

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

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SPANISH WORKERS SHOW THE WAY FORWARD IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AUSTERITY WITH DIRECT ACTION!



Spanish Miners Fire Bazookas at Police during Recent Strike over Government Austerity Measures

NATIONAL NEWS; NSW RAILWAY NEWS; RAIL-BUS NEWS; STATE TRANSIT
NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; SPANISH MINERS PROTEST;
GREEK STEEL WORKERS STRIKE; BRITAIN TODAY; SWEDEN; BOOK REVIEW
CORNER; DEBATE ON "BORING FROM WITHIN"; CARL WINDHOFF GERMAN
SYNDICALIST; NEWS & NOTES;

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

P.O. BOX 92

BROADWAY 2007 NSW

E-mail:

rworker@chaos.apana.org.au

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The problem is parliament continually puts the interests of that small section of society that owns the means of production, distribution, exchange and communication before the interests of the Australian people because all the major political parties are frightened they would not be re-elected if they bit the hand that fed them.

"BLEEDING THEM DRY"

The idea the Australian Courts deliver justice to everyone, Santa Claus exists, the Easter Bunny is real and everybody lives happily ever after are ideas that only exist in never never land. Access to the Courts is becoming a significant issue in an era when companies, corporations and individuals with financial resources use the courts to bleed dry anyone who tries to take them on. If justice delayed is justice denied, justice denied by corporations who bleed people dry for having the audacity to seek redress in court, is a criminal act. Nothing highlights the bankruptcy of

the Australian legal system more than the way powerful interests use their money to ensure people never have the opportunity to seek redress through the courts.

I sat in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court a few weeks ago and saw a man who tried to seek redress through the courts lumbered with \$10,000 court costs because the other side, a corporation, had employed a Senior Council to defend the action. It's time that at least in the Magistrates' Courts legislation was passed which would force both sides to meet their own costs. Bleeding people dry in an effort to stop a matter being

Heard in court should be viewed for what it is – a criminal act.

Thanks

to the Anarchist Age

National News

NOT FRONT PAGE NEWS

I wonder what type of society would allow one person to earn 24 million dollars and another person 85 dollars, a day? No this doesn't happen in Haiti, Niger or Afghanistan, some of the poorest countries on the planet happens a little bit closer to home. It happens in Australia. Gina Rinehart is expected to earn 24 million a day during the next 12 months while workers on the minimum wage will be earning a staggering \$85 a day after their weekly wage was increased by \$17 to \$606.40 by Fair Work Australia.

Almost a million low paid workers will be getting that extra \$17 in their pay packet in July. Anybody interested in mathematical calculations wouldn't be surprised to learn the 876 million dollars Gina will be earning during the next financial year would pay the wages of 25,000 workers on the minimum wage. Looking at it another way, Gina earns almost 23,000 times more money per hour than a worker on the minimum wage.

The problem isn't Gina Rinehart, she is doing what she is legally entitled to do.

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N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

Technological Change - Should workers fear it?

Crimson Coconut

Recent announcements by the NSW government regarding the removal of train guards from rail services and the future possibility of running driver-less trains on new privately owned rail routes caused some consternation amongst rail staff and the RTBU (Rail, Tram & Bus Union) leadership.

Despite privatisation and ownership being the main issue related to driverless trains the RTBU leadership instead spoke out about the unsafe nature of trains without drivers. This is despite the fact that driverless rail services are operating safely in quite a few countries, generally without incident. Driverless trains are routinely operated on the Paris Metro, Barcelona and Madrid Metro, Seoul Subway, Tokyo Metro, Taipei Metro, and hundreds of other lines around the world from Russia to the USA. The train crew "reforms" were forecast in the 2010 EBA and had been opposed by many grass roots union members because it gave the Government the right to do as they wished.

The introduction of new technology creeps up on us and we are quick to forget how things were before the latest innovation.

Motorised scrubbing machines now clean station floors replacing what once were gangs of half a dozen workers or so wielding mops and brooms. Large track maintenance programs now take place with the most modern of equipment. Giant machines require less than a handful of workers. The work is completed in the shortest possible time. Just 50 years ago such work would have required nothing short of a small army of hundreds of workers in a back-breaking and arduous task, working night and day for weeks, if not months, to complete the work. Likewise the use of computers for work sharing, emailing and accessing information has done away with the need for telegrams which were in use frequently right up to a few years ago. Few staff today on the railways would know of, or even need to know of, the telegraphic codes of jargon, which still exist, but are rarely used.

These changes happened without any whimper from rail workers who were freed from unnecessarily labour intensive, anachronistic and repetitive work.

The new announcements about staff reductions are nothing new but they do add renewed pressure to fearful workers because society has changed radically in the last few years. As Australian society and communities around the world have become less egalitarian, (wealth is now concentrated in fewer hands, 1% owning as much as rest of us, the 99%). The loss of a job in the public sector can lead to years of hardship for individuals. The tightening of eligibility rules for government support and the meagre pensions and benefits for unemployed workers in a tight jobs market all point to the dangers of becoming unemployed. Workers are well aware that they are just a stones throw away from a job loss and an undignified life existing in poverty. Innovation is, theoretically at least, any new process which gives manufacturers and owners some sort of advantage over the way goods are manufactured or that services are delivered. It is a temporary

creases the value of each workers labour but rarely does the worker benefit from this extra surplus value that they produce. Precisely because workers become more efficient they will be more likely to be thrown onto the scrapheap that is unemployment.

Because of the way capitalist society works any increase in productivity leads to an ever burgeoning profit which is used to increase the dividend to shareholders. It propels the owners of the new technology to a position of wealth and status well above that of the workers using the it. In the case of workers in the public transport industry, (and the public sector in general) changes in work practises brought on by new technology leads to the likelihood of reduced job opportunities and a much greater chance that private operators will take over these functions. The public service provided by the new private operators are then geared towards producing profits



process that drives the material development of society as a whole and enriches the owners until competitors catch up. For example, IBM the pioneers of the computer age have fallen by the wayside as a major home computer manufacturer and seller. As competitors have caught up through innovation IBM has had to diversify into other areas to survive. IBM are hardly a household name anymore.

The contradiction for workers is that despite the introduction of new technology making tasks easier while massively increasing production, workers generally do not share any of the increased output. Technology's multiplier effect on the productivity of workers instead does away for the need for workers. New technology in-

rather than providing a public service.

Because we cannot stop progress caused by innovation and new technology workers must look realistically at what can be done so that any changes serve their interests rather than the interests of the owners. There are several ways we can tackle the problem of job losses due to technology.

Workers and unions must work towards a better spread of wealth regardless of peoples contribution to society. Besides, new technology does not necessarily have to lead to job losses.

A new Green Economy based on renewable energy and recycling has the potential to create a very large number of jobs which

would be ongoing. By contrast the mining industry is said to employ just under 2% of the workforce. Jobs in the mining sector have a finite lifespan unlike jobs in the renewable sector of the economy. The will to move in the direction of sustainable production though is missing from the political and economic agenda of the mainstream parties despite the looming environmental crisis which endangers human kind.

Our communities are in crisis due to out-

days of the 60's and 70's when they advocated a 38 or 36 hour work week. The time has always been right for a continuation of the "Shorter Work Week" campaigns.

Governments continual cutting back on the social wage by raising the retirement age, reducing pensions and unemployment benefits, as well as cutting back on access to education to those who cannot pay the high fees demanded, is another way that the real economy is distorted away from waged workers. The media and poli-

of our communities could live in dignity. Today unions are on the back foot defending and losing the hard fought benefits workers had.

The problem of new technology destroying jobs exists only as long as unions fail to realise that freedom from work and freedom from scarcity is a major aspiration of workers. Technology will allow us to move closer to the goal of worker emancipation if it is used for the common good rather than geared towards making profit.

Union leaders like those in the RTBU do not know how to fight any more or they lack the political will, so they see technology as a threat rather than as a liberator of workers from the drudgery of everyday existence.

A vision different from that handed down through the media and politicians exists in the heart of every worker, even if what they say is clouded in confusion and mouthed platitudes handed down from the exploiting classes. If unions such as the RTBU are to survive the next decade then they must tap into the real aspirations of their members and learn like King

Canute turning back the sea, that it is futile to try and turn back the tide of human desire for technological innovation.

Railing against technological advances goes against the tide of history. Driverless trains, trains without guards and other innovations will come whether we like it or not. The RTBU bulletin citing safety and community concerns reveals much about the thinking within the RTBU leadership. Issues of safety will be overcome. From the unions point of view it should come down to a simple question that is not about jobs or safety but human need and the ownership of wealth.

The way forward is to extend and expand what is possible based on the needs of union members and the community in general, of which members are an integral part. Let's build the future based on human need, using progress and innovation that benefits all, rather than greed. Let's get our fair share of the spoils by challenging and defeating our real enemies not the RTBU's phantoms which the leadership use as an excuse for doing nothing.



dated infrastructure and a massive injection of public funds could provide the jobs needed for community renewal. The building of cycleways, upgrading of public spaces, better and more frequent public transport services, increasing the availability of housing and community health programs and the like has the ability to create many thousands of jobs. These jobs would be created because of advances in technology and the will to use it for the human good.

Workers displaced through technology need to have access to retraining so that they are better prepared for the new roles and jobs which they will undertake. Displaced rail workers and other public transport workers will hardly be prepared to slot into the jobs on offer outside of their traditional tasks. Retraining of workers displaced by technology could also create many thousands of jobs.

Sharing work and reducing work hours is another way of spreading the wealth. However this must not be at the cost of reduced wages. This is one sure way of sharing the proceeds of the increased productivity brought about by the introduction of new technology. Unions have pulled back a long way since the heady

days of the 60's and 70's when they advocated a 38 or 36 hour work week. The time has always been right for a continuation of the "Shorter Work Week" campaigns.

Never before in our history has so much wealth been accumulated in so few hands. Present Governments however would never dream of ending this life of privileged for the elite few on whose power they depend. The solution to increasing the social wage and therefore a fair share of the profits from innovation and new technology will involve a radical change in political perceptions and will require that the current economic order be turned on its head.

It is time to take back our share of production which is increasing with the help of new technology. There seems no point to increasing the productive labour of workers using technology if it does not benefit all of society.

