

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

NSW Inter-Urban Train Drivers Wildcat Action Over
Driver Only Operation of New Trains Shows the Way
Forward to Fight Wage Freeze & Employer Offensive!



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

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

Comments are welcome.

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BELARUS

26/11/20 The Commission of Relations of the International of Anarchist Federations (CRIFA) expresses its support and internationalist solidarity with the struggles of people in Belarus against Alexander Lukashenko's dictatorship, a mass movement that is participated in by our anarchist comrades there.

The situation in Belarus concerns the autocratic dictatorship that has lasted for 26 years, the current economic, health and public services crises. A wave of protests have filled the squares of the country to request the dictator's withdrawal. As anarchists, we are not impassioned by the debate on whether the last presidential elections were fair or not. It is simply clear that the people in Belarus are saying 'enough is enough': they do no longer want a government which is starving, beating and oppressing them.

We stand in solidarity with Belarusian political prisoners and demand their immediate release. We also demand the reinstatement of all workers who have lost their jobs for participating in strikes or protests, and urge an immediate end to the repression. We denounce the violence and abuses of the political policies that are in place, and the regime's military or

paramilitary forces, who are arbitrarily detaining, beating and torturing its political opponents. We demand the fall of an authoritarian power which is a sad remainder of the totalitarianism of the former Soviet Union, one which still serves as a weapon for the military strategy of Putin's Russia which uses its neighbouring country as a military foothold.

However, in the same way as we oppose Russian militarism in Belarus, we also oppose the militarism of Atlantic (NATO) forces in the Baltic Republic, together with all the armies and all the wars that are made by states against the people. Likewise, we do not buy the current rhetoric of Western 'freedom', nor of a possible mediation role of the European Union. The only role that the EU has is to manage the interests of European capitalism and therefore, as internationalists, we are opposed to this institution.

Instead, we call for international solidarity between all workers and oppressed people and for all social movements which are committed, in the East and in the West, to syndicalism and workers rights, to the right of housing, to the defence of land and environments against speculators, to people's solidarity and mutual aid, to the occupation of spaces, and to the defence of

civil society all freedoms against exploitation and authoritarianism - to quote only some of our preferred axes of social intervention.

Only the direct participation of people in struggles from below can make a difference and produce a movement that go beyond the substitution of an old



government with a new one, more or less corrupt, more or less authoritarian. Among all other challenges that humanity is facing, the current pandemic has confirmed that state and capitalism do not work when it comes to the need for solidarity. It is the entire society that must change towards equality and freedom, and anarchism is more than ever the option that we put forward to achieve this.

The Commission of Relations of the INTERNATIONAL OF ANARCHIST FEDERATIONS (IAF/IFA)

ASN APPEAL

**THE ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST NETWORK
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N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

Wildcat Springs into Action!

Some of the most explosive news in the NSW Railways lately was of course the wildcat strike on 27/11/20 by drivers over the testing of new interurban trains for DOO (Driver Only Operation). The action resulted in the temporary cessation of the testing by management. It just goes to show that the direct action message pushed in Sparks over many years is having an important impact on the job. Even the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) hierarchy have had to go along with it, supporting the strike. In stark contrast to their normal legalistic stance and focusing on such lame duck measures as petitions to parliament over issues. Whilst union funds are squandered on a new legal officer position. When direct action gets the goods. Unfortunately the union officials look to be planning a big sell out on DOO on the new trains. In regard to the so-called safety report of the RTBU officials. It was drafted by a well-known corporate insider, who was a consultant in the Glenbrook Rail Disaster Inquiry which failed to raise in its report the likely contribution of DOO to the accident. Why would you pay for this report when the guards and drivers were doing their own risk assessment.

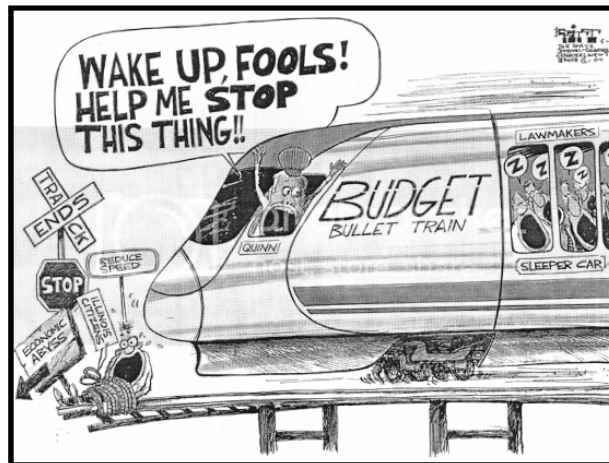
Bring It On

By *Crimson Coconut*.

The Predicament

The predicament which working people are finding themselves in is a sad indictment of the whole trade union movement in this country. It is the movement's pandering to political parties rather than taking direct action that is a serious problem. It has hamstrung the whole union movement and subordinated members to a dead-end electoral strategy. The trade union movement may be "worried" about what is coming. What are they doing about it? Absolutely nothing from what I can see.

This is the path that the turn to legalism takes the union. It totally discounts the opinion of members. The legal eagle that requested the report (available on the RTBU website, but heavily redacted. why?) trying to justify the trial using legalistic means. We have to counter this top



down legalistic unionism because it is a bosses court and because the members have no input to the decision. Only direct action gets the goods. It's unlikely there will be no decision on the new trials until the new year. Especially as they see keeping the dispute in-house and secret as the only option. Secretary Claassens was party to the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) based on secret 'back room' negotiations, okaying DOO on the new trains way back in 2017 (check our web site www.sparksworld.org for a copy as the

union officials seem too frightened to put on the union web site) and okayed a likely fake 'trial' of the new trains on 16/12/2019. Abruptly backing off support for the so called trial, following an edition of Sparks highlighting the likely duplicity and stirring up the grass roots.

Direct action can be effective over the new trains, so why not over the NSW Wage Freeze and pay caps? Currently the RTBU hierarchy, other union officials and Unions NSW are caving in completely on this major attack by the NSW Government. Obviously the RTBU hierarchy can't be trusted to run any effective campaign over these issues. It's urgent that an unofficial co-ordinating committee is established to run a direct action campaign.

Rank and File First are running a campaign based on a petition which is circulating, that calls for a vote of no confidence in RTBU NSW Secretary Alex Claassens. Digitally sign the petition here: <http://forms.gle/6NydMdUzda7eoAuz9> See PDF of the petition attached to this bulletin. Return completed petitions at rankandfilefirst@outlook.com.

Register for our emailing list and ask any questions by sending an email to rankandfilefirst@outlook.com. Open organising meetings are to be conducted shortly. We aim operate openly, democratically and transparently on our collective path forward to improve the lives of RTBU members.

The Wildcat

Recently the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) commissioned a report on the safety of new trains purchased by the N.S.W Government from Korea. The company, that previously has worked for the mining industry, issued the report tabling some of the safety issues on the new trains. The person contracted to make the report had previously worked as a manager for the State Rail Authority in many safety related positions, including leading the investigation into the Glenbrook incident and assisting in the inquiry into the Waterfall incident. The tabled report did not specifically address the removal of guards except as part of an overall operation of a safety system.

Shortly after the production of the report the R.T.B.U. issued a petition calling on

Oh yes, there is a petition campaign, but that won't worry the Morrison Government or force them to their knees in the Hillsong Church to ask for forgiveness. Most of the LNP will wipe their arses with the petition when we should be making them quake in their boots.

With trade union membership at such a low ebb the whole trade union movement is in danger of imploding under a sustained attack from the LNP and businesses.

The New Accord type speech from A.C.T.U. Secretary Sally McManus this week is another sign that we are being led up another blind alley, as we were during the Hawke and Keating years. But this time it could be the end game rather than business as usual. Unions were healthy, robust and prepared to flex a bit of muscle in the past, even if it meant deregistration and calling out the troops. Today the will and ability is not there in the leadership.

the N.S.W. Government to address the safety issues with the new inter-city fleet. For the train crews this lame action would have solved nothing.

There was consternation amongst train drivers as to why they should staff a train under changed working methods that were clearly unsafe. It was work usually carried out by the train guards using proven protocols and a division of labour. Many of the train crew were unhappy with an industrial tactic that involved petitioning the NSW Government that was initiated by the union leadership, when clearly the new trains were unsafe. "Just stop staffing the trains", the drivers said.

