been going down and down. We have had an estimated 4% cut in our pay since privatisation. However, the union officials claim we will get this money back. This reduction in pay has been achieved by the bosses reducing our shifts and the bosses putting on more new drivers. In the case of a Kingsgrove driver, his shift was supposed to be 7 hours. Now it has been reduced to 5 hours 55 minutes. The new drivers are being put on AM's, PM's and Bendies and as they don't get the 15% allowances on these shifts, the bosses can cut costs.

RW: What are the latest developments with the court case between the TWU and RTBU over coverage of Region 6 drivers?

BD1: The judge has made his decision. He ruled that “let the market decide”. At Burwood no new drivers are joining the TWU. There is only one TWU member at the depot and he had been previously a truckie where he joined the TWU.

RW: What are the latest developments with management?

BD1: Behind the scenes management has been busily hatching a new plot. They consider we are now over staffed in Region 6 so they intend to launch a “discipline crack down”. So as to create pretexts for culling drivers on the basis that they are not performing enough.

RW: How are you finding the situation since the Dec. Timetable changes?

Burwood Driver2: Following the changes we were facing a significant tightening of running times on routes. The bosses were continually tightening the schedules so it's ever harder to meet them. Particularly hard hit were the running times on the weekends. In regard to the 461 you had only 5 minutes to get from the depot to the start on the run. We have also noticed a big increase in accidents affecting the new drivers often one and two a day.

RW: How are finding the job since privatisation?

Burwood Driver3: One thing I have noticed is the major decline in the mechanical section staffing. The other day, whilst on the road I needed a change over as a result of a damaged mirror. I had to wait 3 hours for the changeover. Under the STA, in the old days mechanics would be sent rapidly to do the repair on the road.

Waverley Depot News

RW: What's the latest at the depot?

Waverley Busie: The most significant development is the major cuts in pay many drivers are facing. Until recently, you could earn a very good income. That's all gone now. Today most just earn an ordinary wage. A major factor contributing to this situation is favouritism by Transport for NSW toward Transit Systems. They are now getting the longer runs and consequently more lucrative routes. As they are paid by TfNSW per kilometre of runs, and they already pay low taxes on their gross income. Whilst we are just getting mostly the shorter runs. As a result of the loss in pay many drivers are unable to cope with high Sydney rents, mortgage repayments and massive power bills, causing disillusionment with the job and a high turnover of drivers, with the STA unable to keep drivers. We could have tackled this pay reduction problem some years back

when the lightning strike occurred over the Region 6 privatisation, all depots should have taken wildcat industrial action and pushed for an increase in our hourly pay from \$28 to \$38 per hour.

RW: What are your impressions of the effects of route changes affecting the STA eastern depots and Transit Systems?

WB: With the tramways construction, and no buses going to Circular Quay anymore, Waverley buses such as the 30 route buses are now not entering the CBD, but converging in Zetland, Alexandria and Redfern. Whilst the 333 and 380 still go into the CBD. These suburbs are now awash with buses. At peak hour every street seems to be packed with buses, left, right and centre from the STA eastern depots and the private company, contributing to major traffic congestion in the area. They are using every space they can find. Recently I have noticed 4 buses including a bendi parked in a row in one of these small back streets. Whilst I was recently speaking to a coffee shop owner in Zetland, who commented on how he had never seen buses including bendies parking there. In regard to the depot, bus turnaround times on many of our routes are a lot less generous than existed in the past. I don't think schedulers know the full story of the difficulties drivers have in doing their runs.

RW: What is the latest with privatisation?

WB: In late January 4 to 5 representatives from Transit Systems were seen “sniffing” around the depot. In particular they were noticed eyeing off the depot administration building. Is it likely the NSW Govt. will give the green light to build high rise apartments at the front and in the air space above the northern end of the depot? A similar development occurred at Nth Sydney depot in the past. A major obstacle to such a development at Waverley would be the big campaign being currently waged by locals against high rises and associated traffic congestion in the area. Whilst intriguingly a small but very significant change has been made to the account details on Transit Systems Region 6 buses. Now “West” in brackets has been added to Transit Systems. Does this mean the Eastern suburbs depots is next in their sights?

RW: What is the situation with data collecting on drivers?

WB: The bosses are disregarding the issues of whether drivers are safe and are they doing their job. Instead with the data they are now collecting, they are focusing on such issues as whether drivers are leaving on time. This data can seriously misrepresent whether drivers are doing their jobs. This playing around with data on this

and that about workers which happens in many companies and Govt. Departments can be used to make up things against you and so target you for the sack.

RW: How is "Madam Lash" doing these days?

WB: She hasn't been taking her medication. She has upset the upper crust and has been hauled through the coals for disregarding a commuter complaint. She just wants to run her own race and stay in her office waving the whip at drivers and getting rid of them. She already has a bad reputation for her past spying on drivers. She is not engaging and causes hassles. The previous boss was known to be engaging with workers. Why is the STA keeping this type of person as the boss?

RW: What are your impressions of the incident involving a Kingsgrove Driver causing an accident resulting in two fatalities through his usage of his mobile phone on the road?

WB: Have the standards for drivers education and training dropped since the private company takeover of Region 6? As a result of the shortage of drivers which affected the company, the bosses were desperate to take on new drivers and appear to be turning a blind eye on issues such as drivers' mobile use while on the road, which has been a big issue for ten years. Under the STA, the bosses were very strict on this issue. They even required drivers at terminuses to stand outside their buses or sit sideways in their buses when using mobiles to avoid targeting by the corporate media by being photographed and set up for some hostile story. I recently spoke with a Tempe driver who expressed disappointment with the new outfit's management style. He complained they have been "importing" drivers from all over the place. Their major concern has been to save money on training and turning a blind eye on such issues as mobile phone usage and contributing to a degrading of the job.

RW: What are the latest developments with the Light Rail in the Eastern Suburbs?

WB: Berejiklian's Rolls Royce white elephant will cost \$3 Billion and has ruined many businesses and jobs in the area. Already the budget has blown out three times. It will take over a hundred years to get the money back. It's likely this expenditure will never be recovered. Those most benefiting from the project would be the racing and gambling industries associated with Randwick Racecourse, and South's Juniors Leagues Club. Whilst when the Light Rail is fully operational next year, people will see a lot more traffic congestion in the East. Particularly Alison Road will be affected with 2 crossings and Anzac Parade with three crossings and generally slowing the flow of traffic on the major roads. A significant problem affecting the extension outside the Prince of Wales hospital, is that the extension work will disrupt entry to the Casualty Section for ambulances. When the state elections were coming up, Gladys was having a "tidying up" and fast tracking of the extension work with barriers removed and bitumen laid on the roadway. Still seems the extensions won't be completed for another year. Then look out for your jobs.

RW: How are you finding the situation since the privatisation of Region 6?

Waverley Driver1: One thing I have noticed is that the bosses are now cancelling a lot of runs. Before privatisation, they would always try to find replacement buses. This is further hurting commuters.

Santa Comes Late to Waverley Drivers

RW: What is the latest with management?

Waverley Driver2: As a personal initiative of the manager, she has given us an unwelcome "Post Xmas Present". It's a 5 point rating system affecting all drivers, both those with 6 months or less on the job and those with many years. The points include on-time-running, number of sickies, discipline breaches, accidents and commuter complaints. On the basis of this system, qualification for better shifts and other re-

wards such as bendi shifts which are more highly paid than normal driving shifts are determined. Whenever drivers are dragged into the office, the manager refers to whether they are higher or lower in this rating. It is being used to discriminate against the older drivers. In the past you needed to be on the job for 8 years or so to get on the bendi shift. Now new drivers with less than 6 months on the job are getting this work. As obviously they haven't had time on the job to accumulate many black marks and negatively affect their rating. Whilst, older drivers are particularly being targeted by the 'Kellies' for on the road inspections. It all seems to be aimed at driving the older drivers off the job.

RW: What are your impressions of the union at the depot?

WD2: The woman who was elected as our union rep, prior to the union election was very loud mouthed on issues. Since being elected she has quietened down. In late Feb. two drivers were sacked. She did nothing over it. Rather than confronting the burning seniority and sackings issues, she just refers to other less important ones. There is a consensus amongst many of us that if the Libs are re-elected in the March elections, the depot will be sold off. So many are supporting the ALP in the elections.

Kingsgrove Depot News

RW: How are you finding the situation since privatisation?

Kingsgrove Driver: All the new guys are joining the TWU, rather than the RTBU. They are all coming under various subtle pressures from management to join the TWU. As a result, they are under worse wages than us. As under the TWU enterprise agreement their rate of normal wages is lower as well as their penalty rates, than with the RTBU. It's looking with the next EBA are wages/penalties will go down toward TWU standards. Whilst eventually, it's looking we will be all under the TWU conditions regime.

Clarence: This Audit was carried out to prepare V/Line for Privatisation, but because the ALP was returned with an increased majority at the last State election, the report has been pigeonholed.

Rastus: The report may be pigeonholed, but eventually the Liberals will be returned and this report will once again surface.

Emily: It may surface, but the Victorian Public will not wear it. The only reason V/Line was not privatised during the term

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW we will conduct a roundup of events at V/Line over the last twelve months. Once again Head Office staff, station staff, Conductors and Drivers come together to discuss these events. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.