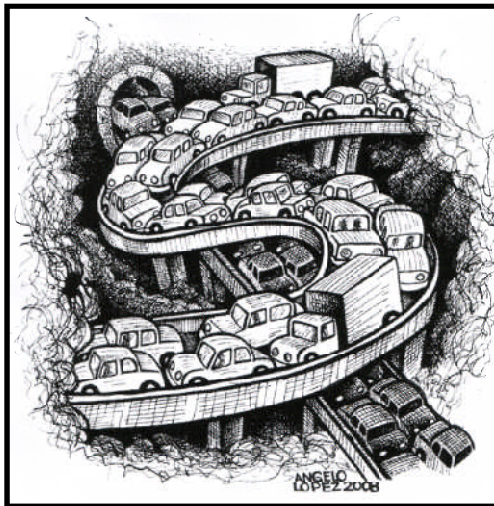
Traditionally unions fought for more leisure time, wage rises based on productivity improvements and a social wage that ensured that even the most disadvantaged

RAIL - BUS NEWS

By the Transport Scrutinizer

RAILCORP

As I predicted Booz-Allen Consultants have convinced the Government to decimate RailCorp once again. 750 salaried and professional job must go as a result. Only around 240 employees responded so far so it is only fair to say forced redundancies are likely to happen. Another problem that may soon happen may well be the removal of Guards from A and H sets, the rumours continue to grow. More staff reviews will see the further reduction of frontline staff from stations in line with the formation of Sydney Trains and NSW Trains.



STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Rebel Worker: How are things at Burwood?

Burwood Driver: Some of the most worrying developments has been blocks of 6-8 new drivers being sent to us from other depots. They are given a brief orientation by the bosses, but it's completely inadequate. As they don't know the runs.

Other news is that the bosses are starting to really hammer drivers on the M41 and are monitoring them with P Tips over cancellations of runs and in some cases drivers are being set up for E1's. The P Tips involving the GPS tracking equipment which all buses are now equipped could help out resolving inefficiencies in the buses, but instead the bosses just used it to punish drivers. These cancellations due to late running are inevitable due to the unrealistic running times being imposed which provide no time for traffic congestion.

Some weeks ago, the STA CEO visited the depot and held a staff meeting. It focused on the STA's insatiable efficiency drive. Particularly emphasising cutting out drivers, rather than tackling other well known inefficiencies. Intriguingly at Burwood a lot of new wiring is being installed. So there is new money available for such things, but it must come from the drivers.

This corner cutting is also seriously undermining the quality of bus services. As a cost saving measure the bosses aren't will-

ing to pay for DOC's for corridor supervisors. As a result, there are cases where there are no corridor supervisor on duty. Such a situation occurred the other night and due to a situation at Concord, when we had no corridor supervisor to intervene, we were sent on the wrong route and along roads the buses shouldn't have gone down. Leaving many commuters waiting at bus stops. In another case, a driver was involved in an altercation with a passenger. Again there was no corridor supervisor to intervene. So this driver was kept waiting a considerable time, as the police treated the incident as a low priority.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

A Visit from "Mr Pinocchio" with "Dolar Signs" in his Eyes

Chief Exec., Peter Rowley, did the rounds of the depots assuring staff that we won't be privatised and that our core work will be quarantined for 3-4 years, while the STA can cut more costs. They will then be forced to compete with private companies for all Sydney contracts. Two weeks later, the Transport Minister says, she will not rule out privatisation. What a joke?! STOP PRESS According to the Sydney Morning Herald Thursday 5th July, the Chief Exec. is now threatening us with privatisation if we don't give back important conditions!

The Holiday Relief (Scrap) Roster was abolished 6 months ago and replaced with specific relief lines below each style of

STATE TRANSIT

The Government has made it quite clear to STA that privatisation is on the agenda once more with tougher scrutiny of management and operation of services by TfNSW happening immediately. Crackdowns on workers rights such as sick leave, compo, special requests for roster adjustments, union representation on disciplinary issues and the abolition of employee staff buses are just the beginning of a raft of actions specifically designed to demoralise even the most hardened employees. The main focus of all of this is to make all STA staff feel resentful of their organisation and gladly accept hostile private takeover of public bus services. TfNSW YOU ARE ON NOTICE FROM ALL AT STA. IF YOU AND YOUR CRONY GOVERNMENT THINK WE ARE ALL STUPID, THINK AGAIN!!!

rosters (e.g. AM's, Midday, PM's, Broken). A form of scrap (in depot) is retained. Anyone on a relief line can be sent to another depot, at any time, based on seniority. So the least experienced drivers, who are still finding their feet at their home depot are being sent en masse to unfamiliar fields.

I recently encountered a driver from another depot, who was driving a bus. He had never driven before. This is totally against STA rules and any driver sent to another depot must be quickly trained on that bus before they go in service. On top of this breach, he was being sent to Birchgrove terminus with a difficult and dangerous turning area – in the dark! Leichhardt drivers are taken to two turning areas (and trained in daylight) including this one, before they ever drive at all in service. This is a totally unacceptable situation. I spent 15 minutes drawing a diagram for this driver, while he drove in service, then explained it to him at my stop for a few minutes. Holding up his passengers. This turning area has obstacles that could result in bus damage from illegally parked vehicles and road furniture.

The bus needs to be raised for a dish gutter. A lamppost hinders the turning circle. The circle needs to be checked for illegally parked vehicles. This driver had none of this information and it was only dumb luck, I was a passenger on his bus!!

LEICHHARDT SHOWS THE WAY FORWARD ON WORKERS' COMP!

On Monday 2nd July a union ballot was held at the depot on the issue of holding a 24 hour stoppage, as a protest against the new workers compensation legislation. It was passed 98 (Yes) 70 (No) and (Infor-

mal) 2. This motion must now be now sent around all depots for perusal and potential voting. Then sent to Division Office for decision.

Leichhardt 5 years ago was considered a soft depot. Now we are leading the charge!! When we moved to the new depot, we threatened a snap Leichhardt only strike over such pathetic refusals by management to supply basic amenities e.g. (1) A local phone for family emergencies!! (2) Soap in the kitchen!! The other half dozen requests were as minor. The threat got them talking, but we were definitely walking, if no response!

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: What are your thoughts on the STA's "Transition Program"?

Waverley Busie: The STA CEO has been going around the depots holding staff meetings on this subject. The major focus is a report by the O'Farrell Govt's transport advisors, the notorious management consultants, Booz Allen. It's taken a figure out of the air of \$20 million and said we are over budget for this amount. Whilst Veolia claims it can run the STA \$20 million cheaper. However, as we all know, Veolia and other large companies are duplicitous in their claims in business to win contracts and can cook up rubbery figures with the aid of corporate lawyers. It's all about screwing the worker. This duplicity of Veolia was highlighted to me on a recent radio program. It focused on Veolia's tender for some garbage business. I was intending to ring in to the program to dispute Veolia's claims and raise some points about its rubbery figures and duplicitous claims. Was Veolia to be paid by weight of the tip? Is it being paid per tonne for land fill? Why isn't the rubbish being recycled? In the case of the Sydney City Council, it outsourced its garbage collection to Veolia just to cut costs. What can this be all about apart from screwing the worker to the limit.

The STA is using this bogus justification for further cost cutting. This amount of \$20 million seems to me to be chicken feed and is farcical. The STA bosses focus on this issue shows their megalomania. It seems to me to be all about making us more profitable to be flogged off. Probably to this most multi monster company in NSW - Veolia. Apart from garbage trucks, it has interests in the desalination plant and buses. It's no doubt looking for rich pickings with the STA.

The Sunday 3/6/12 edition of the Sun Herald dropped the bomb shell of O'Farrell plans for the privatisation of the STA. The Government didn't deny it was under consideration. It seems due to the existence of the current enterprise agreement, it's un-

likely, the STA would be flogged off until 2014. Latest news is that the CEO has been blatantly trying to blackmail us into agreeing to more casuals, cuts to rosters and other give backs using the threat of privatisation.

On a recent 2BL radio program, the President of the Bus and Coach Association, Frank Diapuzzo was interviewed about the issue of the STA's privatisation and its takeover by Veolia. He was very careful in his answers. He knew what to say and what not to say. He gave the impression he knew a lot more than he was letting on. He talked vaguely about rosters and wouldn't elaborate. He seemed to be using "code" words. What does this mean in reality? Casualisation? Different companies bringing in workers?

RW: What's the latest with the toilets?

WB: The salt cleaning solution isn't being put in the men's toilets at North Bondi. As a result, an unhygienic odour is present, even in winter. Without even going inside the toilets at North Bondi, you smell it.



The male toilets at the Bondi Junction interchange are a disgrace. At the old interchange 12 to 13 years ago the toilets were adequate in their condition. However at the new interchange, complaints about the toilets are being made constantly. There are a range of problems such as the noisy fan, a cubicle door which has been kicked in which no one has bothered to fix, urine all over the floor, poor toilet flushing, toilet paper rolls missing, too few cubicles and the obvious need for regular checks. Whilst 200 drivers are supposed to use these appalling facilities. It's farcical! The STA bosses are even corner cutting on hygiene to save a few dollars. Everything is being clawed back to save money. It's like a game. The STA bosses are treating us like the lowest common denominator. There are plenty of ex-professional people

on this job who are scratching their heads about this type of treatment. One driver was so angered by the situation that he is taking this issue up with the OH&S committee, which must look at this and get all the toilets cleaned and done up.

Another example of how ludicrous this corner cutting has become, is an incident in which I was involved the other day. I took a bus at the shed and went to Nth Bondi. At the terminus, I noticed an internal panel on the bus had become detached and was over hanging passengers seats. I contacted the radio room who advised a changeover would be supplied at Bondi Junction. At the interchange instead of being issued with the changeover, an inspector from Grafton Street had some gaffer tape. When he came over to repair the panel, he laughed saying the tape was the STA's ideal fix it. A masking tape to cover up, the STA's deficiencies!

RW: How are things on the privatisation front?

WB: Some on the latest news is that the Parramatta to Liverpool T-Way has been sold to a private bus company. T-Way drivers were given the option of either going over to the private company or returning to their depots of origin. Given the worse conditions of the private company, I assume most returned to STA depots.

Whilst the Ferries will be sold off by the end of July. Were Ferry Skippers paid a bonus as an inducement to go over to the franchisees? Recently I was down at the ferries wharf at the Quay and noticed a group of ferry workers on one of the piers. I pulled up one of the guys and asked him what was going on in the ferries. He mentioned they were attending an induction for the new franchises which will be taking over. I asked him whether anything will change with the franchising. According to him, he was guaranteed by the new management that it would be like the old government operator. I replied, "just wait, you'll see marked differences." With a private mob taking over a utility, it may look good at the beginning, but later you'll see the nasty side.

RW: How are things with the cleaners, mechanics and fuelers?

WB: They are being shafted! At Pt. Botany, cleaners and mechanics have left due to being given the run around by incompetent bosses who lack integrity. The mechanics are suffering and don't have to put up with the callous behaviour of the bosses. Heavy diesel mechanics can find work at many other places. At Waverley, cleaners and fuelers are not getting extra overtime despite increased workloads. Every corner in their jobs is being investigated by the bosses to deliver an outcome. It reminds me of the Nazis. In their concentration camps under the control of

Himmler, the wrong kind of efficiency was displayed with everything being itemised and taken from their victims such as gold, false teeth, glasses, etc and the inmates separated according to category. The fuelers and cleaners are being intimidated and demonised to facilitate the split up of the STA into sections.