Somewhere after the petition was issued the pressure from below was acceded to and a strike was supported by the Union. This was not before Transport for NSW had tried to overcome the ban by drivers by organising scabs to staff the trial of the new intercity fleet.

On the morning that the trial was to begin most Drivers refused to sign on for regular duties and the morning rush hour. The system was at a standstill. NSW called off the trials and promised to enter into talks with the union.

Drivers will have to be on their guard, as talks alone cannot solve this impasse. The issues can only be solved by workers standing up and refusing to staff the unsafe trains.

I have heard a substantial majority of Drivers are not prepared to do the Safe Working of the Guards (who have been reduced to Customer Service Staff under the proposal. - this is a clear excuse to get rid of their jobs altogether down the track). This would mean drivers refusing to operate passenger doors or making sure that passengers were clear, which is a guards job.

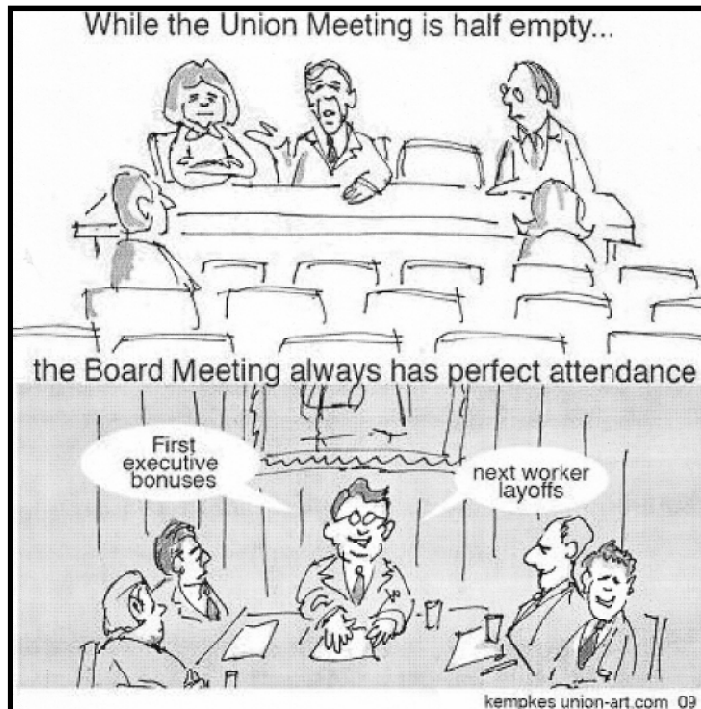
Drivers have the upper hand, they need to keep the little power that they have as many other sections within the railways have very little in the way of industrial muscle. That includes Guards.

Useless Petitions

The A.C.T.U. facing the worst attacks on working conditions since Work Choices has just issued a call to action. The action involves signing a petition against the changes being brought in by the LNP Government which is aimed at downgrading conditions and wages.

As useless as a hole in a donut. Petitions have become the instrument of fashionable fake industrial action of many unions. It's a do nothing strategy.

There are many disgruntled union members out there and there are signs that there are cracks and divisions appearing in the union movement. There are those that want an organised national strike and those that want anger to continue right up



to a Federal Election. The idea that neither the LNP nor the ALP are the saviours of working people is gaining traction.

After the horrible deaths of 5 food delivery cyclists, who had been pushed to their working limits leading to their demise, the leading lights of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) held an impressive press conference. They spoke about how the working conditions of these drivers had led to their deaths and that protections had to be put in place and legislation changed. Next day the T.W.U. issued a public petition imploring the Federal Government to legislate to protect precarious workers in the "gig economy". The petition is a total waste of time as it removes workers in the front lines from the real struggle of confronting employers and the government. Nothing beats organising on the front lines.

Legislation released by the Federal Government over the last few days weakens rather than strengthens conditions for the casual workforce. That shows that the Government is moving in the opposite direction in an attempt to further weaken the conditions and pay of casual workers. It certainly proves that petitions don't have any effect.

The Public Sector Wage Freeze

Which brings me to the lack of action around the NSW Public Sector Wage Freeze. (There is also a wage freeze on Federal Public Sector workers.)

We in the Rail division are bound by an Agreement comprising a 3% wage rise every year till the end of the agreement. This is written in stone. We all supposedly voted for binding the Government, the Unions and Us to the agreement. Before the current agreement the Government was offering public transport workers a measly 2.5% capped rise.

Now, despite the agreement, the NSW Government is freezing wage rises at no more than 0.3% this year, due to the pandemic, rising to 1.5% the following year. What is the point of a Fair Work Commission if the employer can dictate what wage rates workers get. This is dictatorship. But what have we heard about organising a fight back against this from the relevant unions? Absolutely zilch, zero, nothing.

The wage freeze in NSW and in the Federal Public sector affects many people that were in the front lines during the pandemic. That included nurses, police, teachers and public transport workers, postal workers. All of them are essential service workers.

According to an article in the Financial Review

"University of Sydney Business School Professor John Buchanan argued the NSW government was "one of the major wage-setting forces in Australia right now" and its policy would entrench low wage growth as a community norm."

"Traditionally people look at the power of unions and industrial tribunals but in the current situation Treasury is setting these major norms," he said. "It's not just about NSW, it's about what signals are being sent to the labour market at large."

<https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/workers-place/nsw-public-sector-wage-cap-very-generous-20201103-p56b1o>

If ever there was a time to stand up and defend what we have and what we deserve it is now. With a decent but widespread public campaign against the wage freeze I believe we had a chance to overturn it. It may have been a popular campaign if it was en-

thusiastically waged, especially following the public appreciation of all those workers who sacrificed their health through exposure and extra workload during the virus outbreak. But what did we get from the organised unions and Unions NSW? Absolute silence.

Where to from here?

It will be interesting to hear from you and also to put forward ideas about what can be done. The thing is that the leadership that we relied on in the trade unions is failing us. We can all list instances where they failed to fight, whether that be not supporting widespread dissent over the last E.B.A. to the removal and privatisation of many of the services on stations, such as cleaning, ticketing and customer service.

It comes down to what we can do ourselves. Together, we can build, we can learn to resist and to be resilient. How do we restart a dying corpse of a union movement breathing new life, momentum and fire into its belly?

The only possibility of changing from the inertia that pervades the union bureaucracy is having the fight. Education is a big thing for moving the struggle forward. Just getting work comrades together to help them organise is a difficult task. Trying to prompt them towards a class consciousness which is essential to understand what is going on is even harder, simply because the task of rebuilding is urgent.

The biggest effect on changing consciousness is a respected leadership that takes the time to take up the fight, to educate and respect the aspirations of the members. Leading by example is a very good teacher. Not that there are any current leaders that deserve to be emulated. In the absence of effective and inspiring leadership we have to become masters of our own destiny and step forward bravely, learning as we go. Work with colleagues, inspiring and strengthening and cementing ties as you move forward together. "From Little Things Big Things Grow".

The lack of democracy within unions makes our task of fighting for change that much harder. For instance, organisers and

some union leaders are not elected and are usually foisted on members. Usually Organisers are appointed A.L.P. hacks that have no interest in the needs of members. These days there is also convenient recourse to a legal path in an industrial dispute rather than organising members. Most unions now have extensive legal teams and are recruiting more legal eagles by the month. This cuts workers off from the struggle, they don't learn about their real strengths and it reduces the need for real solidarity. The real fight for our jobs and conditions is on the shop floor, not in the courtroom behind closed doors.

Fighting and losing and fighting and winning, but fighting. Not capitulating with statements that are mouthed both by Scott Morrison and Sally McManus that "we are all in this together".

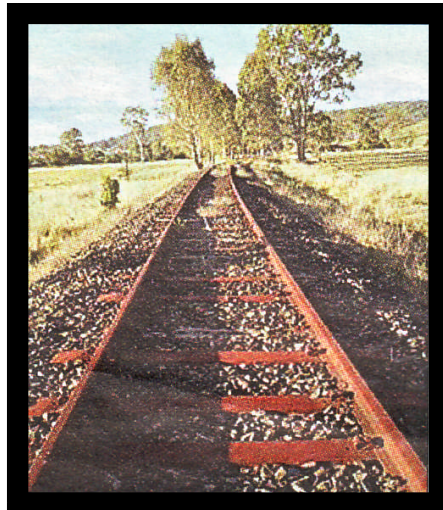
For clearly most of us are not in it at all at the moment.