RW: We will start with the first issue, PRIVATISATION. What is the current situation?

Sheona: A couple of months ago State Treasury sent a firm of accountants in to do an audit of V/Line.

of the previous Liberal State Government was that they only had a one seat majority in Government and the National Party would not have it.

Abner: With V/Line adventures over the last four years it is a wonder the Liberal Party do not say anything during the campaign.

RW: We will now discuss the issues of Dismissals.

Abner: This is still an ongoing issue. Employees on PROBATION are the ones being dismissed. At Spencer Street, the Acting Manager dismissed an employee with only a couple of days to go before their probation expired. The employee was called into the Acting Manager's office and told their work during their probation was unsatisfactory. The employee wanted a Union Delegate to be present. The Acting Manager said, "get into the office" and was terminated.

Clarence: The employee told the Acting Manager that the matter is not over and it will be heading to Fair Work. The case may be lost, but it may prevent future dismissals.

Jethro: The problem with the Customer Service Staff is no one will take on the Union Delegate's position. If employees are in trouble then a Union Organiser is brought in. Lacking this, the Conductors' Delegate or Drivers' Delegate have been known to defend these employees.

RW: What about the Booking Clerk who was sacked?

Sheona: This case was heard by Fair Work over three days and a fair amount of V/Line practices were exposed. As this issue of Sparks was being prepared, no decision has been handed down.

Emily: As a result of the case another employee has been stood down.

RW: Why?

Jethro: The employee put in for a Day's Leave to attend the hearing of the Dismissed Booking Clerk at Fair Work and give him some support. The application for leave was rejected.

Roscoe: It was obvious the application was knocked back as V/Line did not want the sacked employee being supported.

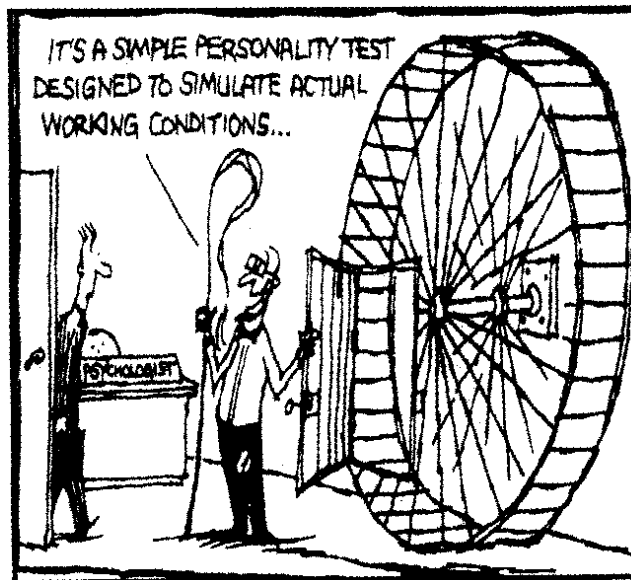
Elrond: The employee turned up at the hearing at Fair Work was noticed by V/Line management and as a result was stood down. As this issue of Sparks was being prepared the employee is still stood down.

Arlene: V/Line are now standing down employees on minor issues such as passenger complaints.

Rastus and Roscoe: The reason these employees are stood down is to keep someone in Human Resources in a job. They don't care about the stress employees are placed under.

Olwyn: We conductors put up with a lot from the public on the trains and CSM's are doing what management tells them. They do not have the guts to stand up to Human Resources.

Rastus and Roscoe: You know what drivers think about CSM's and as we have said in a previous issue of Sparks. If you are stood down come into work and discuss the issue about why you have been stood down with your fellow employees. Also hold on the job meetings on the station concourse. V/line cannot stop a Union



Meeting being held on the platform at Spencer Street.

RW: What is the story about managers selling redundant assets?

Oswald: Some managers were caught selling these assets.

RW: What are the assets?

Abner: Redundant furniture and other fittings.

Olywn: What makes the employees upset is these managers make money out of flogging off the assets while they are giving employees final warnings and dismissals over minor issues.

Clarence: An employee was stood down years ago for selling redundant assets but he was able to talk his way out of allegations and is still on the job.

Jethro: Not being a member of a union may have helped. You see V/Line looks after non-unionists.

Clarence: They have stood down an employee for being ten minutes late because they signed on at the current time. V/Line said the employee was defrauding V/Line.

Abner: They many have done the wrong thing and you were once allowed grace of ten minutes if your train to work was late but what this employee has committed is minor compared to what these managers have done. They have committed THEFT.

Oswald: The thefts are gossip around V/Line. You can hear staff discussing the matter in meal rooms.

Rastus and Roscoe: Even the drivers are talking about the matter in the meal rooms.

Sparks: What about the matter of the letters sent to V/Line employees for being late to work?

Jethro: The matter was taken to Fair Work Australia and V/Line has been told to delete these letters from the employees records.

Clarence: In previous issues we have stated that the majority of the persons were late by under fifteen minutes. The trains were not delayed so why was V/Line picking on these employees?

Rastus and Roscoe: The reason V/Line picked on these employees was payback for the employees throwing out V/Line's proposal to modify the EBA. This matter was discussed in issue 159.

RW: What is the situation as regards the Talent Pool.

Rastus: There is now a Talent Pool for the drivers and existing V/Line staff and external recruits are placed in the pool. After twelve months if you are still in the pool, you have to reapply.

Roscoe: There is a story going around on social media about an applicant who applied for a conductor's position and was successful in his interview. He was placed in the Talent Pool.

Abner: You are in the Talent Pool and you hope you will get a phone call within twelve months saying you are in the next conductor class.

Oswald: V/Line has the habit of contacting people and saying the class will start next week.

Sheona: Human Resources does not show any common sense. They should give an external applicant at least two week's notice so they can give their existing employer two week's notice.

Roscoe: If you give notice that before two weeks you could lose your entitlements.

Abner: This applicant was contacted by someone at V/Line and told they were in the next conductor class.

RW: What happened.

Abner: The applicant resigned his current job and waited to start in the conductor class.

Sheona: The applicant waited and after a few weeks rang V/Line enquiring when he was to commence the class. A few weeks later, the applicant was informed he was not successful.

Rastus: We do not know how the applicant felt, but one of the drivers informed myself that one of the Chief Executives at V/Line was sent an email expressing disappointment in not obtaining the conductor's position.

Sheona: It has been rumoured that v/Line has sent the person a letter apologising for what has happened, but did not offer the applicant a position at V/line.

Roscoe: The applicant would have been devastated. They would now have to look for another job and because of the email sent to the Chief Executive would be on a blacklist.

Emily: You can see why V/line employees and the Union hate these Talent Pools. What has been exposed in previous Sparks have shown Talent Pools for what they are A FRAUD.

RW: Once again we have run out of space. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in this issue. We hope the Booking Clerk who was sacked is reinstated. As for the applicant who was given false hopes of obtaining a conductor's position, V/Line give this applicant a position.

Rastus and Roscoe: Once again in having the final say, these managers who were flogging off redundant assets should be terminated and the matter referred to IBAC. As for the applicant who was cheated out of the conductor's position, V/Line should give this person a position

in V/Line when a vacancy occurs. Think of the stress this person has gone through. As for the person who told the applicant that he was in the next conductors' class, you should be held accountable for your actions. Unfortunately you will keep you position. Enough said.

STOP PRESS

As this issue goes to press, Fair Work Australia has handed down a decision in favour of V/Line. The sacking of the booking clerk will stand. One hour after the decision was handed down. The other booking clerk who was stood down was sacked. More details next issue.

BRITAIN TODAY

No Lovefor Deliveroo! A Reflection on Organising and Mobilising in the "gig" Economy

The below article was written in the build up to, and immediately after the first strike of Deliveroo workers in Manchester, and the first strike I've organised. In recent months, Deliveroo workers have been on strike in Birmingham, Bristol, Cheltenham, London and Nottingham over poor pay and worsening conditions. A number of these strikes have been self organised by the riders, and others have been supported by the IWW and IWGB. I've always thought it important that organisers and workers reflect on their personal experiences and try to draw out lessons from this. There is no real conclusion to this article, as it documents a struggle which has yet to run its course. You can help me write one by organising Deliveroo riders in your city or town until we win.

The build up:

A rider was given an IWW Couriers Network leaflet by our members, who do weekly outreach in Manchester city centre, and have been doing this for about a year and a half. Whilst we'd picked up members and contacts through this, we'd never really been able to mobilise a significant number to take action, or gain an understanding of who the social leaders in Manchester's riders were and meet them.

I was contacted by the national courier's network organiser on the 1st Feb 2019, who informed us about a rider who'd received one of our leaflets and wanted to organise a strike in Manchester. Myself and the national organiser were added to WhatsApp group of 50+ riders in Manchester. This ballooned over the course of the build up to the strike to over 130 riders and supporters from across the country, although only a minority expressed interest at the start.