RW: How are STA Administrative staff faring?

WB: They are working under tremendous pressure. They now, all have to reapply for their positions. Looking at my supervisor, I can see he's not happy, behind his smile. I can see he's been put under more pressure and has to perform more or lose his job. This will mean more pressure put on to us. The other day, a lady from Head Office caught my bus. She displayed her home and duty pass and said, "this will be gone soon!"

Recently, our friend Omar, sundries staff member, who handles lost property and other duties was given his marching orders. As part of his sacking had to sit for a basic test, what I call a "failure" test. To receive a final payment, he and others had to attend a type of induction. One of our guys, mentioned that people from all parts of the STA particularly office staff were attending it. The course is all about helping you apply for jobs outside the STA by helping you write resumes. In a private company, you would never get this type of assistance, but I'm not saying it's good. This cutting of staff is happening across board in the public sector with O'Farrell's drive to save money.

RW: What are your thoughts on fighting the push for privatisation in the STA and other attacks by the O'Farrell Govt.?

WB: The union hierarchy such as Unions NSW has spread the illusion that we need to be revamped and modernised and just focus on computerised communications such as digital media to get the message across of the need to resist the O'Farrell attacks and token single issue rallies such as on Workers Comp on Wed 13/6/12. We are all getting sick of being pushed around by the O'Farrell Govt. and need to fight it like the teachers' union. A work mate the other day mentioned to me how inspired he was by the recent strike by teachers over attacks by the O'Farrell Govt. He was angered by the O'Farrell Govt wanting to vastly increase the amount of the fining of the Teachers' union from \$10,000 to \$200,000 for what it considers as illegal stoppages, but what I call democracy! He considered we need the right strike if we are to effectively fight O'Farrell.

RW: What are your impressions of the speed limits on the bendibuses?

WB: The other day I was going through a tunnel on the Eastern Distributor and noticed in the 2nd lane in the same direction, a lot of traffic congestion caused by a bendibus. It was travelling at its severely restricted, speed limit of 50 kmp, imposed by the STA bosses to save a few dollars on fuel. However, the maximum speed limit for vehicles in the tunnel was 80 kmp. It seemed to me a situation from the horse and cart era, when vehicles had a much less speed capacity. Is the STA really mak-

ing savings by such measures? I don't really know. It's certainly a hindrance to traffic. Whilst the union has claimed a minor victory on the issue. As they obliged the STA to put signs on the back of the bendies for motorists to take account of the 50 kmp speed limit of these buses.

RW: How things with the transit officers?

WB: Recently I was passing the STA office in Parramatta. I noticed a group of 5-6 transit officers outside the office and had a brief conversation with them. The transit officers often come from an elite military background such as the SAS and were highly trained. They were all scratching their heads about their poor treatment by the Transport Minister. They mentioned that she recently featured at a public transport forum in Baulkham Hills where she was unable to handle questions from the floor. She gave the impression that she knew little about the job. However, she has an unhealthy obsession with chopping out jobs. They felt they were on a merry go round with their jobs, as for the 3rd time, they had to reapply for their positions.

RW: What nasty surprises are likely to occur with the STA takeover by a private company?

WB: Few people on the job who voted for O'Farrell, look at a range of issues which will have to be dealt with under privatisation: will the institute still be operational? What changes will have to be made to the Institutes constitution? Your canteen, is that continuing as a going concern? Will you have time off for running and fishing clubs?

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In previous editions of RW, mention was made of a Conductor Service Manager bullying employees and of an employee being given a final warning. In this issue Conductors, Station Staff, Drivers and Staff from Head Office will discuss these ongoing issues. Once again names have been changed.

RW: Three years ago, we reported about a Conductor Service Manager bullying employees. What has happened?

Clarence: Nothing.

Misha and Manfred: You are correct. We spoke about this person in issue 132 of Sparks. This issue received a lot of support from the rank and file, but Human Resources had other ideas.

RW: What ideas?

Misha: They called a number of employees before their respective managers to find out who wrote the article. You see



Human Resources promised to terminate the persons who wrote the article.

Manfred: The number of employees who read the article in 132 supported the persons who wrote the article. As one of the V/Line workers said, "SPARKS stands for free speech".

Sheona: In Head Office, where I work one can observe people. During a lunch break I heard a number of employees discussing SPARKS issues 132 and 134. One employee stated that the people who wrote the article were disloyal to the Company and were the lowest of the low and would not put their names in the article.

Clarence: We maybe a low bunch of workers, but you have to stand up and be counted. The reasons names are changed is because of what happened 25 years ago. In those days, there used to be a Victorian Edition of SPARKS. One of the workers

who contributed to SPARKS was using his name. Management hounded this person and tried to discipline him on trivial issues. He always stood up to them.

RW: You can see why we change names. People are frightened to come forward. We prefer to keep our contributors anonymous.

Rastus and Roscoe: At this point being drivers, we have had trouble with this Conductor Supervisor. You see during a number of service disruptions, a number of Drivers asked the Conductors to come up to the Drivers' cab to discuss the disruption. There are issues we cannot talk about over the radio. On one of the stations during a delay, one of the drivers observed this person hiding in a waiting room. We think he was spying.

Clarence: You are correct. This how low this person could go.

Misha: This Supervisor always picked on female Conductors.

Roscoe: Yes, he did. Being a Bully, this is all he was good at.

Rastus: One of our drivers observed an incident on a station platform, where this person belittled a female Conductor. He claimed that she did not close the doors on an N Set. The Conductor said both green door lights were on, thus the doors were closed. He ignored her explanation and he humiliated her.

Misha: The Conductor was distressed and reported this Bully to management.

RW: What did they do?

Manfred: Nothing. The Conductor told management that if this person ever again got on a train, she was running, she would walk off.

Rastus: We, drivers, would have supported her.

Manfred: Management said that it was against the industrial relations act to refuse to work with a person.

Rastus: Yes, it is, but a bully like him would you walk off.

Roscoe: In issue 132, mention was made of this person spying on a Conductor from a driver's cab in the middle of a velocity train. What happened here was the driver of the train told the manager to tell him to get out of the cab or it would not move. He moved. We, drivers, stood up to him. To hell with the industrial relations Act.

Clarence: In issue 134, an article was written about a female Conductor who on departing a train with an N set, shut the doors and a passenger jumped on the train through the Van door.

Misha: Yes, this was a sad case. The train was departing and the passenger jumped

Misha and Manfred: Human Resources despite representations from the Union and Train Passengers with not remove the warning.

Clarence: In the meantime, this Supervisor was bullying Conductors.

Manfred: He had his friends and spies who would report to him what the Conductors were doing and some Conductors would report to him if a Conductor did the wrong thing on a train.

Rastus and Roscoe: Yes, these idiots thought that by putting other Conductors on paper to him, they would be on his good books, but he was using these idiots.

Sheona: Despite him being a bully, Human Resources would not remove him, because if he was removed, they would admit, they made a mistake.

RW: In conducting, this person should have been removed. It would have restored harmony in the country depot and removed a fair amount of tension around the workplace.

Misha and Manfred: Towards the end of last year, ticket irregularities were discovered at this particular depot where he worked. As there are legal issues regarding this matter, we cannot say anymore. It will have to wait for a future issue.

Clarence: It is good, he has been removed, but unfortunately, it had to be on an issue of tickets.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the Conductors had to put up with this Bully. We hope when the enquiry over the tickets is resolves, that he is removed. Finally, what goes around comes around. Remember support SPARKS.



on the train. He knocked the Conductor over. This supervisor was on the train and stood the Conductor down and she had to front Human Resources.

Roscoe: The Conductor was put on a Final Warning.

RW: Is this warning still in force.

Rastus: Yes it is. Three years has passed since the incident occurred and the Conductor is still on the final warning.

SWEDEN

Monday, July 2 A union representative from the West Local LS of SAC (Swedish Workers Centre) was beaten and received death threats in his home by people linked to the criminal gang Werewolf Legion. The background to the beating and the threat is a labor dispute between members of the union and an agency operating in the hospitality industry. The union had called the company to negotiate, on two invalid layoffs and wage requirements, and owed holiday pay.

Negotiations had begun with a first meeting. When the negotiations were to continue the company wanted it to happen on the company premises.

But a new round of negotiations never happened. Instead, six people forced themselves into the union representative's apartment at 21 on Monday evening, July 2. The attackers were led by a former top member of the criminal gang Werewolf Legion who is also the brother of the owners of the agency.

The assailants struck the trade union representative repeatedly against the head and demanded that the union withdraw the requests made ??against the agency. With a knife against his throat the union representative was forced to call the owner of

the agency and promise that all the demands would be dropped. After the phone call the former Werewolf Legion leader said to the union representative that he was personally considered in debt of half a million kronor to the Werewolf Legion leader, to be paid within one month otherwise the union representative would be killed. In the apartment were also the union representatives wife and children who were kept locked up in another room during the assault.

SAC demands that the police and Minister for Labour Hillevi Engstrom takes this development seriously and immediately establishes a program to get the agencies to follow the rules of labor and Swedish legislation.

SPAIN TODAY

The Miners March

Workers Solidarity Trade Union Confederation Press Release

Yesterday, July 11, the miners protest before the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, was one of the clearest examples of the fight for labour rights. The workers in the coalfields of Asturias, Castilla y Leon and Aragon. Workers who are on indefinite strike for over a month, and who have been deprived of wages agreed upon and signed by the previous government in the National Strategic Reserve Coal, besides being subject to a European subsidy scheme agreed until 2018 that ensured the permanence of the subsidy, but all of a sudden, without warning or anaesthesia, the current government has decided that this agreement will be nullified. Again using the justification of the crisis and seeking to place cuts of 68% on subsidies, leaving entire families without support. On the other hand the government puts forward the argument that the import cost of this resource is cheaper, but it is well known that the Spanish state already imports 80% of energy resources, which is why we are the fifth European country in domestic electricity consumption shortages.

This event was supported by a large number of people, noting that the miners here in Madrid had the support of the working class. And so they did know their path, shouting slogans of support as "Madrid, labour, is supporting the miners", "Long live the struggle of the working class" ...

The fight to save the jobs of the miners is a further example, of the confrontation that pits the government against the workers. The Government "manages" this country based on laws without consensus, enforced by an absolute majority achieved based on fallacies, making and undoing, and obeying the directives of Europe at face value, for your help to solve the mess that politicians and bankers have created. An aid as a loan, subject to harsh conditions, which is not to help citizens but to help their "little friends" bankers.

From Workers Solidarity and we continue to fight and support for decent working conditions and rights acquired through years of struggle.

Madrid July 13, 2012

Workers Solidarity Trade Union Confederation

LETTER FROM A RETIRED MINER

A translation of a letter from a retired miner from Asturias, where miners have been on indefinite strike for weeks, explaining the dispute and giving its background.