Last chance to save railway line

by Beth Shelley, Northern Rivers
Railway Action Group

The bill to close sections of the Casino to Murwillumbah railway line went to parliament last Wednesday. Up until it was tabled in parliament, this proposed legislation had not been made available for consultation with the community which it directly affects. Moreover, the legislation seems to have been directly targeted to a specific result of closing both ends of the line. The Northern Rivers Railway Action Group (NRRAG) were shocked to find that the Casino to Bentley section was to be closed and the railway tracks destroyed, along with the section from Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. We had been told that funding for Casino to Bentley was supposed to be a partnership between the State and Federal governments, but the funding was only offered by the Federal government through Kevin Hogan, and both Geoff Provest and Janelle Saffin told us that the NSW Government was not interested in the Casino to Bentley section of the Rail Trail. It seems suspicious that the Federal Government want to be involved in a project that appropriates land that belongs to the NSW Government. Why are they interested in funding a bike path when it will annihilate our chance of ever having trains again? This is our rail

connection to Sydney and Brisbane gone forever for Northern Rivers residents. What is really going on? The reason for the



proposed legislation change was to be about developing the rail trail from Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. However, rail trails don't require a change in legislation and can be established without removing the railway tracks. This has happened in other parts of NSW such as Dubbo and Oberon. Tweed Shire Council decided to tender to include the option of putting the rail trail next to the railway track a year ago, but this idea was not in-

vestigated by Tweed Council staff. Instead the State government is insisting the legislation must go through even before any tenders go out.

The legislation states that local councils will be responsible for ongoing maintenance and upkeep rather than the NSW Government. Are local ratepayers aware they will be paying for the maintenance of the rail trail?" One of the questionable issues is what is going to happen with the high voltage power line that runs beside the track in Murwillumbah including through the tunnels? Is Transgrid concerned about bike riders and walkers being within close proximity of the 80 KV transmission line? Byron Shire has intentions to establish a local rail service and closure of the Casino end will result in it being orphaned from the rest of the State's railway network. This legislation will pass through the Lower House of the parliament this week supported by the government and will then go to the Upper House. This will be our only chance to save our railway line, and we ask supporters across the region to ask Upper House MPs from Labor and the crossbenchers to vote against the change to the legislation. Please contact us for any further information.

Email: bethshelley4@yahoo.com.au

Thanks to Nimbin Good Times 20/10/20

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

RW: What are your impressions of the timetable changes coming into effect from 25th Oct.?

Burwood Driver: Some of the most significant changes include the elimination of the 436, 439, M10 routes and the 461 being made express and a night service. So we have now the 461X and 461N. In the case of the 461X significant parts of the route are now express and not stopping at many previous 461 stops. There seems quite a bit of confusion amongst commuters and likely anger with the changes. When drivers do the new 461 route, they see many commuters waving to stop but have to ignore them and continue on the route. The 461X is now starting at Riley St. Darlinghurst and the 461X starts from Castlereagh St. in the city. These changes strike me as another example of mad corner cutting to save money at the expense of commuters. Behind the scenes the route changes seem to be in part about stealing work from ex-STA drivers of the RTBU EBA higher pay and giving it to the new drivers who are particularly TWU members on the worse rate of pay due to the TWU EBA. In the case of Burwood Depot 20 lines of work have been stolen from the ex-STA drivers, whilst at Leichhardt there has been 30 or so lines of work stolen from ex-STA drivers. At Burwood, the AM shifts have not been affected, however the PM shifts have been targeted for the cutbacks in lines of work. Other news is that the BOTs (Driver Instructors) are being taken off training new drivers and put back on the road doing normal shifts. Whilst Transit Systems management is still refusing to negotiate with the RTBU for a new EBA for the ex-STA drivers. The RTBU officials have gone to the Fair Work Court over the issue with a hearing to be held in coming weeks.

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: What is the latest at the depot?

Waverley Busie: The bosses are continuing to hold regular fortnightly BBQs. Whilst Madam Lash continues on the rampage sacking more drivers, mainly the older drivers. Consequently, the depot has a high turnover of drivers and currently a driver shortage. Other news is the addition

of electric buses to the fleet. They are farce. Whilst on the cards is a new general uniform for all drivers in Sydney Buses to be introduced shortly.

RW: What are your thoughts on the case of the Kingsgrove Transit Systems driver who was convicted in late October of dangerous driving causing the death of two people on a motor bike?

WB: The driver was caught red handed on the CCTV using his mobile when he rear ended the motor bike causing the accident and fatalities. He has been convicted of 2 counts of dangerous driving occasioning

have cost billions on bitumen and concrete. For me a complete waste of money. It's another white elephant. I noticed few motorists were using it. There was only one entry and exit. What happens if a fire, chemical spillage or gas release occurs in it? It's a road to a dead end. It's certainly won't alleviate the traffic congestion problem in Sydney. The more roads you get, the more congestion you get. The money spent on the project would be much better spent on public transport improvements such as new train lines and services.

Another recently completed expressway tunnel is on the Nth Shore. The Govt. has made it compulsory for truck drivers to use it, costing each truckie \$23 to \$25. Interestingly, when the East-West tunnel was completed years ago under an ALP



death. This incident tells a tale. Don't use your mobile on the road. Don't run red lights. It spotlights that not enough emphasis is being put into driver training by the bosses. Driver safety is paramount. Strictness on safety is being allowed to go down the slot. It points to driver training in Transit Systems being relegated to a lower priority and lack of follow up by Driver Instructors. Driver training and the emphasis on safety certainly has been eroded since I first came on the job.

RW: What are your impressions of the Berejiklian Govt's latest expressway developments?

WB: Recently I was driving along one of these 'Roads to El Dorado' the M8. It cost me \$8 and goes 8 km 's from Gardeners Road in Alexandria and ending at Hurstville. It connects up with the M5 and has the look of a part of a Mechano Set. It's another waste of Govt. revenue. It would

Govt, motorists were being coerced to use it. The Liberal Opposition complained about the anti-competitive aspect and forced the Govt. to back down. How come the Berejiklian Govt. is allowed to get away with this 'anti-competitive' measure?

RW: What are your impressions of the recent wildcat strike by nurses at Blacktown Hospital?

WB: They took 24 hour strike action over staff shortages and associated safety issues. Next day the Fair Work Court intervened and threatened the Nurses Union with heavy fines if the nurses continued with the action. As a result the officials of the Nurses Union pressured the nurses to return to work. This action by the Fair Work Court jeopardises a fundamental right of workers to take strike action over safety issues.

Promises! Promises! Promises!

RW: What are your thoughts on latest developments in the Taxi Industry?

WB: On a commercial TV Channel News program on 8/12/20, there was a report that from the \$142 Mill. collected by the NSW Govt. to supposedly help out the Taxi Industry hard hit by Uber competition, only \$42 Mill. was passed on. The funds were raised from a \$1 surcharge on taxi and drive share trips. This is a fine example of how the Liberal Govt. operates. It's just the tip of the iceberg. What happened to the \$100 Mill. collected?

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: What are your impressions of the impact of the time table changes as of 25/10/20?

Leichhardt Busie: We have noticed much anger amongst commuters concerning the changes such as the changes to the 438 with the introduction of the new 438x lim-

ited stops run particularly with the oldies. We have lost the M10 and M50 which were culled and particularly involved the bendi buses. Now the bendi fleet at the depot has been reduced by 50%. Particularly the ex-STA drivers have been hard hit losing lines of work. The bosses have introduced the new 437 and 502 runs but these runs seem poorly patronised. Coming up in December the bosses are planning a big push to displace the old time ex-STA drivers from their rosters. Costing these drivers big cuts in their wages. The bosses will be giving these rosters to the new drivers who are TWU members on a lower rate of pay. These new drivers have preference on rosters allocation where available. Despite this preferential treatment, the bosses are unable to keep the new drivers as they can't cope with the job and there continues to be high turnover of them.

RW: What has been the latest with management with Transit Systems?