To ascertain who was keen to take strike action, we organised a meeting on the 4th. This meeting was also to plan and discuss what they wanted to do. Every organiser will know the worried dread – the feeling only one person will show up to the meeting you've called. 11 did! The majority of these riders, like a lot of the full-time riders in Manchester, were first or second-generation immigrants, predominantly coming from the Middle East and Eritrea. The meeting was held in English while simultaneously being translated into Arabic and maybe even another language I didn't recognise! They talked about their issues with Deliveroo, and action they'd taken before – one rider described a march on the boss they'd tried, although had ended up divided and weakened by a Deliveroo manager. They talked about times they'd tried to organise strikes before, but nothing had come of it. This should be a reminder to us all that working class self-organisation does exist, and happens today in Britain – we need to find and support it where possible.

They voted for 5 demands:

- £5 a drop, £8 for double orders.

- £10 an hour waiting time.
- £1 per mile travelled.
- No deliveries outside of the city centre zone.
- Allow motorcyclists equal access to orders as cyclists.

The majority of these are demands that have been common across couriers strikes in the UK recently – from the recent Bristol and London strikes to the ones held in solidarity with fast food workers taking action on October the 4th.

The riders voted for strike action on the 14th, between 11am to 3pm outside the Deliveroo Manchester office, and for the IWW to support this. No postal ballot needed, as there's no trade union laws to stop "self employed" workers taking action – just a hands in the air vote (and then later emojis on Whatsapp!). Proper inspiring, proper romantic old school socialism brought into the 21st century. Although I should say don't listen to me for romantic advice – organising a strike on Valentine's Day is unlikely to impress your partner! Riders in Bournemouth, Leeds and York (IWW) and Bristol, Cheltenham and Horsham (IWGB affiliated) also voted to take action on that day.

We had 10 days to spring into action, and mobilise for the biggest – and most important – action we'd ever taken in Manchester!

Our branch meeting on the 6th was one of the best attended, and most productive meeting we've ever had. Every member came away with tasks to do to prepare for the day – new members writing up press releases and leafleting riders, members getting materials ready for the day. An organiser's dream! We were messaging every left group in Manchester to share and support the action on the day, to an overwhelming positive response. It's all too easy to fall into the trap of "Oh the TUC,

the Labour Party won't support us" etc. The majority of these groups were really keen to share and promote the event, and a massive shout out to Stockport Momentum and Manchester Trades Council (as well as other groups) for turning up on the day!

In the run up to the strike, we contacted media across Manchester and the UK, promoting the event. We got positive coverage from the Morning Star and the Institute of Employment Rights before the strike, which really boosted riders' morale. We only got coverage from local papers after the strikers blocking the road and getting police attention – a lesson for anyone doing press releases!

The day before the strike, two of us went around as many restaurants as we could, informing them of the strike, and asking them to turn their Deliveroo accounts off for the period of the strike. We let them know that orders were likely to be extremely late, with 50-70 riders on strike at least. For them, it'd affect their reputation with their customers. Obviously for us, them turning off the apps meant that any strike breakers wouldn't have work, and Deliveroo would have reduced profits during that time. The links we'd made with hospitality workers in the years before hand had been helpful with this – we had workers contact us beforehand asking whether or not we should turn the app off. On the day, there was an overwhelmingly positive response from hospitality workers – we visited 30 restaurants and take-aways in Manchester, and the majority decided to turn off their Deliveroo accounts. It's amazing what you can get away with as a white guy in a shirt and tie – on the news that Deliveroo would be on strike one worker had to hide her glee when she thought we were from Deliveroo. When we told her we were from the union, she burst out in support, following us out of the restaurant pledging her support. We posted about this on Facebook, and were approached by one of our members who asked how he could help in between leaving uni and meeting his parents for dinner. One quick email and printing session later, and he'd covered another 25 restaurants on Oxford Rd. An example of "distributed organising" in 20 minutes!

The strike:

At 10.15, Manchester branch activists met at our office in Partisan, 20 minutes from the picket. As we were leaving the office,

we were stopped by a woman who wanted to know what our signs were. We explained, she smiled and told us her daughter wasn't working today because of the strike, and asked to take a picture to send her and her son who used to work for Deliveroo in Manchester. After, we were stopped by other pedestrians asking us what the signs were. All were supportive. The best reason to be late, to be honest!

At 11 am, we assembled at the top of Redhill St, waiting for riders and supporters to turn up. Turns out Deliveroo strikers have



worse punctuality than lefties! I was told by one of the lead riders that we'd also be picketing their St Peter's Square office (a much more central location) – news to me, but good news! The first 45 minutes or so were so awkward – all the strikers were in one group and most our members and supporters were in a separate one. Reminded me of awkward school discos!

After some cajoling by myself, the leading riders and other activists, at 12pm we moved from the top of Redhill Street to picket their Redhill St office, only to be met by a locked iron gate of the refurbished old mill that's now home to Deliveroo and other startups in Manchester. We were informed by security that Deliveroo had sent all their workers home for the day before our strike! Redhill St is Deliveroo's hub, where they ask riders to attend if they have any problems (usually asked to email them etc). Clearly didn't expect 40 riders and their supporters to turn up with problems of low pay, precarious jobs and demanding a collective solution. Still, migrant precarious workers locked out of a mill in Ancoats made for a great photo opportunity – a real throwback to the 1800s!

After we sent a delegation in to confirm the offices were vacant, we set off en masse for Manchester's other Deliveroo office.

At 1pm we left Redhill Street, marching down Oldham Road and Portland Street to St Peter's Square. It was great feeling to take the streets, marching down the road unopposed with riders so often viewed as part of the background in Manchester streets. The police tried to stop us, but with half of us on bikes and half of us on foot they couldn't decide whether we should be

on the road or the pavement! Regardless, we headed to Deliveroo's central Manchester office, now protected by Greater Manchester Police. One of the riders commented "It's not a strike if the police haven't turned up." – the best words you can hear on Valentine's Day?

For the next two hours we chanted and demonstrated, leafleting passers-by and enjoying ourselves. It's one of the few strikes I've been on where I've seen people smiling and enjoying themselves, and it's one of the lasting memories I'll take away from this.

At the end one of the riders gave Deliveroo an ultimatum of 2 weeks to respond to our demands, and if they weren't satisfactory, we'd strike again. I gave my first speech to a group of striking workers, telling them that their strike had inspired workers in 5 other cities to take action that day too, to their cheers and applause. I told them we'd be there by their side for as long as they wanted to take action, and that I had no love for Deliveroo, but all the love in my heart for them. We shook hands and parted ways. As we walked off, we passed one of the Eritrean riders translating what had been discussed to other riders there. To our amusement, we were told by one of our riders that Deliveroo was offering boosts for riders immediately after the strike. Looks like we had an effect! That evening another rider told us restaurants had been telling him Deliveroo had hired security for restaurants to protect them from the strikers – it's a shame they can't spend that money on meeting the demands on their workers.

Lessons to be learned:

Organising a strike is hard work!

To gain these contacts took months of leafletting, and was built on the hard work done by our members in Wales, Scotland, Lon-

don and Bristol. In Manchester, we were only able to do this due to a number of activists having flexible or part time jobs – short notice meetings at 11am, collecting printing between 9 to 5, supporting the riders on a work day on the picket can't be done by people working 9 to 5 jobs. Increasingly I think it's more important that the IWW experiments with part time or full-time paid organisers to get around this, as I can't see this being sustainable any other way.

We also needed to go out of our comfort zone – the Whatsapp group was chaotic at first, and had riders of all backgrounds there, not just the lefty activists we're used to talking to. Organising over Whatsapp, and organising workers in the "gig economy" brings with it new and unique challenges. More than half of the off-topic conversations I can think of wouldn't have happened in person meetings – at least I hope not! As leftists, we believe in unions, and strikes, as a transformative process for the class. Whilst I could see this happening in front of my eyes in terms of their understanding of class, I found it hard to see this in terms of other beliefs held. I'm not sure there's an easy answer for this particular situation. As much as possible, we tried to keep this focused on the strike at hand to mitigate these issues. One notable moment was when a rider sceptical of the strike posted a Ben Shapiro (an alt right Youtuber) video in the chat, and the negative reactions the video got were amazing. Scab DESTROYED by REACTS and STRIKERS!!! It was a small, but very real lesson to the internet left that's so worried about the alt right on Youtube.

We also couldn't go into this with the standard approach of recruiting workers to the union "We can represent you in grievances and disciplinaries, if we get 50% membership we can get a recognition agreement which means X, Y and Z will be better." So much of this doesn't apply to self-employed workers, regardless of whether they legally are limb b workers or are genuinely self-employed. We had to meet these workers where they were at – they were willing to take action and wanted as many people as possible to get involved.

But it's worth it!

The working class is out there, and ready to fight – from migrant riders organising marches on the boss, to a whole strike at short notice, to hearing one of them say "Our unity is our union, and our strength!" (the best Valentine's day present anyone could wish for!) or "It's not a strike if the police don't get called" and seeing the group gradually understand more and more the basic principles of a strike – unity, mass participation, support from others, workers as leaders was amazing! A strike is the best education a worker can get in seeing where their interests diverge from their bosses' – we tried to talk to Deliveroo at one office and were locked out, at the other police prevented us from entering the building they were in.

Ask for help:

There is absolutely no way I could have done what I did without the help of organisers in the IWW Couriers Network, and the help and advice of experienced trade union and community organisers in the build up to the day. Dividing tasks between riders and members on the day and in the build up was crucial to organising the strike. I can't thank these members and my friends enough, and a short paragraph in this article is nowhere near the recognition they deserve. The riders knew that the help we provided was crucial. Their previous, self-organised attempts at action hadn't gone as well as this.