I've worked for twenty five years in the mines. I first went down the mine when I was 18 and I would like to say that I am amazed by a lot of comments that I'm reading about mining and early retirement. I'm going to give you my perspective.

Firstly the struggle which the miners are carrying out at the moment isn't to ask for money. It is that they respect the agreement that was signed last year between the Ministry of Industry and the miners' unions, and which had subsidies designated until 2018. This money was from the European Community and not from the Spanish government. It isn't money that came from any Spanish people to help us as many people who are criticising us so much seem to think.

Regarding this money what I, like almost all mining families ask myself is, where is the part of the money from the Mining Funds that was supposedly going to the creation of alternative industries in the coalfields, after the closure of the mines? Well, like in many other sectors, this money has been handled by the politicians and the unions. With part of this money, for example, Señor Gabino de Lorenzo,

the ex-mayor of Olviedo, paid for new streetlights in his city, the new Palace of Expositions and Congresses and many other projects. Señora Felgeroso, the ex-mayor of Gijon, spent it on the Technical University and other projects.

In the Valle de Turon, in the Caudal coalfield, where I live, there have been 600 deaths in the mines (the ones that we know about, as in the civil war they burned the previous archives) from 1889 till 2006 when they closed them. Of course they did build a sports centre, which when they opened it didn't have any toilets and is practically unused. All around us everywhere there are heaps of rubble, which bit by bit they are trying to clear up. But reindustrialization, which is what will create stable work so that there is still life in the region, almost nothing.

Secondly, I am amazed to see that lots of people object to this subsidy, I didn't want to write this but there are subsidies to other sectors like livestock farming, agriculture, fishing and many more. Personally I am happy about that, I would rather that the subsidies went to workers than that they went to those thieves who rob us every day.

Thirdly, after the end of the civil war, I think that many of you don't know that the miners worked an hour a day for free for many years, to repair what Francoism destroyed, when in our houses there was not enough to eat.

Four. In 1962 the miners started a strike which spread all over Spain, in which we won many of the rights that all the Spanish people have up till now and which they are trying to snatch away from us. In this strike there were many beatings, many people imprisoned, and many people who were exiled to other provinces of Spain, separated from their families, and who only returned in 1980.

Five. Regarding early retirement, it is a myth that miners can retire at forty and you talk about quantities of euros as if we had won the lottery. The reality is different, in the payments which people who have retired early receive, a part is made up of their extra payments. We make social security payments of 50%, so every two years we work, we pay an extra year of social security, for example I have worked in the mines for 25 years and I have paid 37 and a half years of social security payments, how many of you think you have made the same level of payments?

Six. You say that the coal they bring from abroad is cheaper than Spanish coal, I'm

not convinced but taking it as true, do you want to see us working like slaves like in other countries? I don't want any worker anywhere in the world to be a slave.

I'm going to write this because it really happened. I've worked alongside work-mates from Czech Republic and Poland, when they came to Asturias and started to buy things in the shops, they were amazed because they could buy the amount they wanted and in their own country they couldn't do that. The first Christmas they spent with us they bought a bar of turrón (traditional Christmas sweet) in each hand. We asked them why they did that and they said in their country they couldn't afford it and their wages only gave them enough to eat, and that badly. What I want to say is that if we don't defend our rights we will suffer the same.

Seven. Regarding the roadblocks on the motorways I will say to everyone who is complaining because the miners have made it difficult to get to work or study and who say that when they have problems in their company, they will go to the workplaces of others to "annoy them". I will say to them that whenever other comrades from other industries came to ask for help do defend their jobs, we stopped work for 24 hours, giving support here and abroad.

In the time of the strikes of the English miners, we stopped work and we made a collection to send to them so they could feed their families. Does anybody doubt that we would unite with any affected workers? But it seems that now it's too

much effort even to ask others for help. Supporting one another is fundamental, but what we do is the opposite and so those at the top always play with an advantage.

If all the Spanish workers were as united as the miners, the rulers of this country would think long and hard before making the cuts they are making now, I can assure you. Think about who is really stopping you going to work or going to class, with firing



people so easy now and the cuts in education. The people who are stopping you are the politicians.

I would also like to say to the people who say that we should go to Madrid to the doors of the Ministry and "leave everybody else in peace", yes, we have gone there, but the censorship in the media means maybe they are not giving you all the facts.

I strongly believe that a worker who defends their rights is not a terrorist like now they are calling us for fighting to defend the wellbeing of our families.

I invite you all to leave your houses and defend what is yours. Staying at home, you are letting them bit by bit bring hunger into your lives.

They want our children and yours to be illiterate like us, that we see the walls of the schools more from the outside than the inside, because an illiterate people is more easy to rule.

Keep yourselves informed. Question everything you see on the television, now you have internet, mobiles, you can be in permanent contact, organise, in the way that you want, peacefully or directly on the barricades, but organise! Make objectives to achieve quickly as the government moves very quickly when things are in their favour and they know it.

Take the word "fear" and the phrase "for what, it's not going to change anything" out of your

minds and take control of your future.

If there is anything you don't understand in what I've written or you want to ask me a question about something specific, if I can, I will answer with pleasure.

Many thanks to those who have supported us from other provinces and from other countries.

Salud

Juan Jose Fernandez, Asturias

From Solidarity Federation

GREEK STEEL WORKERS' STRIKE

The third world war is coming! — That's what they say! This ain't gonna be a class war either. — Undoubtedly, Greece is the country that has suffered the most during this last and totally unrestrained wave of liberalization and fierce devaluation of labour which has been sweeping Europe since the start of the financial crisis in 2008. At the same time there are a multitude of political anti-systemic oppositional forces which have managed to maintain a living presence in Greek society.

What this looks like is everything from a widespread network of anarchist/autonomous groups of various flavours, growing in numbers after the 2008 December riots to the network for Inclusive Democracy

across to the Greek Communist Party. The Greek Communist Party are one of the few European communist parties not seduced by social-democratic Sirens, still adhering to the communist

principles (at least at the rhetorical level) and with a consistent presence in the Parliament.

One would be tempted to assume that this situation would turn Greece into a hotbed of revolutionary activity. In fact, there are many, especially among the left-wing intellectuals from abroad, who seem all too willing to make this assumption, thereby creating an image of Greece going through a pre-revolutionary stage.

Of course this is untrue, and it makes no difference to the people who suffer whilst academics dream of revolutions on foreign horizons. What is even more striking though is that none of the above mentioned groups has gathered much attention during this imaginary creation of the "Greek Peo-

ple's Republic". Instead, it is SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) that has been hailed as the possible saviour of Europe, a conglomerate of leftist groups for which the term Left would apply only by a very loose interpretation of the word whereas the term Radical only serves as an marketing trick, showing once again the growing gap between signifiers and signifi-cants in this post-modern world of crumbling meanings.

Just before the second round of elections in June, Slavoj Zizek was invited to give a talk at a SYRIZA meeting and as was expected, he charmed his audience by employing all his usual rhetorical devices. When asked about the Communist Party of Greece, he replied that these people are dead but they don't know it yet. Accusing a pro-Soviet communist party of exhibiting the stiffness of a dead body might of course sound like preaching to the converted. However, doing so among a bunch

of social democrats who have failed to sense the stinking odour of the rotting body of Social Democracy sounds like a twisted Monty Python joke.

Back to basics

A few kilometres away from this SYRIZA meeting, in an industrial suburb of the greater area of Athens, about 400 steel workers were into the seventh month of their strike. These are workers who have to work in dangerous conditions such as amongst molten streams of steel which sometimes might find its way on their bodies. If they are lucky, they might get away with some burns. If they are not, they simply die. They were running one of the longest strikes in modern Greek history which

Euro for a newly hired, inexperienced worker and goes up to no more than 1500 for a worker with decades of experience, working overtime, during weekends and on night-shifts.

Faced with this dilemma, the 400 workers at the Athens site decided to respond in their own way and after a general assembly they voted for a strike which nobody believed would last that long. The atrophied major unions (GSEE for those working in the private sector and ADEDY for those in the public sector) have made a habit of calling for strikes which almost always have a more or less symbolic character, lasting no more than 24 or 48 hours. However, this time the workers assembly

have suggested to the company that only 40 of them should be hired immediately and the rest can return to their jobs gradually.

A walk among the ruins of the unions

The current stalemate situation deserves a closer look since, in certain respects, it epitomizes all the contradictions that plague the unions, their structure and the means they employ for their struggle (assuming of course that their goal is to fight for the interests of the workers, an assumption not at all self-evident). What has allowed the steel workers to keep their fight going for more than 8 months now is a substantial wave of solidarity and (material and financial) support that they have received from various groups and individuals, even from other countries. On the other hand, the company has managed to survive the strike due to the fact that the workers' representatives at the Thessaly site chose to answer the dilemma posed by the company's management by accepting lower wages and reduced work hours. Anyone can guess the outcome of this struggle, in case there's no further escalation on the part of the workers. The company, considered to be the spearhead of changes in the Industry which attempt to lower labour costs, will probably have the final say.

An important difference between the two sites: in Thessaly, the workers society is led by groups affiliated with the ruling parties in Greece (New Democracy and PASOK) whereas in Athens its president is a member of PAME, a union organization with links to the Greek Communist Party. Therefore, an obvious explanation for the division among the workers at the two sites is that the ones in Thessaly are represented by corrupt unionists with interests identified more with those of their bosses than those of the workers they are supposed to represent whereas the ones in Athens have managed to attain a pure working class consciousness. Of course that is an oversimplified analysis, the truth is however, much more complex. A few words about the structure of the unions in Greece are necessary at this point. Compared to the charade of the general elections in the so-called states of representative democracy, the situation in the unions, over which the workers should in theory have more control, has come to a level of almost surrealist absurdity. In the last round of elections in Greece, a country with traditionally high percentages of participation in elections, almost 40% of the electorate chose not to vote at all (not including all the immigrants without any electoral rights). According to a study, 52% of the Greek workers say that workers assemblies do not even exist at their workplaces. It is estimated that almost 75% of the workers do not belong to any



mainstream media had carefully chosen not to cover. Needless to say, Slavoj didn't bother to pay them a visit.

Before the start of the financial crisis, the Greek Steel Industry was considered to be one of the largest Greek industries in terms of sales among those that were not in the stock exchange market. Comprising of two sites, one in Athens and another one in Thessaly, a region about 300 kilometres to the north of Athens, it had a revenue of more than €320 million, employing almost 1000 workers. Its actual production had risen during the past 20 years to about 1 million tons of steel per year and it kept rising at the time that the strike began.