Leichhardt Driver: Some of the most significant developments have been Jamie Sinclair who in a previous corporate life was general manager of State Transit, transferred over to Transit Systems with their takeover of Region 6 as a consultant

has now become general manager of Transit Systems. In recent months, we had a visit from the new owner, the head of Sea Link, which now owns Transit Systems. There was a serious breach of procedures associated with COVID-19 prevention associated with his visit. Under these procedures we are issued with masks and made to wear them in the depot and have a temperature check. Whilst now we can only enter the depot building via the parking area. The new owner refused to comply with these procedures but was allowed by depot management to enter the depot building and have a full run of the place. This incident glaringly shows management's double standards on COVID-19 issues.

RW: What are your impressions of the 25th October timetable and route changes?

LD: There have been big changes affecting many Inner West routes we have been particularly hard hit with the culling of the M10 and M50. Particularly ex-STA drivers have been hard hit with the loss of 30 or so lines of work.

South Australia

Train drivers rebel over plan to privatise Adelaide network

29/10/20 There are fears that plans to privatise Adelaide's train network could be derailed.

9News revealed tonight that almost a third of the network's drivers aren't yet willing to work for the new French operator.

The impact this could have on services is not yet clear, but it could mean up to 60 train drivers would not work for new operator Keolis Downer.

That might leave the company significantly short of the 174 drivers it would need to run the network in just three months' time.

Questions have been raised about the \$2.1 billion deal and its benefit to taxpayers since it was announced last month.

Not only are pay talks ongoing, but many drivers are waiting on the findings of a separate Fair Work Commission hearing next week about pay and conditions, before deciding whether they want to be redeployed into other state government jobs.

Contingency plans are already being worked on.

Lawyer Gary Collis represents more than 100 train drivers who have broken from the union.

"If, say, they were 20 drivers short, the government may determine to say, we'll labour-hire those 20 drivers back to Keolis Downer until such time that they've got new drivers trained," Mr Collis said.

In a statement released this afternoon, a spokesperson for Keolis Downer said all train services would operate from day one of the takeover.

A state government spokesperson said nobody would be forced out of work by the privatisation.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW Drivers Conductors and Head Office staff will discuss current issues in V/Line. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.

RW: What is the current situation at V/Line?

Archie: The Chief Executive has been stood down.

Rastus: He is being investigated by the Corruption Commission.

Roscoe: We do not know what it is about but Drivers are glad he is stood down. He tried to wreck our current EBA in 2018 which was defeated in a Ballot of V/Line employees. It will be revealed at the Inquiry.

RW: Last issue mention was made of EBA negotiations. What is the current situation?

Forsyth: Negotiations have been included with a satisfactory outcome to employees. The union delegates have worked hard to achieve the outcome. It will be written up in the union journal.

Abner: Unfortunately non unionists will get the rise. It makes us sick that these scabs get the rises, yet the rises were fought hard by the union.

RW: With COVID-19 and Victoria's hard lockdowns, what is the situation regarding public transport?

Archie: With the exception of Friday and Saturday night services, all public transport is running to a full service.

Penelope: With V/Line, all trains and bus services are operating but no services are crossing the New South Wales and South Australian Borders.

RW: What is the situation with the Albury Line?

Roscoe: V/Line has replaced all Albury line services with buses from Melbourne to Wodonga. The XPT terminates at Albury.

RW: Why haven't the V/Line trains run to Wodonga?

Rastus: When the broad gauge was converted to standard gauge, no provision was made to terminate trains at Benalla, Wangaratta and Wodonga.

Roscoe: No Safe Working provisions were made in Safe Working at these locations to do locomotive run arounds. When the current Border Lockdowns were made it was proposed to send the trains empty cars to Albany to run around but the NSW

Archie: Employees are working a basic 36 hour fortnight. At least compared to other industries we are working. I know people who have been stood down since March who have received nothing. Not even JobKeeper. These people are on Tourist Visas. Some employers have used the COVID-19 as an excuse to reduce staff.

Forsyth: The current situation is conductors are running trains but they are not checking tickets due to OH&S. One manager tried to force conductors to check tickets but due to tougher lockdowns this instruction was never enforced. Police and Protective Service offices check trains at random to check travel permits and non essential travel. Employees have to carry a permit to show they are travelling to work.

RW: What is the situation at Southern Cross?

Penelope: Human Resources are still assigned to monitor employees.

RW: What is the story of the employee who was injured in an accident due to the incompetence of a manager?

Moose: This happened eighteen months ago. There had been a storm and due to a fault the Ballarat line was shut down.

Forsyth: The Ballarat line was later reopened but the rostered employees were out of position. The manager on duty decided to send the conductor who was to run the train from Ballarat in a taxi to run this train.

Moose: The taxi proceeded up the Western Highway to Ballarat and the taxi was hit by a car travelling in the wrong lane of the freeway causing serious injury to both the taxi driver and the conductor. The driver who drove on the wrong lane was killed in the accident.

Archie: The conductor spent time in hospital and has returned to work on light duties.

Forsyth: With proper planning by the manager, the Ballarat depot could have covered the duty and the conductor could have been changed over along the line. If no Conductor was available at Ballarat then use one of the station staff as in an emergency.

Penelope: With the employee being on light duties, we hope V/Line will offer the employee another position.

Rastus: We don't know what V/line has planned but other employees who have been injured at work over the years, V/Line has said no position exists except their original classification and they have been paid out as

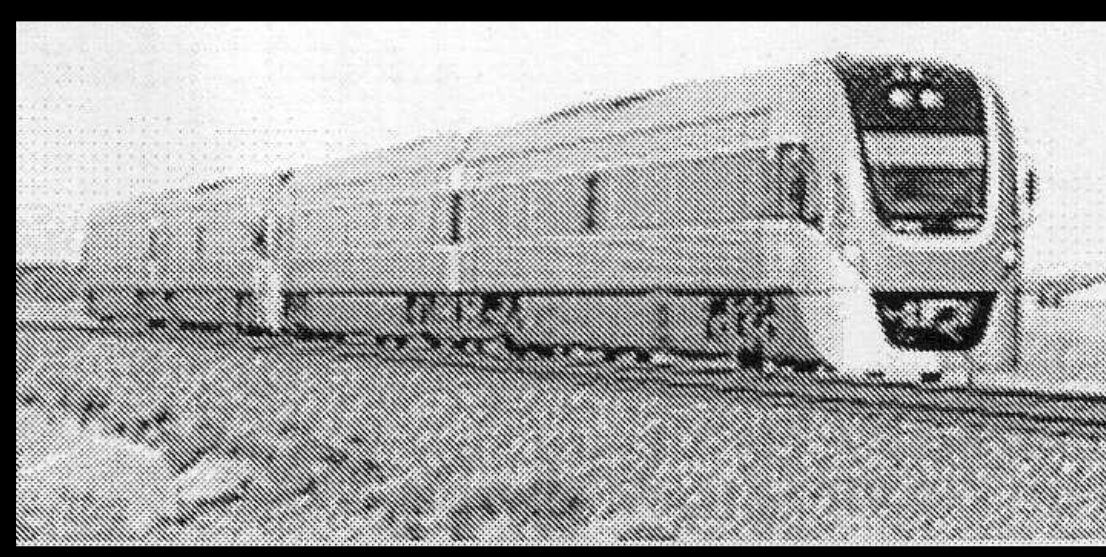
medically unfit.

Once again we have run out of space. The employee who was injured in the freak accident on the Western Freeway should be retrained in another duty within V/Line. The only good point for V/Line is that no employee has been stood down due to COVID.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, V/Line should look at its rostering during service disruptions and as for Human Resources: let the managers run the department. Finally we will repeat what we have said in previous issues of RW. If you are called in by a manager and if Human Resources are in attendance – walk out!

Stop Press

"As of 28/10/20 the Chief Executive of V/Line James Pinder was sacked over cleaning contracts at V/Line. Pinder ad-



Govt. rejected the proposal. For example if an equipment fault or occupation happens North of Wangaratta then all passenger trains are replaced by buses from Melbourne. This may change when Velocity trains are introduced on the line. When the line was converted to Standard Gauge no one thought about installing loops to run around at these locations. At these stations the loops were five km's with no run around loops.

RW: Have any V/Line employees been stood down?