Put workers in charge of their own fight:

From picking the strike date, location, demands, and what we did on the day, Deliveroo riders were in charge of their own struggle. They were the ones leading the chants and giving speeches, they were the ones deciding what we did on the day – our members and supporters were there to back them up, provide them with resources and advice. Frankly, I don't think they'd have felt as confident or up for it if they weren't in charge of their own struggle, and we wouldn't have had as many involved if they weren't in charge. It takes a huge amount of trust in workers to do this –

there were so many times where I doubted they'd bring enough people for us to make a difference. I was wrong. I've never been more glad to be.

Media is important:

Press coverage from Morning Star and Institute of Employment Rights, as well as That's Manchester and local journalism students was really important in boosting our confidence in the build up to the strike. It's a shame it wasn't covered more widely, but it's to be expected by media owned by, and ran by a class with interests opposed to ours. All the more reason to support independent working-class media!

But we can make our own:

The Manchester Evening News only wanted to cover us after we blocked Portland Street. Photos of our leafleting and outreach before the strike and live streaming of the picket was crucial to let people know about our campaign. If people see you preparing for a protest or strike on Facebook and Twitter (we posted pictures of us leafleting riders, giving letters to restaurants, making placards etc), they're more likely to turn up to an event, as they think it'll be good. Unions of a similar size, organising similar constituents (I'm thinking ACORN, IWGB, UVW etc) have learned this lesson really well. It's time for us to catch up – and quick!

The left is helpful:

Knowing we'd bring 20 to 30 supporters along on the day, as well as media contacts, placards, loud speakers really buoyed riders confidence in the build up to the strike. As a union we played a vital role in pushing riders in other cities to take action alongside them, which again boosted their confidence.

But working class leaders are vital:

We couldn't have done this without a few key riders, who know who they are. Workers that other workers look up to, listen to and follow are important. Get them on board, and you have a company on the run and a city that's stopped to listen to you – if only for a few hours. *Edited*

ITALIAN LABOUR NEWS

6/4/19 In defence of Aldo Milani - national coordinator of the SI Cobas in Italy, who will soon be threatened by a 2-year sentence and 4-month prison sentence. In defence of other trade unionists threatened by repression.

Aldo Milani was unjustly accused of "blackmail" in the form of organizing a series of strikes together with slaughterhouse employees in the province of Modena. The lawsuit had its finale at the end of March, the sentence is to be taken in the coming days. Similar reprisals for

employee activities have been met by other trade unionists and activists who are today struggling with court trials or penalties for participating in

strikes.

The logistics sector in Italy - one of the key areas of the economy in Poland and in the world - has been a place of almost daily

strikes and labour unrest for about 10 years. In recent years, this movement has spread from logistics to other industries such as agribusiness, trade, ceramics and metallurgy.

In the previous century, the majority of workers' movements fought for more favourable rights and contracts. Today, concerns are aroused by the order based on the systematic violation of national collective agreements and the most basic safeguards regarding wages, health and safety and working hours. This labour movement restored rights and dignity to thousands of workers (mostly immigrants) previously silenced, reduced to half-enclaved: poorly paid, blackmailed, forced to work under inhumane conditions. The movement brought to light a densely woven network of lawlessness, tax fraud and mafia infiltration.

However, the police and public prosecutor's offices have so far often captured workers' strikes and anxieties in terms of "violating public order." Employee rights in many logistics supply chains have therefore been recovered only by forms of struggle considered illegal, for example, plant and street gate locks and wild strikes. These gains translated into hundreds of criminal cases against the movement. In addition, recently approved by Prime Minister Salvini, the Decree on Security imposes fines of up to 12 years for the "crime of blocking the road" and immediate deportation of workers - immigrants who took part in such blockades.

A criminal trial against the national Si-Cobas coordinator Aldo Milani indicates that furious repression of the workers' movement in logistics is part of a wider campaign of repression against

trade union rights, social movements and resistance of the scientific community to the current situation in the country. Originally, Aldo was arrested and kept in custody for three days in the last stage of trade union negotiations on charges of "extorting money" to the detriment of a meat processing company managed by a family constantly facing allegations of corruption. His process revealed close links between private business and state authorities. The innocence of the trade unionist was so evident that the prosecutor



himself recently softened the accusation that Aldo was to demand money not for himself, but for dismissed workers. He demanded a penalty of 2 years and 4 months in prison. However, the allegations made in this way pass the definition of extortion.

Aldo tried to prevent the dismissal of 55 employees and ensure that they will be properly paid together with the payment of taxes and contributions. These are demands typical of any serious trade unionist. The prosecutor's office is trying to criminalize the common labour dispute and creates a dangerous precedent. If every economic demand in favour of an employee can be considered as "extortion", it undermines the very foundations of trade union activity. The prosecutor's office is trying to criminalize the common labour dispute and creates a dangerous precedent. If every economic demand in favour of an employee can be considered as "extortion", it undermines the very foundations of trade union activity.

Therefore, we appeal to all forces that support our movement to demand that Aldo Milani be cleared of charges. We urge you to sign the letter of support for Aldo - English version here:

<https://www.change.org/p/tribunale-di-modena-in-defense-of-the-si-cobas-coordinator-aldo-milani-and-of-trade-union-freedom-in-italy>

We also call for support in the campaign against the criminalization of street blocks as a form of social and union protests and against the use of police forces in labour disputes outside the gates of the workplace.

Germany: Berlin Public Transport Strike

15/2/19 The BVG said traffic on the tube, tram and bus routes was starting again but until all the lines were back to normal, disruption could be expected over the next hours.

On Friday morning, buses and trams remained in depots, while many U-Bahn gates stayed locked, as travellers were forced to find other means of transport to get to work or travel through the city.

Over the course of the morning there was also a huge demonstration by BVG employees and union members in the centre of Berlin.

The strike started at 3:30 am. It was being held over a dispute regarding pay and conditions, and was the workers' first strike since 2012 when they walked out on a Saturday for 15 hours.

"The strike is going according to plan", a spokesman for the union Verdi said on Friday morning, reported DPA.

The union has also not ruled out the possibility of further strikes.

Many people with early morning flights faced huge disruption getting to the airport. Along with the U-Bahn services, the bus lines TXL, X9, 128 and 109 to Tegel

airport were not due to be in operation until noon. Passengers travelling to and from Schönefeld were advised to switch to the S-Bahn

or regional trains.

However, shortly after 9 am, Berlin airport services (BER) organized a shuttle bus to take passengers to Tegel from the Jungfernheide S and U-Bahn station.

The S-Bahn system, which is operated by Deutsche Bahn, was not affected directly by the strike. Many people switched to S-Bahn trains to get to their destination.

S-Bahn services and regional trains were over-crowded as people flocked to them during the strike.

The Berliner Zeitung reported that the S1 (Zehlendorf-Potsdamer Platz) and the S5

(Mahlsdorf-Warschauer Straße) was planning a total of around 50 additional journeys, which may have eased some of the congestion.

Many people got on their bikes to travel across the city in the morning. Luckily, the sun was out.

The strike also resulted in lots of people switching to their cars. This meant traffic was particularly heavy, especially during rush hour.



The red parts in this graphic by the Tagesspiegel show where the worst traffic jams were this morning.

Other people walked to work, with some leaving earlier than usual.

Some people commented on how quiet areas of the city were on Friday since they were usually filled with trams. This is Alexanderplatz.

A total of 28 subcontracted bus lines and all ferries were excluded from industrial action because subcontractors are not on strike.

Some BVG employees picketed at different locations throughout the city during the strike. Here, an employee wears a bib with the line: 'We are worth it' on it, early on Friday morning. Photo: DPA.

Berlin and Brandenburg broadcaster RBB posted a video on Twitter of the huge number of employees protesting at the BVG headquarters.

Many people urged Berliners to show their solidarity with the strikers with the hashtag #Solidarität.

This tweet shows a picture of graffiti on an U-Bahn train. It says: 'Dear BVG employees, we wish you lots of success in the collective bargaining negotiations, higher wages and shorter working hours.'

What's the strike about?

Verdi demands that the weekly working time for employees who joined the BVG after 2005 be reduced from 39 to 36.5 hours – with full wage compensation.

This would require 500 additional employees, said Claudia Pfeiffer, managing director of the local employers' association (KAV), earlier this week.

The union has warned that more strikes could take place.

The negotiations on the new collective agreement for the 14,500 employees are also about a fairer classification in the wage and salary table. The Christmas bonus of €1,400, which is only paid out after one year of being an employee, should also be paid earlier, according to the union.

The trade union has also demanded a one-off payment of €500 from the BVG for its members. The bottom line is that all the improvements demanded would increase the BVG's annual personnel costs (most recently around €570 million) by €60 million, according to Verdi.



BVG bosses have described the strike as "completely inappropriate".

It's the latest in a long line of strikes to hit Germany as negotiations over pay take place. There's been industrial action by airport staff and public service workers.

inevitable result of the search for economic and political alternatives; on the other we have the paladins of state capitalism with their caricature of authoritarian socialism. Both sides are committed to jointly validating each other as the sole options for understanding and proposing the trajectory of Venezuelan society, as well as hiding their great similarities when defining and applying the strategies of oppression and exploitation that are imposed on the community: State and Capital.