In October 2011 the company announced to the workers that it faced financial difficulties, i.e. a significant reduction of sales since the start of the crisis and presented them with a choice. In order to cut down costs, they would either have to accept a five-hour workday, accompanied by a reduction of their wages by 40% or 180 of them would be fired. In order to see this dilemma in its true perspective, it is worth noting that the monthly wage starts at 900

showed an unusual determination which of course forced the company management to take the offensive and soon afterwards the first layoffs were announced. 38 people were initially fired, a practice that the managers kept escalating as the workers showed no signs of submission. At the time that this article is being written, this number has risen to 120 fired workers. Besides these sackings, the company has made use of a number of other aggressive tactics, from using strike-breakers to split the workers to arresting the president of their assembly and even bringing the case to court which ruled the strike as illegal. A host of establishment journalists didn't miss the chance to follow suit once again, demanding that the government be firm in enforcing the law and bring things back to normality so that the company's problems could be discussed in a "rational", "responsible" and "civilized" way. At present, the company does not seem willing to step back from its initial decision, even though a number of workers no longer wish to be hired again and the rest of them

unions at all. As if this number did not sound scary enough, try adding the hundreds of thousands of unemployed. And then add all the illegally employed. What about the temporarily employed?

On top of this, the overwhelming majority (more than 90% !!) of the members of the executive boards of GSEE and ADEDY work for the public sector whose workers are protected by more safety nets (e.g. until very recently public servants could not be fired). What is more important though is that this striking imbalance reflects the very structure of the Greek state itself (and therefore Greek capitalism) which has been built upon the selective “donation” of benefits among several special interest groups within the public sector resembling in certain respects the tribal divisions in countries of the periphery where capitalism has been forcefully imposed upon heterogeneous populations. Needless to say, this is a poisonous situation that gives rise to fierce conflicts by essentially turning these dependent groups into beggars of the great Father figure of the state and competitors for its benefits.

Another factor that has alienated workers from the unions over the past decades can be traced to their internal organization. As has already been mentioned, the very first division among workers is introduced by the existence of two completely separate high-level organizations, one for the public servants and another one for those working at the private sector. These so-called third-level organizations cover the entire geographical area in Greece and are led by their respective boards whose members are elected among several groups with links to the established political parties, a process not dissimilar to the one for the parliamentary elections. Below them, at the second level, there exist the confederations, divided according to geographical area or type of work and at the base of this hierarchical structure one finds the first-level societies, attached usually to a specific business or company. As is evident, this structure essentially reproduces the same pathological (and pathetic) situation to be found in the centre of the political scene by introducing multiple vertical and horizontal dividing lines of mediation and representation.

The above mentioned communist PAME, established in 1999, has tried to create a separate and parallel structure, condemning the leaders of GSEE and ADEDY as traitors of the working class. At the same time however, it participates in all of their proceedings and elections without ever attempting to completely disengage itself from them whereas being very selective about whom it chooses to support. Closely following the steps of the Greek Communist Party, it keeps its distance from every

movement and struggle over which it has failed to gain absolute dominance while being very efficient at containing whatever it leads at very manageable levels.

The net result of all these machinations amounts to nothing more than the appropriation of workers’ power by the professional unionists at the top into leadership positions who have no problem becoming full-time professional politicians after exhausting all the options of climbing up the Union ladder. It’s sad to think that this happened through a slow and gradual process of self-mutilation which a large part of the working class experienced in an almost masochistic daze of perverted pleasure, accompanied by the administration of the “morphine” of loans, mortgages and the dream of someday moving up to a middle-class status, back in the not so distant days of easy money. This works so long as a significant part of those at the bottom of the hierarchy could maintain a lifestyle of reliable (i.e. zombified) consumers by employing the usual exorcism rituals of condemning the union elites as corrupt before going to the next electronics store to buy the latest gadget. Once again, the most vulnerable part of the working class finds itself in a state of paralyzing division and almost complete helplessness. In this perspective, one may have a better understanding of the deadlock situation of the steel workers, a Gordian knot becoming tighter and tighter each time they (or anyone else in position similar to theirs) attempt to pull on the rope.

In search of alternatives

From our point of view, it is obvious that the *raison d’être* of the unions, as they are today, has ceased to exist. Now that the European capitalist forces attempt to restructure the European economic zone in order to make it more competitive and catch up with the rest of the existing or emerging economic superpowers, they have no intention of making any compromises when it comes to lowering labour costs. For them, within their own political framework, it is a matter of life or death. The time of the welfare state is over and no return to obsolete forms of Keynesianism or Social Democracy is possible. The Unions, as distributors of “benefits” to and pacifiers of the workers, will probably discover, sooner or later, that they have not only become useless for the workers but that the ruling elites as well have no use for them.

It is therefore imperative that new forms of resistance are developed before it is too late (if it isn’t already). Without going into a very thorough analysis, there are certain steps that the workers can take, if they are to have any chance of surviving the onslaught that is about to hit them (what we’ve seen is just foreplay). No matter how hard or unthinkable this might seem,

the workers can make their voices be heard and their presence be felt again in a truly antagonistic manner only if they burn the bridges than still link them with the existing unions and start building their own organizations again, irrespective of whether this move might be declared as illegal. Organizations without all these levels of mediation and at the same time less divided which should accommodate not only those with permanent jobs but also the masses of the unemployed or precariously employed. Organizations that should respond not only reactively and defensively, with strikes and negotiations, but also proactively, by building international (if possible, given the international nature of the current “war”) networks of (material) support that should be automatically activated in cases like those of the steel workers who had to depend on the goodwill of their supporters.

Furthermore, if one understands the current situation as we do, i.e. that the time of compromises is over, then the next logical step is to move towards more radical defence tactics and even take the offensive. We may find one such example in Greece again. Since May 2011, the management of the Industrial Mining company in Thessaloniki (about 500 kilometres north of Athens) has stopped paying its employees, again due to financial difficulties. After months of negotiations and unemployment, the general assembly of the workers reached the following decision. The workers should take over the company and start running it on their own by dividing the shares equally among themselves. No wonder the Confederation of Industry Workers was hostile to this action. You guessed right. It is led by representatives affiliated with the ruling parties. It is no secret that this kind of workers co-operatives may very well turn into fully assimilated capitalist companies if they try to move towards production on a mass scale while struggling to survive in the existing environment. However, we need to start discovering those few threads that can loosen up the Gordian knot while preparing the sword that will cut through it.

UPDATE 1: After this article was written, the few news media that cover the strike of the steel workers have reported that the company’s management is taking all the necessary legal steps to completely shut down the Athens site.

UPDATE 2: In the early morning hours of July 20, the riot police was called in to force the strikers out of the factory so that it can resume its operation. A week after, the workers’ assembly announced that the strike was over.

GUEST WRITER: Elias

Thanks to Worker Solidarity Movement/Anarkismo

Britain Today

Olympic Fortress Looms Over London

Residents in Tower Hamlets were horrified when they learnt that surface to air missiles were to be positioned on a tower on their site, the old Bryant and May match factory buildings. As a result a campaign had been set up to oppose the missile installations, formed by local residents and supporters (for more information visit <http://stoptheolympicmissiles.wordpress.com/>).

But the positioning of missiles here and elsewhere is only part of the story. As many as 48,000 security forces will be deployed in London, in addition to 13,500 troops – more soldiers than the British Army have stationed in Afghanistan. A sonic weapon designed to disperse crowds by administering “head splitting pain” is in readiness. Unmanned drones will be patrolling the skies over London. An aircraft carrier will be anchored nearby on the Thames in addition to other warships. A “safe zone” will be put in place surrounded by eleven miles of electrified fence, and patrolled by 55 security teams with attack dogs. This is not North Korea or the Soviet Union but London today - during the Olympics in Peking, not even the Chinese government put up such a fence or drone planes.

The 2006 Olympic Games Act means that not only the police and armed forces, but also private security forces, can use physical force to “protect the Olympics”. This covers anything from demonstrations and strikes, to the sale of bootleg Olympic products on the street that are not officially approved. “Brand protection teams” will patrol inside the Games to make sure that only clothes or accessories with officially approved commercial messages can be worn.

In addition people congregating on the street, a normal occurrence particularly in summer months, will be harassed, in particular local working class youth. This is already happening, with increased surveillance and harassment in the boroughs bordering the Olympics. Rough sleepers are to be removed; in fact the police can remove anyone “deemed in any way to be causing a nuisance”.

What’s more, there is no sign that this will disappear with the end of the Olympics. The police will end up more tooled-up and arrogant than before, whole neighbour-

hoods will be socially cleansed and gentrified, taxes will be jacked up to pay for it all, and all the security devices and cameras installed will

stay in place.

The Games are not about sport. They are about commercialised patriotism, brand placement, and profiteering for estate agents and landlords. They are there to boost the push towards neo-liberalism, to destroy our working class neighbourhoods, to boost the power of a state that is increasingly a police state. Who is the enemy in this New Britain? It’s us, the majority of the population!

Thanks to Resistance Bulletin

Workfare Struggle

The Government in Britain has introduced a programme of savage welfare cuts. The cuts are part of a broad government offensive on worker’s living conditions with attacks on a whole range of benefits. The government’s programme of cuts is not just about reducing the amount the state spends on welfare, the aims is also to force

creased, it soon become clear that this was not happening. Workers taken on under workfare were not made permanent; rather, once their time under the scheme was finished, companies simply got rid of them and recruited a new set of workers from Workfare. After all why pay workers when you can get them for free!!!

Further it soon become apparent that the Workfare scheme was actually increasing unemployment. Rather than fill new vacancies with paid workers companies began to take on unpaid workers under the Workfare scheme. There is also the concern that employers will begin to make workers redundant and replace them with unpaid workers recruited under Workfare.

Coupled to this is the reality that having a large pool of workers being forced to work for nothing acts as downward pressure on wages as a whole. Fear of being replaced by an unpaid worker puts pressure on workers not to demand a pay rise. This comes at time when the real value of workers pay in Britain is declining at a rate not seen since the 1930s depression. It is important to understand then that Workfare affects the whole of the working class not just unemployed.

Since the workfare scheme was first announced there has been a general campaign against Workfare which the Solidarity Federation has supported. But we felt that campaign to a degree lacked direction. There was also the concern that it was too political in the sense that it focused too much on putting pressure on the government to drop Workfare. At the beginning of 2012 the Solidarity Federation decided to launch a more economically orientated campaign that would use the tactic of direct action to confront the companies who were actually making increased profits out of the Workfare scheme.

Our strategy was to pick a specific company and then target them with coordinated nationwide pickets, communications blockades etc until they dropped out of the Workfare programme. We would then move onto another company and repeat the process. The hope is that we can force increasing numbers of companies to drop out creating a domino effect that will totally undermine and discredit the government’s Workfare scheme.