Forsyth: At the moment No. There are no catering facilities on the trains and catering staff at Southern Cross have been redeployed in Customer Service roles. As for the Catering Manager. He has been moved to Head Office as he is working from home.

Abner: Catering may return to the trains with time table changes in December in a limited capacity.

RW: Are they still using these clowns?

Penelope: Yes they are and if the employee has to front a manager on certain issues this individual from Human Resources is always there.

Roscoe: This is intimidation. Years ago Human Resources only appeared if the issue was serious. Haven't the managers got the guts to tell these individuals to get lost?

Rastus: No they are still weak and employees are still being terminated on the last day of the six months probation period.

Archie: The Union says they cannot intervene if it is a probation period but if employees stick together this may be prevented. The only difference is Human Resources are doing the terminations and not the managers. They move quickly and other employees do not know until it has happened. If the employees discuss the issue, managers try to stand over them. Most employees think there could be a Court Challenge. We can only wait.

mitted at an IBAC (Area Based Anti-Corruption Commission) Inquiry he and the cleaning manager at Metro Trains had accepted kickbacks from a cleaning contractor so as the company could keep this contract. Pinder tried to say the money

was won in a betting syndicate. But when questioned by IBAC, he admitted it was a kickback. The cleaning contractor's contract was also terminated on the same day. Details in the next edition of RW".

Pinder was dismissed and Metro Trains sacked its cleaning manager. The cleaning contract with Transclean was cancelled

THE HISTORY OF PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN AUSTRALIA

In this issue of RW we will be discussing privatisation of public transport in Victoria and other Australian States. Railway workers and Bus Drivers will discuss these issues. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.

Rastus: We will discuss State Transit. State Transit is the oldest Government provider of street public transport in NSW as well as Australia. Its predecessors have provided public transport in Sydney since 1879. Originally it was a branch of the NSW Railways. Later the NSW Railways established tramways in Newcastle, Broken Hill and Maitland.

Roscoe: There were two Private Tramways in Sydney. One at Rockdale which was a steam tramway which ran from Government House Sales to a wharf at Duck River. This line operated a seven day a week service, but towards the end of 1962 abandonment was announced. The line closed in 1963. It was privately owned till the end. Ironically the new Parramatta light rail is to be built on part of its route.

RW: Was Privatisation of the tramway system considered?

Montague: In the 1880's a number of times the Government considered franchising the Sydney Tramways to Private Enterprise. Due to public backlash the franchising was defeated in Parliament.

Taylor: The word Privatisation was not heard of until the early 1980's. In 1926 the tramways in Broken Hill, Maitland and some Sydney tramlines were abandoned and replaced by private buses.

Clyde: These abandonments were due to interested bus competition with the issue becoming political. In 1931 legislation was introduced which co-ordinated bus services and eliminated bus routes duplicating tram routes. Some tramway and railway lines were closed.

Roscoe: In 1930 the NSW Railways lost control of the Tramways. A Trust was set up to operate Trams in Sydney and Newcastle. In 1932 this Trust became the D, RT and T. From 1932 onwards Private Bus operations were taken over by the Government with the first bus route being the 144

service from St. Leonards to Manly. There were other takeovers of private bus operations which evolved into the current STA. From 1937 to 1961 Govt. buses replaced Sydney trams.

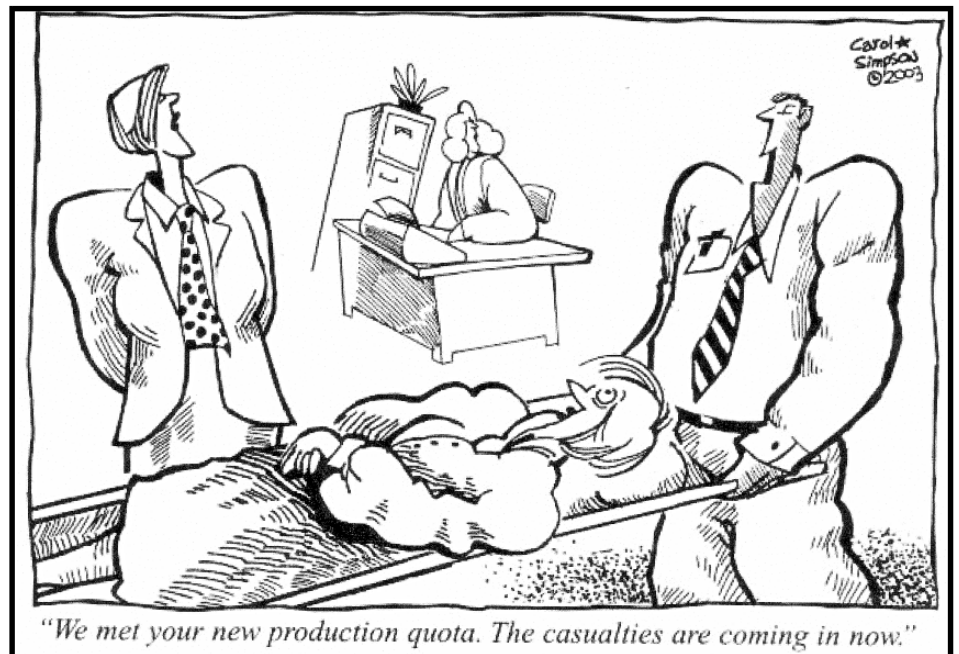
Clyde: It is ironic that the STA's predecessors were set up by the Liberal Country Party Government during the 1930's and now it is a Liberal Country Party Govt. which is destroying State Transit.

RW: When were Government and Local Government Transport Operations established in other States?

Rastus: Victoria: Melbourne in 1905,

abandoned. From 1934 when Co-ordinated Transport was established in Victoria. If the Victorian Railways wanted to abandon a Rail Service they applied to the Transport Regulation Board who would issue a licence to a local bus operator to run the service. After 1958 Pensioner Concessions were introduced in Victoria. They only applied to the Government operator. Private bus operators did not offer any Pensioner Concessions.

Clyde: The first operation to be abandoned after Pensioner Concessions were introduced was when the Victorian Railways abandoned operations from St. Kilda to Brighton. Staff from this operation were redeployed to other sections of the Railways. A licence was issued to a Private Operator who had to operate the service



Geelong 1930, Ballarat and Bendigo in 1934. South Australia, Adelaide 1907, Tasmania, Launceston 1911, Hobart 1913, Western Australia, Fremantle 1905, Perth 1913, Kalgoorlie 1962, Queensland: Rockhampton 1909, Brisbane 1923, Australian Territories: Canberra 1927, Darwin 1950. In the above cities with few exceptions services before these dates were operated by Private Companies.

RW: When did Private Operation of Government Transport commence?

Roscoe: It was happening on the Victorian Railways from early days. Services were

seven days a week. There were no Pensioner Concessions.

Roscoe: By the 1970's the replacement of Country Rail Services was becoming a political issue so the Railway Management came up with another idea.

RW: What was that idea?

Rastus: The Railways replaced the Country Services with replacement services let out to tender. Rail Fares and Concessions would be available on these services. This system was introduced from 1976 onwards and concluded in 1994.

Clyde: Some Railway Managers were alleged to have said that the Contracted Service would after two years be offered to the Contractor to operate. If the Contractor refused, the Railways would put an application to the TAB to abandon the service.

RW: Has any service been abandoned?

Taylor: A few have gone but most services are still operating. To abandon these services would be Political Suicide. A Public Inquiry would have to be held as these Bus services are still considered Rail Services.

RW: What about Train Services?

Montague: Tram Services operated by the Tramways Board which were abandoned were replaced by Buses operated by the Tramways Board.

Clyde: Services in Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo were operated by the State Elec-

tricity Commission of Victoria. This Department was forced to operate Tram Services. This came about in Victoria from 1919 to 1952 which had a minority Government. The issue in these cities is political. By 1966 Geelong Tramways were abandoned and replaced by Private Buses.

Montague: Ballarat and Bendigo survived until 1971 and 1972. By then the systems were worn out. In 1968 the SEC introduced a Bill into State Parliament to Abandon the Tramways. The Government did not control the Upper House so the Bill was thrown out. One of the reasons the Bill was thrown out was due to Pensioner Concessions. Ballarat and Bendigo Tramways had Pensioner Concessions. There was no Pensioner Concessions in Geelong.