Saying that "democratic" versus "socialist left" are essentially the same does not go down well with those who adhere to either of them, but in El Libertario (The Libertarian) we have, over many years, insisted on presenting compelling evidence that proves it. So, for example, both of them prattle on about anti-capitalism as something that defines the Bolivarian regime, whilst we only need to see how the governments of Chavez and Maduro have repeatedly invited and made deals with transnational capital, associated with the development of the extractive exploitation model of the natural resources of Vene-

VENEZUELA TODAY

Confronting the Deceits and Deceivers

English translation of *Venezuela: Frente a los fraudes embaucadores* á <https://periodicoellibertario.blogspot.com/2019/02/venezuela-frente-los-fraudes.html> Written by *El Libertario*, Caracas, Venezuela, February 2019. — Translated by the Anarchist Federation (Britain) á <http://www.afed.org.uk>

[Introductory note: Anarchists from across the world have requested a text that summarises, from a libertarian perspective, what is happening in Vene-

zuela, especially to dismantle the lies that authoritarians of all varieties have said about it. In response, we have prepared the following, which is already being translated and disseminated in various languages, with the intention of putting forward our perspective and unmasking the deceitful positions that have been widely disseminated about what is happening in this country.]

Those who have read us before will be very familiar with the approach taken by various statist factions to the Venezuelan situation, and it is precisely to them and their deceptions that we will refer to here, in an attempt to clarify the situation in the face of their untiring efforts to confuse it. On one hand we have the defenders of liberal capitalism, with their political antics of representative electoral democracy, presenting the Venezuelan setback as the

zuela. This policy culminated with the official deal to allow the ecocidal exploitation through the Arco Minero del Orinoco (large-scale mining project) which counts on silent support of the parliamentary opposition that is so loud on other issues, but with its tacit approval would not modify this model of looting plunder at all, if it came to power.

Another common policy is to refuse to acknowledge the militarist essence that the Chavez government had from the beginning, which has deepened over subsequent years. Especially now, where there are ongoing negotiations with the military as Maduro's support wanes they are being offered impunity (disguised as "amnesty") from all responsibility for the outrages and corruption that are characteristic of a regime of which they have been key supporters. From the two dominant interpretations of the national crisis there is a huge effort to ignore that, from his ascension to the presidency in 1999, Chavez gave priority to military presence in the workings of government in a way not seen in Venezuela since the military dictatorship of the 1950s. Military predominance was reinforced from 2013 under Nicolas Maduro, reaching such a height that it has been one of the defining features of this dictatorial regime. With the proclaimed "transition" that is envisioned for sooner rather than later, the mood among the opposing political cliques to take over state power is bound to maintain the military elite with the juicy spoils they have enjoyed over the past decades, such that both "socialists"

and "democrats" just accept the nefarious reality of militarist blackmail that has been imposed and grows in 21st Century Venezuela.

Intervention by external powers: Now you see it, now you don't

The leaders of both sides will grumble that



we are ignoring an essential aspect of the fierce confrontation between them, vociferously denouncing how the rival gang is a servile agent of foreign interests. For the right-wing and social-democratic opposition, the evil foreign shadow is foremost the Cuban dictatorship, which has not only been a privileged parasite of Venezuela's notoriously buoyant oil income, but is also a decisive factor in imposing an authoritarian model that attempts to follow the steps of the one that rules in Havana; then China is mentioned, with growing importance as a financier and creditor of the Venezuelan government, and Russia, with less economic weight but which is a worthy political-military backer. In addition,

reference is made to the presence -now declining as the oil revenues that sustained it- of governments that derived economic and / or political benefits from their relationship with the Venezuelan State; something that also applies to para-statist groups like the Colombian guerrillas, previously the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia/Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and now the ELN (Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional/National Liberation Army). From the Chavista perspective, the external Bete Noire par excellence is North American imperialism, fulfilled by the disgraceful leadership of Trump which appeals perfectly to Marxist left-wing propaganda. Then there would be the whole troop of lackeys, servants and junior partners of the Yankees.

It is plain to see that both perspectives are largely based on truths that the other side makes the greatest effort to ignore, so that, for example, the obvious and ostentatious presence of officials Cubans in military installations and state security becomes invisible data for some. Similarly for others, who are aware of the lucrative deals that the Maduro government has agreed with the transnational banks, there is a pretence of ignorance about the ways, yet again, that there is stealthy agreement amongst its "irreconcilable" opponents.

Final note: Limitation of space prevents us developing other aspects of this topic here We invite contributions to blog of El Libertario <http://periodicoellibertario.blogspot.com> to expand on information and details that reinforce an alternative vision to the above.

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Paul Preston, *The Last Days of the Spanish Republic* (London: William Collins -2016), 390 pps.

In the summer of 1936 a group of right wing Spanish army officers led by General Francisco Franco attempted a coup d'etat against the elected republican government and plunged their nation into a prolonged and bitter Civil War. By its conclusion nearly three years later, some two million people - military and civilian - had perished, casualties of war and atrocity.

The upheaval in Spain provoked an international crisis, heightening tensions among the great powers of Europe - the democracies of Britain and France, the fascist states of Germany and Italy, the Soviet Union. Hitler and Mussolini immediately intervened to aid Franco's Nationalists with troops, tanks and aircraft. The western democracies, following a cautious policy of appeasement and avoid-

ance of conflict, sponsored a Non-Intervention Agreement to ban arms shipments to either side. Ignored by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy who continued to provide massive resources to General Franco, the non-intervention policy merely had the effect of denying arms to Spain's legitimate government, thus tacitly aiding the rebels. The only power who would come to the aid of the Spanish Republic was the Soviet Union.

Funneled through the Spanish Communist Party, the price of Russian weaponry and resources was the increasing domination and control of the Republican government and armed forces by Communists and their Russian advisors. The revolutionary forces on the Republican side, the independent mass movement of radicalized workers and landless peasants who

had taken up arms to fight for a new social order, were coopted and suppressed. Stalin's foreign policy aim was an alliance between the Soviet Union and the Western powers to contain Hitler and Mussolini. A radical social revolution in Spain would undermine his diplomatic efforts, alarm the governments of France and Britain and encourage them in their continued policy of appeasement of the fascist powers.

Paul Preston's narrative begins in the last months before the final collapse of the Spanish Republic. Through his extensive researches he is able to provide what appears to be a most detailed and informative narrative of the intricate and complex discussions, arguments and Byzantine intrigues within the highest circles of the Republican government in attempting to decide upon a policy of continued resistance or the negotiation of a surrender to Franco's forces.

By now the industrial province of Catalonia had fallen to the Nationalist army, sealing off Republican Spain from the French border and reducing it to less than a third of the national territory with its back to the sea. Morale now plummeted and desertions multiplied. War weariness and food shortages increased resentment of the Communist-dominated government and fueled mass discontent. Official Communist policy, articulated through the Communist International, maintained an insistence that the war continue for as long as possible. Stalin was hopeful that the prolongation of the conflict would serve to worsen relations between the Western powers and Berlin and Rome. This was also the position of the Republican Prime Minister Juan Negrin, his power and authority quickly eroding in the debacle of the Nationalist advance. Negrin was regarded with contempt by many in Republican circles and considered a mere puppet of the Communists.

With military defeat now only a matter of time, as he himself recognized, Negrin argued that resistance had to continue to assure an "honourable peace" (18). Exactly how this was to be achieved with an army in disintegration, bereft of resources, and in the face of an increasingly obdurate Francisco Franco remained to be seen. A movement within the Republican Army to end the war coalesced around Colonel Segismundo Casado and other non-Communist officers. They formed a National Council of Defense began clandestine negotiations with the Nationalists and planned a coup to oust Negrin and remove the Spanish Communists from positions of power. The author makes much of the hatred for Communists within the Republican officer corp, but fails to identify reasons for this antagonism. The disaf-

ected officers entered into conspiracy not merely to end the war, but also to protect themselves against a possible Communist purge of their ranks.