By having a more focused campaign, directed at one company at a time, based on direct action, the Solidarity Federation hoped to also draw in other groups and individuals.



the unemployed into taking jobs paying lower and lower wages which in turn drags down the wages of all workers. — As part of the cuts programme the Government introduced the so called “Workfare” scheme under which the unemployed are forced to work for free for up to 6 months or face having their benefits stopped with no guarantee of a permanent job at the end. Needles to say companies were quick to take advantage of what amounted to free labour and began taking on an increasing numbers of people under the Workfare scheme.

The government claimed that the Workfare would help unemployed find permanent jobs but as the number of people driven into working for nothing in-

The first company we decided to target for the campaign against Workfare was a company called Holland and Barrett. This company sells health products and has shops in most towns and cities across Britain. We chose Holland and Barrett because of the extend they planned to make use of the Workfare scheme. At the beginning of 2012 Holland and Barrett had announced that they were to take on 1000 unpaid worker under the Workfare scheme. With a workforce of only around 3,500 people this would have amounted to almost a quarter of their staff on Workfare!!

It was decided to launch the campaign against Workfare as part of the IWA Days of Action that took place in March earlier this year. The plan was to leaflet workers on the two days prior to holding a nationwide picket of Holland and Barrett shops on the March 31st. The day of action proved to be a tremendous success with pickets of Holland & Barrett and other companies using the workfare scheme taking place in over 20 town and cities across Britain. The pickets were not only supported by other anarchist but also claimants and anti-cuts groups.

After March 31st the Solidarity Federation kept up the campaign with regular pickets of Holland & Barrett shops. This constant picketing put real pressure on Holland & Barrett, a company that tries to brand itself as “ethical and caring” on the basis that they sell health products. As a result of the campaign the company received numerous complaints about their use of Workfare from angry shoppers with customers regularly bombarding their Twitter and Facebook accounts with complaints.

The sustained pressure eventually proved too much and on July 5th Holland & Barrett declared a u-turn, their official Facebook page announcing that: “the people currently undertaking the work experience scheme will be the last to complete the eight week placement. After this time Holland & Barrett will not participate further in that scheme.” Holland & Barrett now intends to replace unpaid Workfare jobs with a salaried apprentice scheme.

This announcement is another blow to the government Workfare scheme already under pressure

as an increasing number of companies refuses to participate in the scheme for fear

of bad publicity. The Solidarity Federation now hopes to build on this success of Holland & Barrett by now moving on to target another company. There has been some discussion about targeting Pizza Hut a company with a nationwide chain of outlets. But when the Solidarity Federation approached the company they responded by stating that they are no longer use the governments workfare scheme, a claim the Solidarity Federation is now investigating.

If it proves true the SF will move on to target another company. In the meantime the Solidarity Federation will continue to support the growing campaign against the Workfare until the scheme is scrapped and companies can no longer treat workers as unpaid slave labour.

www.iwa-ait.org

*Solidarity Federation -
anarcho-sindicalist*

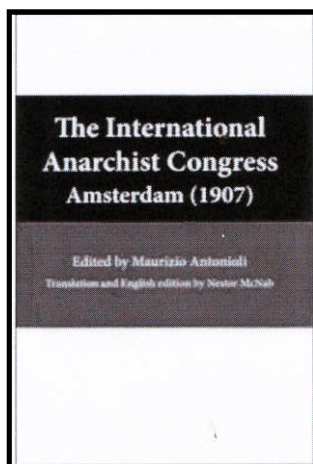
BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Maurizio Antonioli (ed.), *The International Anarchist Congress, Amsterdam 1907* (Black Cat Press)

This 280 page book is based upon a pamphlet that was published some years ago in the series “Studies for a Libertarian Alternative” in English (and which is also available online) by the Italian Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici (FdCA – Federation of Communist Anarchists).

This book is largely the work of historian Maurizio Antonioli, who is professor of Contemporary History in the Faculty of Political Science, University of Milan. We should note here that Maurizio Antonioli has published several studies on the history of the Italian labour movement, especially on the history and struggles of the Federation of Metal Workers and Labour Centres (Camere del Lavoro) of Milan and Lombardy regions.

The translator and general editor of the publication is Nestor MacNab, amongst things, he is a member of the FdCA and the editorial collective of www.anarkismo.net



The book “The International Anarchist Congress, Amsterdam 1907” consists of separate chapters on the six days of the duration the Congress. The editors of the book focus on the presentations and positions of the key-participants and points of the dialogue that developed on each separate issue that was presented to the Congress. The subjects were on many and diverse issues such as participation in an antimilitarist Conference that was held on the same days in Amsterdam, reports on the state of the anarchist movement in a series of countries from which

delegates came from (Belgium, Bohemia, Holland, Romania, U.S.A., Austria, Germany, Russia, Serbia, Italy, England), anarchism and organisation (which lasted the entire second day of the Congress party and the third), the Anarchist International, anarchism and syndicalism, the anarchist

press, the Russian Revolution (of 1905), trade unionism and the general strike, anarchism and trade union movements in Argentina, anarchism and antimilitarism, the education of children, alcoholism, productive co-operatives, the Esperanto language and others. (Note that in most of these issues the Congress adopted and issued respective Resolutions).

Also in the book, several texts, reports on the activities of anarchists and other documents were published especially on Russia and the Russian Revolution of 1905, that had been submitted to Congress.

This Congress was held between 26-31 August in 1907, at the Plancius Hall in Amsterdam. This year is close to 105 years since this important Congress for the international anarchist movement.

In the previous (of this) Anarchist Conference that was held in London in 1881, an attempt was made for reconstituting the old First International, but then commenced the period known as “anarchist terrorism” (propaganda by the deed), during which the anarchist movement disregarded the toiling masses.

During the period between 1881 and 1907 several dramatic changes in the labour movement took place. This time, however, anarchist activity was entirely outside the realm of the working class, though

some few comrades remained by the side of the workers. When the anarchist movement at some point realised that it had to put an end to this isolation, the result was to convene the International Congress in Amsterdam. This congress was to be a forum to discuss the most important issues of the day: the attitude of anarchists to the (then) new phenomenon of syndicalism and the question of anarchist organisation. During the Congress, the delegates dealt seriously with a number of key issues affecting the international anarchist movement of the era. Like the always thorny issue of organisation and work in the trade union movement, the issue of the general strike and various others, including the possibility of setting up a new Anarchist International organisation.

As we said previously, those years were the time when anarchists finally realised that propaganda by the deed does not lead anywhere and decided to return to their roots in the labour movement from which the anarchist movement was born, i.e. years of Mikhail Bakunin and the First International in the mid 19th Century. So, then, it was natural that of all those issues discussed in this Congress, the most controversial and important ones were the future development of the anarchist movement, the question of organisation and the issue of the then, new trade and labour movements that emerged everywhere and compared with those of the

anarchists, and the relationship between the specific anarchist organizations and the mass labour organisations. How would these organisations interact with each other? Had the anarchists to participate in workplace struggles as members of political organizations?

In this Congress, some important figures of the international anarchist movement of the era participated, such as Christian Cornelissen, Errico Malatesta, Luigi Fabbri, Emma Goldman, Aristide Ceccarelli, Thomas Keel, Karl Walter, Nikolai Rogdaev, S. Velez, Pierre Monatte, Amedee Dunois and several others from countries such as Holland, Italy, Germany, U.S.A., Argentina, England, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Belgium, France and Bohemia.

In the introduction of the book «Dibattito sul sindacalismo: Atti del Congresso Internazionale anarchico di Amsterdam (1907)» (published in Italian in 1978), historian of the working class movement, Maurizio Antonioli, examines the process that led to the Amsterdam Congress and its importance for the labour and anarchist movements of the time. Thereafter, Antonioli lists the various references in anarchist literature of his time to the Congress, creating the most comprehensive work on this important event, and cites the whole debate that lasted six days.

In this book, apart from the report of the six day debate during the conference, the Resolutions and the Annexes, there is also a brief prologue by the translator in English and editor Nestor MacNab, and follows a fairly thorough introduction entitled “Anarchism and Trade Unionism” by Maurizio Antonioli, with a quite useful compilation of the reports of the Congress in the pages and columns of anarchist newspapers, magazines and other publications of this time.

Today, more than a century later, the different positions and views of anarchist militants and organisations presented in the book have lost none of their controversy and continue to be key points of departure for all those today facing similar situations and dilemmas regarding the same top-down issues and problems. This book on the International Anarchist Congress of Amsterdam of 1907 with its reports of various debates is of invaluable historical importance to contemporary anarchist militants.

Finally we want to note that the book was published by Black Cat Press based in Edmonton, Alberta in Canada and everyone who wants to buy it or to have more information, you can visit their website at <http://www.blackcatpress.ca>

Dimitris Troaditis

A FEATURE REVIEW by Graham Purchase

Continued from last edition

Part 2 Academic Anthropology, Anarchism and Activism

Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology By David Graeber, Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press 2004

The Yale School of Anarchist Anthropology?

There is considerable overlap of theoretical interests and viewpoints between Scott and Graeber, presumably because both academics were engaged as Yale University Anthropology professors whilst researching and preparing these works. It is of some note that two senior anthropologists from an elite USA College conduct research into the dynamics of anarchist social organization. But, whilst Scott only uses the term anarchism in the title of his book and makes it clear that his analysis is relevant only up until the second world war period Graeber, has attempted to ex-

plore how modern anthropological knowledge and theory can inform or compliment contemporary politically radical or activist groups and, specifically organizational practices, ideas and processes elaborated or employed within and between the groups that constituted the anti-capitalist/globalist demonstration movements around the turn of the 21st Century.

Scott's study is long, serious and consistently extremely well written. It is very substantial, perhaps a monumental work of world class scholarship. Whilst one should allow a couple of months to read and digest Scott's book Graeber's can be read in a couple of days. Graeber's little study is an intentionally unpretentious and not always entirely serious exercise in letting of some steam and throwing around a few ideas about anarchism, activism and anthropology in the academy. Consequently the philosophical quality and depth of this short, insubstantial, sketchy and disjointed pamphlet is very uneven and, occasionally some of the ideas silly, sloppy or simply half-baked. As suggested

by the title—Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology—the text consists of a series of fragmented passages and single paragraphs addressing a wide variety of themes. It is somewhat left to the reader to join the dots.

Against Primitivism and Modernism:

Scott's and Graeber's anthropology explore ethnogenic eruptions and flux. Ethnic history is a process of continual ethno-speciation involving the generation or consolidation of a multiplicity of new and often intentionally chosen identities whilst old identities over time evolve or adapt through division, merger or incorporation of one another's ideas, territories, practices and identities. Both authors invoke this empirical process of Ethnogenesis in their outright dismissal of Primitivism. Contemporary primitivism is based upon empirically and conceptually false models of social-technological development. Primitivism rests upon the notions that cultural evolution is causally related or can be equated with certain levels or stages of technological or class development and consequently remnant indigenous groupings may be viewed as being, or have of recently being, representative of 'primi-

tive' or 'stone-age' society. The idea of a linear progression of civilization beginning with stone-age society and technology and moving through the iron Age, bronze Age etc is false, unhelpful, misleading and even racist in anthropology (but valid with qualification in archaeology). Sophisticated societies have existed with only the simplest of technologies. Thirty thousand year old rock paintings (such as those in France) can be as painterly as Picasso. Scott concludes that archeology of the hill peoples of S.E. Asia "suggests widespread craft specialization and complexity, but in a context that appears politically decentralized and relatively egalitarian (suggested by a rough equality in "grave goods") consistent with what some archeologists have called "heterarchy": social and economic complexity without unified, hierarchical ranking" (p.325-6).