Taylor: The Government gained control of the Upper House after the 1970 State Election and the Bill was passed. One of the Conditions was that the SEC subsidised Pensioner Concessions for three years. This was until 1974.

Montague: This only delayed the Day of Reckoning and as October 1974 approached the Government introduced subsidised Pensioner Concessions on all Private Bus Operators in Victoria. From 1976 Private Buses received a Government Subsidy.

RW: Sadly we have run out of space. In the next issue we will discuss further Bus Privatisations in Australia.

German Labour News

Christian passed away on December 10, 2020.

Amazon Workers International, an international network of militant Amazon workers, wrote this beautiful obituary, pledging to continue the common project:

On 10th December our comrade and irreplaceable friend, Christian Krähling, passed away.

Christian had worked in Amazon in Bad Hersfeld since 2009. He was the co-founder of Amazon Workers International (AWI), a member of the Amazon works council in his warehouse, a militant, a great songwriter, and a dedicated grassroots troublemaker.

The history of AWI started in spring 2015 with Christian initiating the first meeting between Polish and German workers in Bad Hersfeld. Workers who took part in the meeting were highly inspired and decided to meet regularly.

As a result, Christian and other German workers came to Poland in May 2015 for an internal meeting and a demonstration in Warsaw against precarious working conditions. In September 2015, Christian was in Poland again to give a public talk in which he described the aim of workers' organizing as follows: "We are the ones who perform, we produce the success. That's why we want to be the dominant factor.

We want to determine our working conditions ourselves" [see the video (1) and the summary of the first "International Amazon Workers' Meeting" (2)]. At the AWI meeting with Amazon workers from Poland, Germany, and France in the same month, Christian smilingly started to talk about small things workers in Amazon



warehouses were doing to annoy the managers, to win some time, and to show their resistance. He motivated everyone to come up with more ideas of this kind of sabotage. He showed us that for him the struggle was not just about some collective bargaining agreement but about winning back workers' dignity in a fight with Amazon managers who would daily try to humiliate workers.

In the following years, workers' meetings were organized regularly every six months: in Berlin, Paris, Bad Hersfeld, Poznan, Leipzig, Madrid, and Lille. Christian was always present and stressed the need for international organizing [for more read the interview with Christian in the journal "Common Strategy to Gain Power and Think Bigger" (3)]. We met to discuss and share ideas, but also we distributed leaflets

together in nearby Amazon warehouses, supported strikes, organized pickets in front of temp agencies, and took part in demonstrations.

Christian always played the key role in the AWI meetings: preparing reports, doing presentations, and organizing campaigns. For him the clue was self-organization of workers at the warehouse shopfloor level, while our meetings were an extension of this grassroots approach on the international level. If he heard of workers organizing locally who needed support, he just took the car and showed up. He spoke at employees' meetings in warehouses all over Germany to support local unions

with his humour and eloquence. In 2018, he supported the strikers in Spain when he went to visit the strike of Amazon workers in Madrid on Black Friday.

Christian was a member of the ver.di trade union. However, his relationship with its leaders and officials was often conflictive. Fellow workers were his point of reference, not union bureaucracies, political parties, or NGOs. Asked if AWI should cooperate with such organisations, he was strategic, saying “during the last nine years of our organizing, dozens of outside organizations approached us offering support. But they all came and went. It is us who stayed always here, in the warehouses, with our people”. He was however happy to build coalitions with Amazon workers on the different level of the corporation ladder: when two workers were fired at Seattle Amazon headquarters in the USA, he took part in a solidarity sick-out day (4).

In April 2018, during a demonstration in Berlin, organized by AWI and ver.di against awarding Jeff Bezos a prize for having a “visionary business model,” Christian joined Amazon’s Polish employees when politicians and union bureaucrats tried to take over the stage and marginalized them. He was also furious when the union officials spent a lot of money on conferences in luxury hotels while not funding workers’ meetings. In 2015, some ver.di officials even refused to let Christian and shopfloor comrades go to international meetings to speak on behalf of their union. They went anyway and paid for the travel expenses themselves (and they did so in the following years too).

Christian wanted to organize strikes and empower workers, not to sit in conferences. When Polish workers organized a strike ballot in 2019, he and his

co-workers made a solidarity movie, encouraging to vote “Strajk tak!” (Yes to the strike!, 5). Once Christian was invited to a conference organized by trade-union officers. He told us the story: he was terribly bored, couldn’t wait to go for dinner and a beer, but none joined him afterwards, as for the others the conference was only a job. Christian was different: his whole life was engaged with it. He wanted to build friendships, laugh with others at Amazon’s ridiculous internal policies, and plan the next actions at 5 a.m. At AWI meetings, he was always the last of us who went to bed - after singing protest songs. He planned to write an AWI strike-songbook. One of his songs was dedicated to the Chicago Amazon workers who organized walkouts in spring 2020 (5).

In recent weeks, during the #MakeAmazonPay actions, Christian took pictures with his co-workers in front of the Bad Hersfeld warehouse. They held souvenirs from international contacts that he had made: the flags of Workers’ Initiative, of Spain’s CGT Amazon, of France’s Sud Solidaire, and on his cap he had a badge from the USA’s Amazonians United, used in their campaign for paid time off (PTO). He also had scrawled on his vest a slogan that the Polish workers used in November 2020 to fight for a bigger bonus: “2000 zlotys for everyone”. In the coming weeks, he wanted to create an international newspaper for Amazon employees, and organize money so AWI could make contacts with workers in Latin America. We will not let your great plans languish in a drawer.

We are in deep sorrow over Christian’s death, and send our condolences to his family. AWI’s structure has been seriously weakened, and we have lost a friend. The AWI Committee was supposed to

meet next Sunday and Christian was supposed to discuss our further plans. We are sure that his last will would be for us to keep on fighting for workers power, put his ideas in place and extend our network, wherever Amazon employees say: “Enough, we deserve more!”

Christian, we are going to continue our common project, and we know you will be with us on every picket line. Thank you for the amazing time that we were able to spend with you, thank you for the inspiration that you gave to us! We will keep on fighting!

Amazon Workers International

1. Amazon workers meeting in Poznań? | en.labournet.tv:<https://en.labournet.tv/video/6925/amazon-workers-meeting-poznan>

see also: Amazon Arbeiter an die Berufs-kraft-fahrer | <https://de.labournet.tv/amazon-arbeiter-die-berufskraftfahrer>

2. International Amazon Workers’ Meeting | amazing workers (wordpress.com)<https://amworkers.wordpress.com/2017/03/19/international-amazon-workers-...>

3Strike the Giant! Transnational Organization against Amazon // TSS Journal <https://www.transnational-strike.info/wp-content/uploads/Strike-the-Gian...>

4. Christian speaking at Amazon Employees for Climate Justice (from 2:16:26 minute)- 4/24 Sick Out Day, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5s5Aup66EZU>

5. “Strajk tak” video:<https://www.facebook.com/PracownicyAmazona/videos/478207162997965>

6. One of the Christian’s song: Amazonier Bleibt Heiter, Amazon Workers International (soundcloud.com)

Syndicalist Currents in the South African Labour Movement

In examining the possibilities for politics within and at a distance from the state, it is important to revisit the democratic traditions of the working class, which are often learned through struggles and strikes - and which were exemplified by the new unions of the 1970s and 1980s. Not much of this alternative tradition of democracy outside the state has been captured in official histories, which present the attainment of democracy in terms of the formation of a parliamentary government in 1994.

There is a larger problem here of how the working-class heritage - the intellectual and organisational and political traditions

of labour and the left - has been side-lined in media, textbooks, monuments and narratives; this also involves a narrowing of our political imagination, with our view of “democracy” itself narrowed dramatically. There has been a focus on elections and political parties and electoral politics. This reflects and reinforces a view that assumes a separation of the political - basically left to the state and the parties - and the economic - issues like wage negotiations are left to unions, and union involvement in politics is increasingly reduced to lobbying political parties.