Their fears were not without foundation. Although Preston makes passing reference to friction between the independent left and the Communists, he takes but slight notice of the existence of the Communist controlled Servicio de Informacion Militar. This was a secret police force answerable to no authority but their own and advised by a Russian officer of Stalin's NKVD. The SIM maintained their own prisons within the Republican zone and engaged in abductions, torture and murder of real or potential critics of Communist policy, all of whom they labeled traitors and fascist sympathizers. Their quarry included foreign socialist and anarchist vol-

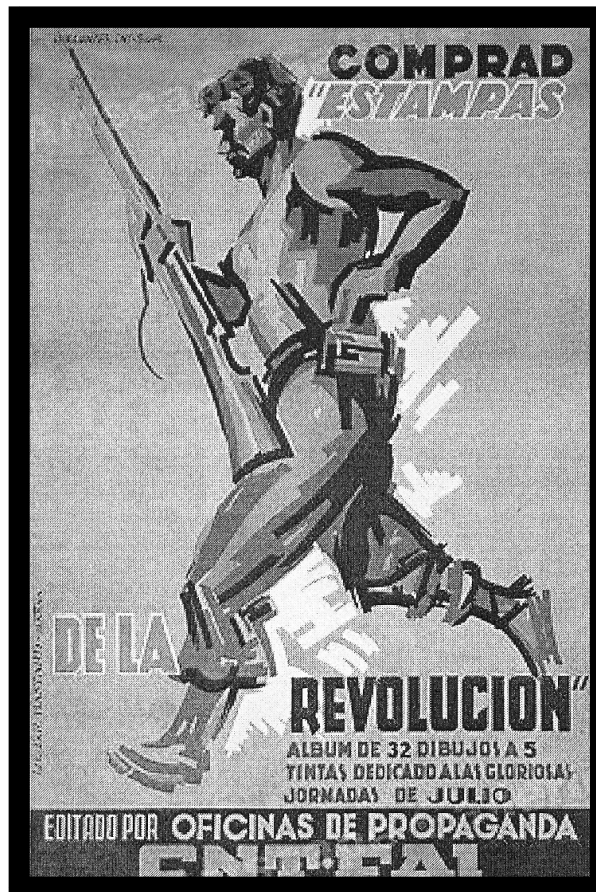
unteers to the Nationalists and sympathy for Franco's cause. Throughout the body of the book Colonel Casado himself is subject to various negative assessments – "defeatist" (33), "selfish arrogance" (133), "mendacious" (282), "narcissism" (313), "underlying anti-Semitism" (315), "self-obsession" (319), "hyper-sensitive" (320), etc., etc. Note that this is by no means an exhaustive list of Colonel Casado's alleged character flaws and shortcomings as recounted by Preston. Granted that Casado no doubt had his faults, the use of such unrestrained invective by the author enters the realm of the polemical and brings into question the objectivity if not the accuracy of his entire narrative.

The success of Casado's coup and assumption of governmental power by the anti-Communist junta proved to be a bloodless affair, and Negrin and his cabinet ministers put up no resistance and took flight into exile.

Preston's main point is that continued resistance by the Spanish Republican Army could have ensured "that the war ended in such a way as to secure evacuation of the most at-risk politicians and soldiers and guarantees for the civilian population to be left behind" (3). Yet he furnishes no proof for this argument. Indeed he provides evidence to quite the contrary. The Republican forces grew weaker by the day and General Franco remained inflexible and unrelenting in his attitude toward the losing side. For a rigorously objective account of the internal politics of Republican Spain the reader is better served by consulting the definitive study produced by Burnett Bolloten (*The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution* –University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill and London -1991).

In the final pages of the book the author quotes the deposed Prime Minister speaking some years later from Mexican exile. Negrin numbers himself among "the irresponsible leaders who ... contemptibly surrendered when (the war) could be still fought and won" (321). This last is a fantastic assertion in total contradiction to the reality of the last days of the Spanish Republic.

*Martin Comack
Boston Labor Solidarity Committee*



unteers who had come to Spain to fight for a social revolution. George Orwell and his wife were among those who had to flee the country in peril of their lives. (In the UK press, Preston has accused Orwell, in his narrative "Homage to Catalonia", of displaying "ignorance of the wider picture" and providing a "distortion of the Spanish situation." Ignorance and distortion that Orwell must have picked up after being shot on the Aragon front and later escaping from the Communist secret police).

It is at this at this point that the author abandons whatever objective assessment of the motives and judgment of men like Casado and plays up their alleged connec-

A quick review of 'Privatisation is THEFT -The looting of NSW public assets' by Jim McIlroy. Socialist Alliance booklet, October 2018.

This is a collection of 35 articles published during 2017 and 2018 by Green Left Weekly and written by their industrial correspondent in Sydney covering the period of the Baird-Berejiklian State Liberal Party Government in N.S.W.

It is a comprehensive run down of the major privatisation con-jobs pulled off or attempted by the Liberals in the current era. It covers key public sector areas like hospitals, electricity and energy power plants, public transport, prisons, public housing, etc. focusing on major campaigns where public resistance was involved. In doing so it tends to avoid how previous ALP Governments and their compliant Trade Unions leadership conducted similar policies or laid the ground work for the subsequent Liberal Party public sector cutting knives.

The booklet also covers asset sell-offs of individual sections of the bureaucracy like the Land Title Registry and significant public land marks like the Powerhouse Museum and the Bondi Pavilion. A flash back to the corrupt Obeid era covering key coal mines sell-offs, poles and wires issues, heritage buildings like Dept. of Lands and Dept. of Education, both in Bridge St CBD, the N.S.W. ferries, railway cleaning jobs, etc. would have provided a broader view on the history of the issue in N.S.W. even if it was outside this 2017-8 compilation.

The booklet also covers similar moves by the Liberals in the Federal sphere such as the outsourcing of Centrelink jobs and moves to abolish the A.B.C. broadcasters.

In the more general articles opposing privatisation, McIlroy is prepared to concede that neo-liberalist ideology is structurally a disease that affects both major parties of governance under Australian capitalism. But in his nitty-gritty, slipshod coverage of the bus privatisation issue, he reveals a hidden agenda whereby Left mainstream party publications cover for the trade union bureaucrats, usually with key ALP links, to hide their role of treachery. When questioned personally on the issue he calls it "building the united front".

Key union bureaucrats from the R.T.B.U. in N.S.W., in the opinion of many workers on the job, undermined any real initiatives to halt the process by any united rank and file direct action. Similarly the officials by default and hidden connivance prevented any real on-the-job campaign to defeat Transit Systems takeover of the four in-

ner-West Sydney bus depots which officially started July 1st 2018 and Keolis-Downer's takeover in Newcastle in late 2016.

Missing from this booklet is the December 12th 2016 announcement in The Newcastle Herald by Liberal Minister Constance that Newcastle's two public bus depots and new light rail line would be run from July 1st 2017 by a private infrastructure company Keolis-Downer. The same article quoted the NSW Bus Division Secretary of the RTBU Chris Preston supporting bus privatisation in Newcastle. Not a word from him about how it would set a dangerous precedent for the 12 Sydney public bus depots. Not a word about mobilising the Sydney depots to oppose the privatisation of their fellow union members' Newcastle jobs.

Twelve months later another Socialist Alliance member wrote an article that appeared in Green Left Weekly about a massive public meeting of 1,000 people in Newcastle against the complete disaster that the sell-off of buses had been in Newcastle.

The six articles on inner-West bus privatisation that appeared in this booklet from the Green Left Weekly compilation It begins thus (from his 20/05/17 GLW article): ... "Sydney bus drivers walked out on May 18 in a 24-hour strike against plans by the NSW Coalition govt. To privatise public bus services in the city's inner-west. The action, which defied the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (IRC), affected four bus depots: Leichhardt, Burwood, Kingsgrove and Tempe."

The rest of this article quoted RTBU bus division secretary Preston. Preston's militant press release suggested on-going industrial action was likely and complained about "no consultation with bus drivers or the community about the (privatisation) May 17th announcement." The article concluded with motherhood anti-Liberal statements from the ALP and Greens spokespeople. What McIlroy never mentioned here, nor in any subsequent article over the 18 month period before eventual defeat on the issue, was that RTBU officials Alex Claassens and Chris Preston had months of notice before the State Liberals public announcement in the media on May 17th to "Open tenders for Area 6 buses". Claassens (RTBU State Secretary) does not deny he had these "top secret" regular weekly meetings with Gladys Berejiklian during her period as Transport Minister under Premier Baird. Once she was elevated to Premier. New Transport Minister Constance kept these meetings going. A staffer of Federal ALP member Albanese said it was an example of "good governance practice".

Thus Preston was correct in saying the public and ordinary bus drivers were kept in the dark on the privatisation announcement day. But the RTBU union leadership and that of the fellow right-wing TWU union leadership (whose Secretary at least had to notify and then authorise his membership being brought in as 'scab labour' from as far afield as Gosford and beyond for the strike) knew full well. Hence it is not unfair to speculate that the Union bosses and State Liberal Minister combined in a carefully-planned manoeuvre to minimise the impact of the so-called "walking off the job" by bus drivers the day after the Libs privatisation claim.

Two weeks before this announcement Preston, at the monthly RTBU bus division job delegates meeting, was confronted by all 12 depot reps vote for a 24 hour all depots Sydney wide stoppage. Unions NSW Head Mark Moray was worried. He called another meeting a week later and forced the 12 delegates to back down to confining any stoppage to the four affected inner-West depots. When challenged on this influence over the RTBU delegates months later, at a Politics in the Pub address, Moray claimed he only "warned the 12 delegates they would have to suffer the consequences" if it was a Sydney wide stoppage. Yes but were the "consequences" being froze out of union solidarity or isolation of bus drivers after legal action from the State Government, or both?

Now what about the 24 hour strike and walk-off on May 18th? The RTBU leaked to the media a fake story that it had called a delegates meeting the night before at Leichhardt Depot. On the morning of the strike the mainstream media announced it was over all 12 depots. But there was no strike bulletins up at depots, even in the four inner-West depots. Only word of mouth the day before the so-called "walk-off"? Maybe text messages to drivers? The Union Executive kept their distance. It could be interpreted by them as a legal tactic to avoid prosecution at the top? They were fined \$10,000 by Fair Work anyway.