Graeber compares the differences and dynamic interplay between Madagascan peoples to illustrate the process of ethnogenesis. The Tsimihety were those people "who refused the authority of the Sakalava monarchy and to this day are marked by resolutely egalitarian social organization and practices" The Tsimihety, Graeber observes, chose to take flight from statism and authoritarianism; forging an "identity emerging" as an intentional "political project...to live in a society free of markers of hierarchy" (p.54-55).

"The ethnogenesis literature is a fairly new one, but is becoming increasingly clear that most of human history was characterized by continual social change. Rather

than timeless groups living for thousands of years in their ancestral territories, new groups were being created, and old ones dissolve, all the time. Many of what we have come to think of as tribes or nations, or ethnic groups were originally collective projects of some sort. In the Tsimihety case we are talking about a revolutionary project...a conscious rejection of certain forms of overarching political power and a reorganization of the way they deal with one another on an everyday basis" (p.56).

Like Graeber, Scott concludes that some non-state peoples were also consciously anti-state peoples: "Upland societies, far from being the original, primal "stuff" from which states and 'civilizations' were crafted are rather, largely a reflexive product of state making" (p.327). "Virtually all hill societies exhibit a range of state-evading behavior but [in some cases] this is coupled with practices that might be termed the 'prevention of internal state-making'. Relatively acephalous groups with strong tradition of equality and sanctions against permanent hierarchy, such as the Akha, Lahu, Lisu and Wa, seem to belong to this category" (p.331).

Graeber further undermines "Primitivism" by debunking the equally suspect notion of "Modernism":

"It is common to distinguish between what are called 'kinship-based societies' often called 'primitive' and, modern ones which are assumed to be in no way like our own. But then the exact same people who make this argument will usually take it for

granted that the main social problems in our 'modern' society revolve around race, class and gender. In other words, precisely form the nature of our kinship system."

"Most Americans see the world as divided into "races". It means they believe that it is divided into groups which are presumed to share a common decent and geographical origin, who for this reason are seen as different "kinds" of people, that this idea is usually expressed through physical idioms of blood and skin and that the resulting system regulates sex, marriage and the inheritance of property and therefore creates and maintains social inequalities. We are talking about something very much like a classic clan system, except on a global scale" (p.51-2).

In Sydney prisoners will divide themselves into various socially accepted or perceived racial categories: aboriginal, white, islander, asian/maori. Go into any college refectory in South Australia and watch how the students divide themselves into Anglo, Greek and Italian sections. Graeber is right to point out that despite all the multi-cultural rhetoric of globalism and modernism humanity still thinks in much the way it always has and there is nothing that "makes us so special". The primitive is not something to which we can contemplate some return because: it is only "arrogant, unreflecting assumptions telling us we have nothing in common with 98% of people who ever lived" (p.47)

To be Continued

Debate on "Boring-From-Within"

Phil Dickens on Libcom internet discussion board critiques the "boring from within" union strategy advocated by various left groups.

I've written a number of pieces now on anarchist activity within the trade union movement. In particular, I'd point to Trade unions, worker militancy, and communism from below, What is anarcho-syndicalism: revolutionary unionism, Anarcho-syndicalism and the limits of trade unionism, and my most recent post on Building the rank-and-file. However, these have all focused primarily on the difference between bottom-up and top-down workers organisation. Here, I'd like to look at differences in approach between those who advocate mass-led organisation – in particular the notion of "boring-from-within."

I was inspired to write on this subject by a conversation with another rep within my workplace. They aren't, or certainly don't identify as, an anarchist. However, they have agreed with a lot of the ideas that I have articulated on workplace organisation – in particular the need to build from the ground so that workers as a mass can take control of their own struggles from the union bureaucracy. Where the differences came was in the attitude to the existing bureaucracy. In particular, to the executive committees which make decisions on the direction of the union and its response to decisions made by the bosses, largely in isolation from the will of the rank-and-file. Agreeing with me that simply putting different faces into the existing

structure was useless, he asked why we couldn't put people into positions with the specific aim of using them to change the structure.

As I have already alluded, this idea within the libertarian movement is called boring-from-within, an idea articulated by the now-defunct Workers Solidarity Federation of South Africa in Unions and Revolution;

We must do two things if we want the unions to play a revolutionary role. First, get rid of the union bureaucracy and make sure that the unions are controlled by the membership. Second, win the union membership over to Anarchist- Syndicalist ideas.

We must work within the existing unions to achieve these goals. All unions are workers combat units. Leaving the mainstream unions to form new "pure" revolutionary unions has serious consequences. It withdraws militants from the unions, leaving them at the mercy of bureaucrats and reformists. It isolates militants in tiny splinter unions because the masses prefer to join large, established unions. Small groups of revolutionaries working inside

established unions can achieve impressive results. For example, the main French (CGT) and Argentinean (FORA) union federations were won over to Anarchist-Syndicalism in this way in the early twentieth century.

At this point, the idea isn't distinct from that prevailing within the Solidarity Federation in Britain, whose industrial strategy argues that "workers will still be likely to hold union cards here to avoid splits in the workplace between union members and non-union members."

However, it is beyond this point where the two strategies differ. Whilst Solfed argue for building up "an alternative structure to official union structures that are dominated by full-time bureaucrats," the boring-from-within approach involved attempting to directly transform the existing structures in order to democratise and de-bureaucratise the union.

In its position paper on trade unions, the Irish Workers Solidarity Movement lays out the strategy for transformation in some detail;

7.3 No WSM member will accept any unelected position that entails having power over the membership.

7.4 Members elected as shop stewards consider their position as that of a delegate rather than that of a 'representative' who can act over the heads of the members.

7.5 When going forward for elective positions we make it clear that we are not accepting the structure as it now exists. We will fight for more accountability, mandation, information for members, etc.

7.6.5 UNION DEMOCRACY

(a) We fight to change the role of the full-time officials – not to change the individuals who occupy the positions. Their decision-making powers have to be removed and returned to the rank & file membership. They should be elected and paid no more than the average wage of the people they represent. They should only serve for a fixed period of no more than five years after which they return to ordinary work. The unions will have to win the demand for jobs to be kept open in order for this to be realistic.

(b) All officials to be subject to mandation and recall.

(c) We are totally opposed to the ICTU (Irish ACTU) "two tier" picket.

(d) For regular branch and workplace meetings, in working hours where this is possible.

(e) For direct elections to all committees, conference delegations and national officerships, subject to mandation and recall.

(f) All strikes to be automatically made official as long as they do not contradict trade union principles.

(g) Support for all disputes, official or unofficial, in pursuit of higher wages, better conditions, jobs, trade union principles or any issue in the interest of the class.

(h) For the publication of minutes of all union meetings.

(i) Where revolutionaries can gain enough support to win election to national officerships in large unions, or indeed small ones, this support should not be used to merely elect a candidate. Instead it should be used to fundamentally change the structure of the union in such a way as to return power to the membership and turn the officers into administrators and resource people rather than decision makers.



This relates to the strategy argued for by my fellow rep at work. Yes, we should be organising at a rank-and-file, building mass participation and forcing a culture shift when it came to decision-making and to taking action.

But why could we not compliment that by trying to put people into place on the Group and National Executive Committees who would support this and could help remove any potential barriers that might arise?

On the face of it, this is a compelling argument. Building from the ground, almost from scratch, is not an easy task to contemplate. Surely, there's no harm in using the existing structures where you can, and making sure that you have people within them who are willing to step back from them when the time is ripe to put the new structures into practice?

However, the question here is – if such a thing is possible – then why does it not follow that you can simply replace the existing leadership with a more militant and "left" one, and see things change that way?

The answer, as those who argue for the above strategy would broadly agree, is the fundamental nature of the trade union bureaucracy. As the WSM themselves state, "no matter how radical or left-wing [the leadership] are at the beginning, their role sucks them into the business of conciliation." More explicitly, "if they are to have anything to bargain with at the negotiation table," then "the union official has to sell the employer labour discipline and freedom from unofficial strikes as part of its side of the bargain." Hence their role as "keepers of industrial peace."

Does this change if you enter the role with the specific aim of supporting rank-and-file organisation and transforming a trade union into a revolutionary one? To a degree, perhaps. After all, you will be far more conscious of the pressures that the role will place on you and arguably better equipped to address them.

However, in practice we see that this awareness doesn't help you to fare any better. As Joseph Kay wrote in *Thinking about unions: association and representation*, "the problem is highlighted by the number of modern day bureaucratic unions with radical syndicalist origins (of which the French CGT, founded under large anarchist influence is the most obvious example)." It was Buenaventura Durruti who rebuked the CNT during the civil war for seeking to "get the CNT legalised and alleviate the repression," because "bureaucratisation and subsequent mediation was a result of taking on a representative role."

JK cites the Direct Action Movement pamphlet *Winning the class war*;

Of all the areas that the unions seek to have influence in by far the most important is its dealing with management, for it is from this area that all their power flows. They must retain the right to negotiate wages and conditions with management. It is by having the power to negotiate on behalf of workers that they retain their influence within the workplace and ultimately attract and retain members. In turn it is having that control and influence in the workplace that they are of use to the boss class. The unions offer stability in the workplace, they channel workers anger, shape and influence their demands and, if need be, act to police the workforce.

It is for this reason that the CNT now consciously spurn representative functions, arguing against "giving your 'representatives' the power to sign and negotiate for you" as "you and only you, are representative. When you take in your hands your problems, you gain representation."

It is not difficult to see how this works in practice.

If you are a delegate, directly accountable to the membership, it is very difficult indeed to stray. You are there to voice the demands of the workers, and their response to offers made, with no capacity for independent decision making. If you violate that mandate, you can be instantly recalled.

By contrast, a representative has been mandated by their election with decision-making power, and is part of a key body with responsibility for negotiation in the manner described above. Even if they are put forward as a candidate by a group to whom they consider themselves answerable, See Page 20

Carl Windhoff 1872-1941 German Syndicalist Militant

A short biography of Carl Windhoff, German anarchist, FAUD (Free Workers Union of Germany - syndicalist union) organiser and tiller.