One effect is that unions - which have almost four million members, considerably

more than the audited membership of the big three parties combined - are presented as bit players, with the drama centred on the parties and the politicians. The other effect is that we tend not to learn from, and remember, the rich political traditions of the working class, both in communities and in trade unions. There are many examples, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, of unions and other forces developing radically democratic, bottom-up movements, outside of the state. For example, the most radical and innovative strands of the anti-apartheid coalition, the United Democratic Front, developed into systems of direct self-government - “people’s power” - in places like Cradock and Alexandra. The Young Christian Workers’ movement, which was actively involved in the new

unions of the 1970s, stressed the importance of a strong moral code and an accountable organising style, on the basis of See-Judge-Act.

In both cases, bottom-up democracy at a distance from the state was not just a method of organising for other goals - ending apartheid, improving wages etc. - but an aim of empowering the oppressed, giving control over daily life, and creating a new human community.

A third example is provided by the “workers’ control” and “workerist” traditions of the new unions, which I will explore below. Let me stress here that all of these examples had serious limitations, and, in revisiting them, I am not suggesting that they were perfect and can be mechanically applied. We do need to learn the lessons of their failings, but, at the same time, we also need to learn from their successes. This, I think, provides a powerful way of engaging contemporary challenges. We do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Focus: the “Workers’ Control” and “Workerist” Traditions from the 1970s

An important example of imaginations of an alternative society and different practices was the “workers’ control” tradition of the Trade Union Advisor Coordinating Council (TUACC), which was formed in 1973 to unite some of the new unions.

There was a long history of unions in South Africa - unions were started more than 150 years ago - and of black-based unions, but black workers were victims of both class exploitation and racist oppression. With colonial capitalism and apartheid, there was systematic, institutional and legal discrimination against black workers, especially black Africans. For example, the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act, which for the first time provided real union rights in South Africa, excluded black Africans. The 1951 revision of this law banned “mixed” unions and laid the ground for making black African strikes illegal across the board.

Generally, before the 1970s, unions in South Africa were racially fragmented, mainly based among whites, coloureds and Indians, organisationally weak and base among a small part of the workforce. The 1960s were noted as a “decade of darkness,” in the words of Baskin,[1] with union decline and the apartheid state crushing opposition.

The “Workers Control” Tradition and the TUACC This changed in the 1970s with the rise of new unions, which changed the landscape forever. The new unions were not just a revival of the old, and were not just considerably larger - the biggest

black-based union federation in the mid-1950s, the SA Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was less than 60,000 in total, the new unions reached one million in the mid-1980s - but also involved new modes of organisation.

First, there was a mass strike wave in 1973-1974. Running alongside this was a new worker-focused infrastructure: the Urban Training Project, the Industrial Aid Society, the Western Cape Province Workers Advice Bureau, and the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund. This last-named was not an NGO, but a worker-run, worker-funded funeral scheme that also funded worker education and the new unions.

Then there were new unions, some founded in 1973, joined by some of the established mainly Coloured unions, especially in the Cape. Then there were new federations, notably the TUACC.

TUACC’s critical contributions to the

democracy from the bottom-up, with ordinary workers in control of all parts of the unions, based on elected and recallable representatives that dominate decision-making at all levels of the union, and no voting rights for hired officials, who also would get standard workers’ wages. Prioritising worker education: unions would control their education programmes, stressing the value of both technical skills - like negotiating - and of a broader understanding of society - allowing people to understand the problems, and decide on solutions. The “Workerist” Tradition of FOSATU This “workers’ control” idea, created in great part from below by TUACC workers, was expanded in the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), which was formed 1979 in large part by TUACC. In FOSATU, the idea of “workers’ control” developed into a project to build a larger “working class movement” at the centre of the struggle. According its gen-



movement were the ideas, first, of “building tomorrow today,” meaning that how we organise today shapes the future we can win (so, for a democratic future, build a democratic workers movement); and, second, a stress on “workers’ control,” which meant strong, non-racial, independent, democratic shop-floor-based unions centred on assemblies and shop stewards. What this also meant is that unions should not be controlled by political parties or by the government.

We can summarise this as follows:

Coherent organisational strategy: unions would build factory-to-factory, targeting winnable battles. A “tight federation”: this meant joint policies and shared resources across the federation. “Open” unions: the TUACC unions rejected apartheid laws that racially segregated unions, and racist measures; it redefined unions to lay the basis for (prefigure) a non-racial, common future. In the Eastern Cape, this included bridging the divide between black African and Coloured workers, for example. Industrial unions: unite workers across industry and South Africa, regardless of skill, job, colour, belief or gender or language. Shop-floor democracy: this meant

eral-secretary Joe Foster in a famed 1981 speech that the movement would:[2]

Challenge apartheid and capitalism at the same time, rather than defer socialism to a later stage, after majority rule. Challenge apartheid and capitalism with a single movement, where unions would undertake both political and economic struggles, rather than outsource one to a party. Build class consciousness, rejecting nationalist multi-class alliances - FOSATU looked north, and saw a pattern of nationalist parties like ZANU in Zimbabwe suppressing or capturing unions after majority rule. The larger “working class movement” would include community-based struggles, co-operatives and a socialist media. Meanwhile, FOSATU retained key TUACC positions, like control via assemblies and shop-stewards, a tight federation, non-racialism, and struggle.

This FOSATU approach was labelled “workerism” by its critics, and was rejected by the ANC and SACP, who were then labelled the “populists” by their critics. The workerist-populist debate would continue in the early years of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), formed 1985 at the initiative of FOSATU and uniting many unions, including from outside FOSATU, into a giant.

So, for “workerism,” unions were to be the centre of a larger “working-class” movement that would challenge both apartheid and capitalism, and lay the basis for a radically democratic South Africa.

The ideas were as follows:[3]

Workers’ control of unions would be expanded into workers’ (and working class) control more widely, including the economy and production, and democratising society. Workers’ control over “reproduction” would also be attempted - i.e. organising in the neighbourhoods - which was expressed in activities of FOSATU veterans like Moses Mayekiso. Mayekiso organised street and block committees in Alexandra township, modelled on the unions’ assemblies and shop-steward structure. A “working class movement” that could fight for both socialism and national liberation on its own terms - a worker-led national liberation - that rejected the idea that nationalism is the only form of national liberation. It rejected the idea that there was a separation between class struggle and the struggle against apartheid, since the working class needed to make national liberation serve its own interests. It was socialist (anti-capitalist and anti-apartheid), but sceptical of the ANC and SACP. It stressed building a working-class counter-culture - including education, history, songs, poetry and theatre - to develop a radical socialist and class consciousness. At a Distance from the State? What this meant was that unions would be political, but autonomous of parties. Politics would involve debate and learning through practice and struggle. Workers would make their own political decisions, rather than just carry out decisions taken some where else, which would be undemocratic, and which could lead unions into battles they did not need and could not win.

So, the new unions of TUACC and FOSATU aimed at reforms in the workplace that would:

Win tangible improvements for members. Build confidence. Take place bottom-up: winnable demands and measurable day-to-day victories within a few targeted workplaces were to be won in ways that strengthened workplace organisation and rank-and-file participation. At the same time, the TUACC and FOSATU unions accepted tactical engagement with the state and law. While the apartheid state was obviously oppressive, they argued that democratic organisations such as unions could pressure the state to make concessions, without being co-opted. They

could even use state systems - such as labour law, industrial councils, and courts - so long as checks-and-balances were in place and this did not change the unions’ focus on struggle. For example, in the so-called “registration debate,” FOSATU chose to register with the state for the purposes of using labour laws, but refused to register until certain demands were met - the removal of restrictions on migrant workers, for example - and so long as the unions did not become part of the state.

Rather than building completely outside and against the state in pursuit of the new society, some workerists clearly envisaged some social change occurring from within the institutions of the state, through participation and engagement in these structures. In this, they helped lay the basis for the idea that a gradual series of ongoing reforms within and through the capitalist state could cumulatively change society.

One child of this approach was the “radical reform” of the 1990s COSATU unions, which is discussed in Chapter 4.3. (See the book *Strategy: Debating Politics Within and at a Distance from the State* - Eds. John Reynolds & Lucien van der Walt)

Decline: why so Fragile? What happened to these traditions?

At one level, they left a real imprint on COSATU. For example, COSATU adopted the principles of a tight federation, workers’ control, and unions playing a political role. We can even see some of the roots of “radical reform” thinking in FOSATU.