Many drivers from all depots did "walk off" on the actual day. But only after they found out via the mainstream media and passengers telling them that they were officially on strike. Chris Preston saved face all around by being unavailable to receive a late night last minute communique that the strike was in defiance of a last minute IRC decision. But where was the union leadership on the day of the strike? At a smallish lame duck RTBU protest rally outside NSW Parliament! Lack of communication and co-ordination of this and the follow up June 1st 2017

"No fares/No Opal cards" See Page 20

DEBATE ON “BASE UNIONISM”

Totale: So, a lot of the most exciting workplace campaigns in the UK in the past few years have happened through the new “base/grassroots/independent” unions (based on alleged ultra democratic practices, but work within the British IR system with pretensions to be syndicalist unions) like UVW (United Voices of the World), IWGB (Industrial Workers of Great Britain) and CAIWU (Cleaners and Allied Independent Workers Union). I haven’t really seen much in the way of analysis of these kinds of unions, so I thought I’d start a thread here - especially interested in hearing from people who might be of more critical left-communist/anarcho-syndicalist/whatever persuasions about how these organisations fit in, or don’t fit in, to standard criticisms of the unions. Like, are there examples of these groups playing a bureaucratic/legalistic/representational role in ways that hold back workers’ self-organisation, or if not, are there tendencies that point in that direction further down the line? What would people’s ideal revolutionary unions, or workplace resistance groups or whatever, be doing differently? (I’m genuinely not asking these as leading questions in the hope of getting a “gotcha!” moment or whatever, I’m just really unsure and interested in hearing from what people with more actual experience of them think).

Also, I’m generally interested in questions of how far these models might be of use to other workers beyond the very specific sectoral, geographical and cultural context they originated in. Can cleaners outside London use these models? What about people in London who aren’t cleaners? Or those of us who are neither?

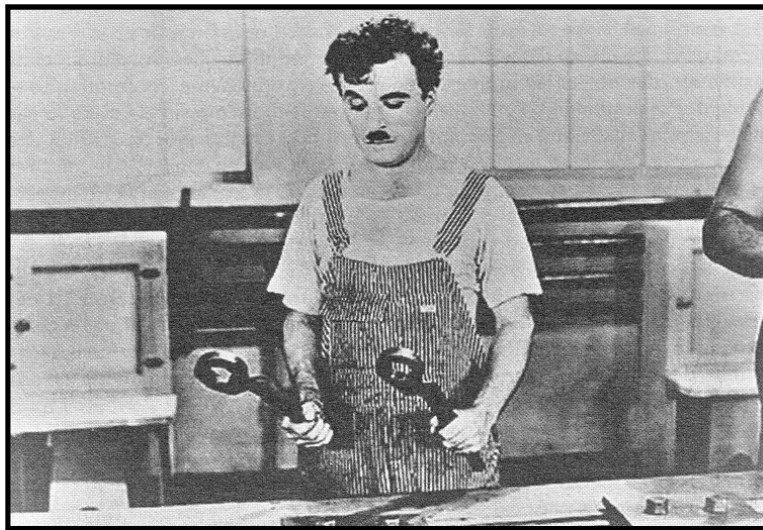
To start off with, here’s a snippet from a recent AWW piece that I thought was good:

Quote:

There are some hopeful experiences of rank-and-file organising amongst migrant workers, primarily in the cleaning sector. These were only successful when a bigger group of already politicised workers from South America became involved and when workers cleaned buildings of institutions that don’t want to risk losing their reputation, e.g. as prestigious international universities, famous museums or globally

acting banks. Who cares about unknown sandwich manufacturers in the suburb? Workers in west London, unlike the logistics workers in Italy, don’t arrive with the inspiration and encouragement of the Arabic Spring on their backs. In the back of their minds is the rather dreary autumn of the sell-out of Solidarnosc (Polish - Solidarity union confederation) - neoliberal corruption in the name of workers’ solidarity.

Spikymike: Seems to me the big problems will be further down the line and will depend on how the ‘associational’ and ‘representational’ functions of the



union form, develop and conflict in circumstances where such unions seek to grow in opposition to the traditional unions rather than remaining as politically motivated minority agitators. However I’ve never thought it was possible today to maintain a mass based genuinely revolutionary unionism. So I’m a bit prejudiced! Maybe people involved in some of these base unions here in the UK and elsewhere and other sympathetic organisations like the UK SolFed (Solidarity Federation – British syndicalist grouping) and the AWW (Angry Workers World) could explain how they view the potential positives and negatives in this type of base unionism in terms of both day to day class gains and longer term revolutionary potential?

Ah, fair enough. If not possible today, hopefully we can do what’s needed to make it possible tomorrow.

Quote: *...the revolutionary unions advocated by anarcho-syndicalists are an expression of a process of workers’*

self-organisation at its higher points. ... For us, a revolutionary union is necessarily non-permanent because it is an expression of a given wave of class struggle.

Lucky Black Cat: I’d still say that a tiny union with revolutionary goals is a revolutionary union. Worker self-organization on a small scale is not revolutionary in a practical sense, cuz it has no potential to be part of an actual revolution. But if workers self-organize in a union with revolutionary goals, then I think the union can be called a revolutionary union.

ASN: But saying you are a “revolutionary” union doesn’t make you one in the “real world” (of course in the fantasy world of leftist activoids anything is possible). If we look at the formation of mass syndicalism in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, we see complex processes associated with major upsurges in the class struggle waged by workers e.g. strike waves not some fantasy of a very smallish grouping incrementally getting bigger. (1) The reality of the current situation in places like the UK in the Anglo world is

that any so called base/syndicalist union will be surrounded by corporate unionism which is interwoven with the State and supported by the corporate media (Needless to say they will seek to isolate and smash any direct action and associated “union”). In the Australian context a well known example of this dynamic is the crushing of the NSW BLF (Builders Labourers’ Federation) in the mid 1970’s. This union has been the closest we have had to a syndicalist style union in recent decades. It manifested many ultra democratic features and direct action, most significantly the “Green Bans”. This “unconscious” syndicalist movement in this sector failed to expand throughout the building industry interstate/nationally and expand into other industries and/or linking up with similar movements in these sectors. It became isolated and crushed by a conspiracy of the Norm Gallagher/Maoist National BLF leadership, the bosses, the State and most of the rest of the union bureaucracy. (2)

So unless you can break out of this encirclement e.g. launching major direct action in vital arteries of the capitalist set up and inspire and assist workers in syndicalist union organising drives in other sectors and build an expanding movement wiping out the base of the corporate unionism - you get drawn into the orbit of the corporate unionism and various countries industrial relations systems. Something like this has happened to the CNT (Spanish National Confederation of Labour - formally anarcho-syndicalist but content wise according to previous discussion on Libcom Discussion Board, seems not radically that different from the corporate unions in various aspects) and of course look at the history of the SAC (Swedish Workers Centre - Also claiming to be an anarcho-syndicalist union confederation) - drawn into the Swedish Welfare State and I.R. system from the late 1920's, etc.

(3) As a result you move away from a syndicalist style path. The moral of this story is the importance of focusing limited personnel and resources in one of these strategic sectors to launch major direct action and change the climate in the labour movement.

1. See Review of "Unruly Equality: US Anarchism in the 20th Century" by Andrew Connell in RW Vol.34 No.2 (226) July-Aug 2016 on www.rebelworker.org for a discussion of problems of contemporary international syndicalist groupings.

2. See Review of "Green Bans, Red Union" by Meredith and Verity Burgmann on archive section www.rebelworker.org

3. See "Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective" edited by Wayne Thorpe and Marcel Van Der Linden re essay on Sweden and the SAC.

Totale: LBC: I guess where things get tricky, but also interesting, is navigat-

ing that tension between, on the one hand, the fact that, in these non-revolutionary times, most workers probably won't want to sign up to a revolutionary anti-capitalist organisation, and on the other, to pull a successful workplace action, you do want to have most of the workforce on board. If I remember rightly, I think SolFed's answer to that problem is/was to not try and sign everyone up to SolFed, but instead to say that struggles should be run thru mass meetings open to all workers; as I understand it - and I'm pretty much speaking from a distance here - it looks like the UVW/IWGB/CAIWU have picked a different approach and just decided not to ask people to sign up to revolutionary principles - although, if the UVW is looking towards anarcho/revolutionary unions for inspiration, maybe that'll change?

LBC: ASN, the problems and pitfalls you raise are legitimate, and although I still think it's ok to call a contemporary syndicalist union revolutionary, our disagreement seems mainly semantic. IMO, it doesn't really matter if we call them revolutionary or not.

R Totale wrote: *If I remember rightly, I think SolFed's answer to that problem is/was to not try and sign everyone up to SolFed, but instead to say that struggles should be run thru mass meetings open to all workers;*

SolFed's strategy seems like a good one. Of course I'm speaking as someone who has no experience, but when I read Fighting For Ourselves, and considered the various options for how to approach organizing, SolFed's strategy sounded like it made the most sense.