Carl Windhoff was born on 9th November 1872 in Düsseldorf. He became interests

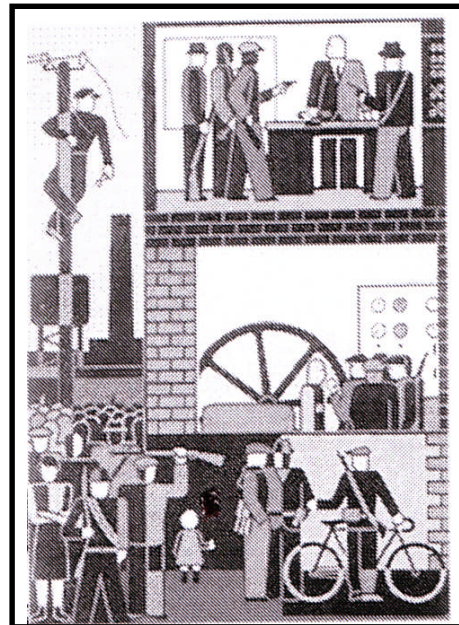


in radical ideas at the age of fourteen and gravitated towards the workers' movement controlled by the Social Democrats. He joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in 1890. As a young adult, he read Edward Bellamy, Tolstoy, Zola, Kropotkin, as well as scientific literature and "South German peasant novels". He was one of the most important SPD leaders in Düsseldorf until he left the party in 1901. It was in the year before that he first started trying to organise among his fellow tillers. Five years later after much work the Tillers Union of Düsseldorf and Environs was set up. A vacuum was filled by the creation of this union, the mainstream unions ignoring the region and these particular workers.

The tillers were known for their self-discipline and pride in their work. Windhoff was targeted by the employers and blacklisted. Despite this the tillers were the first workers in Germany to gain 6 days paid holiday in 1923. Windhoff and the tillers joined the Free Association of German Trade Unions (FVdG) and he became one of its most prominent members in the Rhineland. The FVdG represented the localist current within the German unions who rejected the centralising control of the General Commission of German Trade Unions controlled by the SPD. They were to be the nucleus of the post-WWI Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands (FAUD) the anarcho-syndicalist organisation. The

FVdG had about 8,000 members and stood for class struggle and anti-militarism in opposition to the class collaboration and jingoism of the General Commission unions. In 1913, Fritz Kater, Karl Roche, and he were the FVdG's delegates at the First International Syndicalist Congress in London.

After World War I, Windhoff was one of the leaders of the FVdG in the Ruhr region and helped re-build the organization. The creation of the FAUD was in no small measure due to the work of Windhoff. On 15-16th September 1919 meeting in Düsseldorf the FVdG unions together with the General Miners Union and the Düsseldorf and Essen branches of the AAU created the FAUD. This was followed up by a conference in Berlin in December. As a result the FAUD gained a membership of 120,000. In Düsseldorf alone the FAUD organised 800 building workers, 4,000 municipal workers, and 11,400 metal-



workers. The Düsseldorf FAUD workers gained the seven and a half hour working day and no work at all on Saturday afternoon, unheard of in a country where workers worked an average of ten hours a day. The tillers led several successful strikes and were able to wring many concessions out of the employers for the Düsseldorf

building workers. A tilers' youth group was set up and this contributed to the founding of the Anarchist Syndicalist Youth (SAJD) in the region.

Windhoff became the head of the agitation committee of the FAUD in 1922.

He was also active in the International Federation of Construction Workers (Syndicalist) the industry-specific counterpart of the International Workers Association (IWA). He spoke at the IWA Congress in Madrid in 1931.

By 1930 with working class demobilisation and the effects of the economic crisis FAUD membership in Düsseldorf had decreased to 234. Windhoff was dismissed from his job in the same year, after having worked there for 7 years.

With the coming to power of the Nazis it was decided to dissolve the Tilers Union and maintain an illegal underground organisation. Windhoff was entrusted with carrying this out, transferring funds to the underground FAUD. At the beginning of 1933 he was convicted for "slander" and in summer of that year he and his second wife Kaethe (nee Jonal), whom he had married in 1917, were the victims of house searches. In October 1934 the Brown Shirts invaded their flat for seven hours. A further search followed in the same year and one week later Windhoff was arrested. All in all there were seven house searches up until March 1937, with a quest for illegal publications which were never found. On 23rd February Carl and Kaethe were arrested again by the Gestapo. Carl was accused of conspiracy to perform high treason, organising secret meetings of the tillers, transferring union funds for the commission of acts of violence against the employers, and organising a strike in Lippstadt. For this he received 3 years in prison, whilst Kaethe was sentenced to 9 months imprisonment for aiding and abetting.

Windhoff had been detained in prison for a long time before the trial and his health now rapidly deteriorated with the awful conditions in Luettringhausen prison. He suffered several strokes and was transferred to a prison hospital in Cologne. He was then returned to Luettringhausen and was now in a state of severe physical and mental decline, as a result of which he was released before the completion of his sentence. He never recovered and died at home on 28th May 1941.

Nick Heath

References:

<http://syndikalismus.wordpress.com/2012/02/14/biographie-carl-windhoff-1872-1941/>

Thanks to Libcom

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news lately in NSW has been the O'Farrell Government's continuing spearheading of an intensified employer offensive. Particularly its been focusing on moves to privatise public transport with associated major job losses and cutbacks to services. As part of this push, at the end of July Sydney Ferries were sold off as franchises. Typically the union hierarchy continues to roll over before this onslaught and has no plans to fight it.

The ASN has been assisting militants of Members' Voice, NSW public transport workers organisation to organise a campaign on the job to defeat the O'Farrell Govt's privatisation agenda. Recently it issued a bulletin to educate the grass roots about the harmful effects of privatisation and calls for the formation of "anti-privatisation committees" on the job to fight back with direct action. According to feedback received, it's been well received on the job.

In recent weeks in State Transit, the CEO was falsely assuring workers at depot staff meetings that they were not facing privatisation, in a bid to gouge out more budget economies. However, around this time the Sun Herald dropped the bomb shell that it certainly was in O'Farrell's gun sight for sell off. Government Ministers later on confirmed the move was not ruled out. (See article page 5.)

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REBEL WORKER

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www.rebelworker.org

A.S.N. DIRECTORY

ASN Sydney Local

PO Box 92
Broadway 2007 NSW

ASN Melbourne:

J.Dixon
jeremytrewindixon@yahoo.com.au

Newcastle ASN

PO Box 106
Kotara 2289 NSW

The Anarchist Age

PO Box 20
Parkville Vic. 3052

SPARKS

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

JURA BOOKS

440 Parramatta Rd
Petersham 2049 NSW
Ph. (02) 95509931

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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

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General Secretary

PO Box 106

Kotara 2289 NSW

Continued From Page 17

they cannot be recalled from their seat if they betray that trust, as such a mechanism doesn't at present exist. Thus, the accountability rendered by direct democracy almost completely dissipates when it is used to "bore-from-within" a system of representative democracy.

It could be argued that, in building up the strength of the rank-and-file at the same time, you create a situation whereby even if instant recall cannot be enacted the recall will still occur the next time elections come around. But there are numerous flaws in this logic.

In the first instance, there is the problem of numbers. Even with the straightforward objective of switching the leadership in purchase, the Left Unity faction which currently dominates PCS (UK Public & Commercial Services Union) had to build for many years in order to have the strength to put forward a full slate of candidates. Within the current structure, a single voice or even a minority voice is not significant enough to influence the direction of the union – as in PCS the rival 4th members and Independent Left factions currently experience.

Thus, in order to "change the role of the full-time officials" and make other fundamental changes in how the union is run at the top, you essentially have to take over the leadership. Not only does this require an immense amount of time, energy and resources better spent on rank-and-file organising, but it then puts you in the same position as any other broad left takeover. It is now you "at the negotiation table" with responsibility to "sell the employer labour discipline" in negotiations. The fundamental nature of power structures means that they do not allow for their own dissolution, and there is little reason to expect that we will witness anything other than rank-and-file militants falling prey to bureaucratisation.

More pressingly, if a rank-and-file movement has enough influence as to sway the election of officers to an executive, why do they need to seize power of the executive at all?

If there has been a steady effort at organising workplace committees based on mass participation and direct action, and you have lay reps taking up the role of delegates, you have already dismantled the existing power structure at a local level. If this is spread across enough of a cross section of any given trade union that you can be the major voice in elections, it is a safe bet that you have already laid the foundations for building a national federal structure.

Thus, to alter the structure of the union, you simply have to circumvent it. Rather than wasting the effort of taking over the existing leadership in parallel with rank-and-file organisation, the rank-and-file can establish an entirely different structure and vote en masse to disaffiliate from the reformist union whilst establishing a revolutionary one. I have over-simplified the idea somewhat, as this is not a quick process and there would be a significant battle of ideas to be won, but fundamentally that is the essence of the thing. The bureaucracy has essentially been jettisoned and the bosses are forced to deal with a militant rank-and-file rather than officials who will meet them halfway.

There is a clear precedent for attempts to transform the fundamental nature of a trade union being akin to alchemy. Down that path, we repeat mistakes already made and become what we were fighting against. In order to build a revolutionary union movement which is genuinely led from below by the rank-and-file, what we need is to build the new structure within the shell of the old.

Originally posted July 19, 2011 at Property is Theft

Comment

One problem with this critique of "Boring from Within" is that it completely fails to take account of the issue of workers morale and its ramifications and how the

strategic position of different groups of workers affects the class struggle. In the current situation of low morale of workers in the Anglo world, unless union officials take action such as calling mass stop work meetings, most workers lack self confidence to take direct action and hold their own workers assemblies to consider taking action. Its important to be a bit practical and look at transitional steps to get this grass roots unionism going such as the election of more "grass roots friendly" union officials, which would improve the terrain for organising. They could ensure the union is run on the basis of workers' assemblies, limited tenure of office for officials, etc. This was the case with the NSW BLF (Builders Labourers Federation) in its syndicalist phase in the 60's and early 70's.(1)

Whilst workers in more strategic industrial sectors via direct action can influence and raise the morale of workers in less strategic sectors and encourage them to take direct action. Given their industrial strength they can also defy repressive industrial legislation. Whilst also slowing the tempo of the employer offensive via defeating major employer attacks which are likely to be initially focused in these sectors and eventually turning the tide. It also has to be taken into account that strategic sectors, such as transport are likely to be highly unionised. So the only realistic option is long term pursuit of a "boring from within" strategy within the bureaucratic "bosses unions". The critique also does not address the issue of repressive industrial legislation and state attacks which are likely to smash any newly emerged anarcho-syndicalist "micro union confederation" based in non-strategic sectors. The officials of bureaucratic unions no doubt will also sabotage any move by the grass roots for industrial solidarity to help fight these attacks.

Mark McGuire

Notes:

(1) See "Green Bans, Red Union" by Meredith & Verity Burgmann