ASN: LBC & Totale: I see such unions as the CNT as becoming more satellites of the corporate unions - as they don't display the dynamics of the mass

syndicalist movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries - e.g. according to something I have read in recent times, the CNT gained new coverage of workers in one new area due to winning a case in the Spanish IR court, this sort of thing. If you are talking about syndicalism you are talking about "direct action" and strike waves etc, read the classic works on syndicalism. Also you are talking about tackling the employer offensive - turning the tide or slowing the tempo. So I think focusing on such sectors as the East London cleaners is strategically senseless. Any gains will be swept away by new waves of the employer offensive and any "base" union will be drawn into the above (see previous post) cul-de-sac and bureaucratisation. It's essential these days given tiny numbers capable of long range serious industrial work based on extensive industrial experience and historical/ theoretical research and the periphery who can do regular small scale stuff to focus in one key sector with a terrible determination. Involving "outside the job" organisation intensively assisting or even creating "on-the-job" organisation. If you are entertaining the fantasy that you are a revolutionary union when you are not - you get drawn into these peripheral areas - helping organising industrial action, recruiting etc. The SolFed and "solidarity networks" do win "microscopic" victories in peripheral areas but that doesn't tackle in anyway the issue of the employer offensive, get the processes going to form genuine mass syndicalist unionism etc.

(For a critical review of "Fighting for Ourselves" see Review in RW Vol.33 No.220 July-Aug 2014 on web site archive section www.rebelworker.org) Thanks to Libcom

lution of January 1918 were desecrated in both cities. The monument dedicated to the Makhnovista Kuzma Apatov was demolished in Mariupol, and in Kherson.

The Ukrainian authorities officially declared the "nationalist leader" Petliura, as a "national hero," against whom Makhno's army fought from 1918 to 1921. Thousands of anarchist activists and Ukrainian workers fell in the fight against this executioner, who suppressed the workers and refused to stop the genocide of Ukrainian Jews during the civil war. Petliura was executed by the avenger of the Ukraine, the anarchist Shalom Schwartzbard, with whom Makhno maintained a great friendship. Today in Ukraine, Authorities

See Page 20

PROTEST AGAINST THE REMOVAL OF THE REMAINS OF NESTOR MAKHNO

We anarchists, operating in the territory of the former Soviet Union, are outraged at the intention of handing over the ashes of the revolutionary anarchist Nestor Makhno, deposited in the Pere-Lachaise cemetery in Paris, France, to the current Ukrainian authorities. The return of Makhno's ashes to his home town of Huliaipole might be welcome if this action were not part of the dirty political game of reactionary forces.

This is not the first time the Ukrainian State, which officially proclaims militant nationalism as its ideology, has tried to declare Makhno "their's." The authorities,

through the repeated organization of nationalist campaigns, have always tried to present the anarchist Nestor Makhno as a nationalist fighter. At the same time, in modern Ukraine, they are trying to exterminate any historical revolutionary tradition, including the anarchist one. Thus, a monument in honour of the revolution of 1905 was demolished in Kiev, and another in honour of the uprising in the battleship Potemkin was desecrated in Odessa. Monuments in memory of the workers who fell in the battles against the counter-revo-

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news affecting the NSW Railways and other sectors of public transport is the re-election of the Berejiklian Liberal Govt. Whilst Transport Minister Constance has made new threats to further push public transport privatisation and wiping out drivers. The ALP was silent about seriously fighting privatisation and reversing privatisation such as in the case of Newcastle buses and Region 6 in Sydney. Intriguingly the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) hierarchy did not advocate to the membership voting for the ALP. In this edition we discuss the elections and its ramifications and the critical importance of organising on the job for direct action to hurl back the Liberals gauntlet of attacks. (See article page 3.) In this edition we also look at changes in the management organisation structure in the railways and how it facilitates rorts by the bosses and attacks on the lower echelons. (See article page 4.)

Some of the most important news in Sydney Buses is the wildcat strike "mass sickie" at Leichhardt depot of Transit Systems in early December 2018. It was over savage tightening of bus running times and a range of other issues. An important back drop was similar action by Hillsbus drivers in November 2018. Needless to say the RTBU hierarchy has covered up the whole affair at Leichhardt. This action by Leichhardt drivers shows the way forward to meet the renewed and intensified Liberal onslaught and the importance of coordinated action between depots and all sectors of public transport. (See article page 5.) The privatisation of Region 6 has had major flow-ons in the remaining "rump" of State Transit. In this edition, we put the spotlight on these new attacks, which will likely feature in clauses in the next enterprise agreement in the STA and facilitate further stages of the privatisation carve-up. (See article page 5.)

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WEB SITE:

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A.S.N. DIRECTORY

ASN Sydney Local

PO Box 92 Broadway
2007 NSW

ASN Melbourne:

J.Dixon
jeremytrewindixon@yahoo.com

ASN Newcastle

PO Box 106
Kotara 2289 NSW

**Anarchist Media
Institute**

PO Box 20
Parkville Vic. 3052

SPARKS

(Anarcho-Syndicalist Transport Paper)
PO Box 92 Broadway
2007 NSW
Web site: <http://www.sparksweb.org>

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User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice
Email: Membersvoice2010@yahoo.com

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STOP

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Privatisation"**

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Leichhardt 2040 NSW
Facebook STOP Privatisation
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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 these struggles.

5. We are fighting to abolish all authoritarian institutions such as the State (including its communist variety), capitalism, all hierarchical and oppressive divisions between people.

6. We have no country and are organised on an international basis in opposition to oppression everywhere. The ASN is striving to build a viable revolutionary syndicalist movement in Australia as part of a world wide movement able to meet the challenge of the global employer offensive.

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name

Address.....

General Secretary

PO Box 106 Kotara 2289 NSW.

If undeliverable, return to
PO Box 92, Broadway NSW 2007

Continued From Page 18 are erecting monuments to Petliura, and their construction is paid with Ukrainian money and the streets of cities bear his name ...

The return of the ashes of Makhno to modern Ukraine, where the reactionary nationalist atmosphere prevails, would mean the transfer of the remains of the anarchist into

Cont. From Page 16 day of action. The union claimed the latter event was followed in "wide sections of Sydney". Thus claiming success, but avoiding consequences?

Big divisions in the ranks developed over these two actions. Drivers on the North side and Eastern Subs were divided over supporting the inner-West drivers even though they all knew they were next for privatisation. The cancelling of the over-award payments for those involved in the "illegal" strike added to the divisions with drivers losing up to \$150 pw from their pay packets for a number of months by order of the Industrial Court. The Union Executive did nothing to undo this effective wage cut.

As their credibility waned, the Union heavies had a new stunt and gave the Green Left correspondent a 'world exclusive' for his 28 July 2017 report in Green Left. It claimed Ryde Depot was under threat of (pending?) privatisation. Yet there was no press release from the government or even a window of opportunity for new tenders before the next election. It was a chance for another Luke Foley 'doorstop' interview and for the Union leadership to appear to be acting on what was an inevitable turn by the Libs once the inner-West job was bedded down. The Ryde distraction was to help bed down the

the hands of his mortal enemies. That would be a direct insult to the revolutionary's memory and the cause for which he fought.

It would be like transferring the ashes of Makhno to the Russian authorities, who openly declare themselves successors of their worst enemies, the White Guard and the Stalinists. An equally absurd manoeuvre.

inner-West situation as history, a done deal even though drivers still wanted to fight, even strike, albeit with a lame and silent leadership.

The RTBU strategy was to rely on mass petitions of commuters and a public education campaign and a debate in parliament around the petitions. Clearly the only thing that would have forced a back down by the State Liberals was industrial action and public picketing of depots. Both these tactics were denied or undermined by the career orientated trade union bureaucracy. The Greens and even the Socialist Alliance gave only a tokenistic support to the December 2017 community pickets of bus depots which were the last window of opportunity for action before the expected early 2018 Constance announcement of "successful tender".

So why would the ALP and their trade union leadership collaborate with a Liberal Government at the expense of their members and the commuting public, contrary to all their public announcements, you ask? Firstly, note that both the RTBU and TWU NSW union secretaries are both on the State Executive of the ALP political party machine. Secondly, note the cooperation between the major mainstream parties is about safe-keeping the existing system intact as part of their taking turns in dividing the spoils of parliamentary in-

We ask the anarchists of France and the whole world to protest against the deportation of the ashes of Makhno from France. The anarchist Nestor Makhno rests in a graveyard near the Commune of Paris in 1871. This agrees with his revolutionary and internationalist convictions.

Russian section of the International Association of Workers (AIT-IWA) Individual anarchists of Ukraine and Moldavia
aitrus.info Translation: Zucchini

cumbency. The secret weekly meetings between ALP Union officials and Liberal Ministers are just one example of how this keeps the system in place.

Further, the timing of the Sydney bus privatisation in May 2017 brought the September 2017 local council elections onto the horizon where transport privatisation was "a local issue". Deals had to be done to keep radical Greens and community Independents out of Mayoralships with this in mind. Witness the amalgamated Inner West Council preference swaps between the ALP's Darcy Byrne and the Lib's Julie Passos as one example. Once in power they ignored their own Council Traffic Advisory body's report to campaign to save the local buses and undermined the anti-West-Connex campaign of the pre-amalgamation Councils.

The RTBU strategy was to rely on mass petitions of commuters and a public education campaign and a debate in parliament. Clearly the only thing that would have forced a back down by the State Liberals was industrial action and public picketing of depots. This booklet is one for the true believers. The ones that believe you'll win public campaigns by believing in trade union bureaucrats with cushy ALP pre-selection ambitions and desires to constantly hoodwink workers.

Contributed, by a community transport activist.