In the early period of COSATU, too, the “workerist” stress on remaining political but outside of party alliances also stayed in place. The first COSATU congress in fact resolved in 1985 that the new federation would play an active political role, but “not affiliate to any political tendency or organisation.”[4]

However, within two years the federation had openly aligned with ANC, and even in 1985, its leadership included many ANC supporters, while the name “Congress” itself identified the federation with ANC and SACTU. In 1990, it formally allied with the ANC and SACP, which persists to this day, a decision backed even by former “workerist” unions, like the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA).

We can blame repression, but the “workerists” also had significant political weaknesses. They did not have a strategy linking their immediate struggles to the

longer-term socialist transformation that they sought. Their ideas were not always clear, and this led to some serious misjudgements.[5]

There was an ongoing, unresolved tension between more social democratic and more quasi syndicalist strands within “workerism.” The first-named was expressed in the idea of ongoing reforms leading to socialism through the state (see above); the second-named pushed for more complete autonomy from the state, and more direct efforts by the workers themselves to take direct power in factories and townships. This tension between a social democratic focus on tactical use of the state, and quasi-syndicalist emphasis on autonomous counter-power, was not even addressed openly. A heavy stress on practical issues and a dismissal of what were labelled by some as “armchair theorising” meant that theoretical reflection was neglected; meanwhile the “workerists” did not organise within FOSATU as a coherent political group, which created more problems.

That said, these ideas are worth revisiting - to understand where we come from, and to judge where we are now. There are no easy answers.

Zabalaza.net

Footnotes:

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BRITAIN TODAY

THE RELEVANCE OF ACORN

In SolFed (Solidarity Federation - British syndicalist grouping) we have generally had pretty bad experiences with ACORN (Community Union originating in the USA), in multiple areas as well. Won't go in to too much detail about it, because I don't how public people want to be about it. Pretty sure we have had bad experiences since we are "competitors" in a fairly limited market for them (very few groups wanting to organise with tenants around).

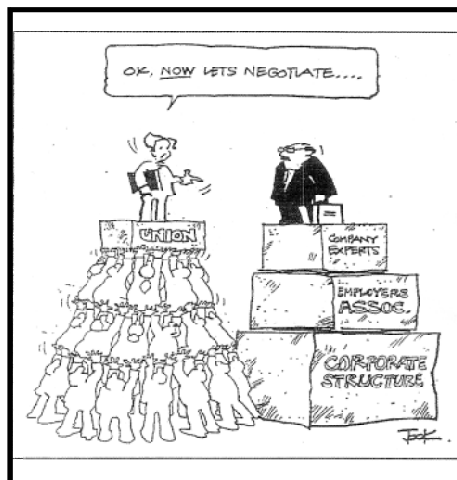
Friends in the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) reported a similar thing (both general feelings and something about ACORN members near the beginning voting for some money to be given to them and then leaving / not getting involved again). Also spoken to people in other anarchist or communist groups (like Afed), who have said similar things.

In my opinion ACORN are just like the IWW of (Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England) or UVW (United Voice of Workers) tenants organising. They are pretty new / small so are willing to take a few more risks to grow and haven't become quite so fossilised by bureaucracy yet, but at the end of the day just like the "base unions", they are headed quite clearly in one direction: a bureaucratic service. They are just like a standard unions really, but small.

Often they are far more willing to help you if you become a member. Here they are bragging about being giving out a letter template to non-members, for free! <https://acorntheunion.org.uk/rent-reduction/> Even then they want all your details, for a letter...

This is quite simply because they have a lot of paid organisers. Their website usually has paid positions up to apply for. Obviously these people need salaries, so they

need members. And while they might opportunistically use direct action to make gains, they aren't going to take any big risks, since big risks means big fines and smaller salaries. A lot of their activity as well is also useless stuff like calling on the government to change the law or signing people up to vote... They do a lot of door knocking which is nice, but it pretty clearly seems to get people to sign up (as personal insurance) for salaries. Obviously with paid bureaucrats you get different interests (and a hierarchy) as well as opportunists. They don't tend to pay a lot but it'd make a good stepping stone for fancier jobs in the unions, left journalism or the labour party (or an NGO or even a business). When ACORN wants to expand somewhere they seem to pay an organiser to go there and promote the union, which sort of tells you it all: they are a



business model.

There is defo nothing revolutionary or anarchist about them. In Bristol (their centre so to speak), the council literally sent their details out to the public at the start of the pandemic.

There is also some pretty dodgy stuff with ACORN and unionisation. In America ACORN's leader for a while sacked a bunch of workers in their bureaucracy for

joining the IWW (so essentially union busting). When they started here they said they had nothing to do with that guy. However, in January, at Bristol, they invited him to come and speak! https://www.facebook.com/events/2795314383824941/?acontext=%7B%22source%22%3A%22page%22%2C%22mechanism%22%3A%22main_list%22%2C%22extra_data%22%3A%22%5C%22%5C%22%22%7D%22has_source%22%3Atrue%7D

In terms of alternatives, any SolFed local (not just Brighton) is probably willing to help with housing issues (and yes we are very small compared to ACORN, as its most of the radical left compared to unions). There are local groups as outlined by people above as well (who I imagine don't have paid organisers). For students there is a national rent strike group. I'd imagine groups like IWW or this new Get Rooted group might also help you out if you asked them.

In general, while national groups are nice, the most useful thing while organising as tenants is to have your neighbours or fellow tenants on board (whether it's to resist an eviction, picket an agency, have a rent strike, whatever). Not sure how paying pretty high fees really helps most people in this regard. In the States there seems to be a fair amount of action without an ACORN-like-group. Likewise in the past there have been some pretty impressive rent strikes in the UK (St. Pancras, Glasgow, Liverpool, Leeds etc.) and as far as I know they never really needed paid organisers. I would agree a national organisation (or just cooperation) may have helped these struggles, and helped it to have a lasting legacy, but I think ACORN already show a lot of issues and those will only get worse.

Personally I'd not work with ACORN (nor do I think they'd want me to), though I'd support any struggling tenants even if they are signed up with them (same as with any union). I would encourage people first to talk to their other tenants and get in contact with any local tenants unions/ SolFed/ similar groups if they want a hand.

Thanks to Libcom

MANCHESTER RENT STRIKE

Article from the Liverpool Anarchist on the ongoing University of Manchester Rent Strike. Their recent victory seems to have breathed life into the movement with over 20 strikes being organised for January.

6/12/20 Recently around 200 students withheld their rent at the University of Manchester. They were locked inside their blocks, after being lured into living at the university with the promise of safe in-person teaching. A revolt followed, with students tearing down fences that were erected around their blocks! Nine students also occupied a disused 19-story accommodation block. Why that many rooms, which they described as an "up-grade", are empty while so many sleep

rough is a mystery only capitalism can explain. While the occupation was largely symbolic, it did a great deal to raise awareness, and thus harm the reputation of the university.

Initially they were offered a measly 5% rent reduction in return for an end to the strike. The Student Union fell over themselves to accept this offer, but since UoM Rent Strike and 9K 4 WHAT? actually organised the strike the union was ignored. I

the end their persistence won an impressive 30% reduction for the first term! Roughly £600-900 for every student, not just those that participated. This is being proclaimed as the biggest victory to ever come out of a student rent strike. The strike is set to carry on into January unless a similar concession is gained for the whole year. They were following in the footsteps of 1,400 Bristol students, and it looks like it's spreading across the country with strikes breaking out from Newcastle to Brighton. Hopefully it continues to spread, and outside of the more expensive "elite" universities. An education in direct action is worth far more than any university degree.

In contrast, at the University of Liverpool, as of December 6th, the pathetic Student Union are merely petitioning management to "Refund the Rent". While one demand has been won (the right to cancel contracts) this is undoubtedly an attempt from management to avoid the outbreak of a strike. If students want a rent strike they will have to do it themselves.

Obviously the vast majority of us aren't students, so why should we care? Perhaps most importantly helping them is the right thing to do. Solidarity goes both ways – for example students helped the Abercromby



rent strikers in 1969 – we shouldn't expect support if we aren't willing to give it. Furthermore, student accommodation often ends up forcing local working class people

to move out due to increased rent costs (gentrification); if students can get rent cuts this process might be slowed down or even reversed.

Crucially, we should be trying to learn from their example. Direct action can help us keep our livelihood and liberty. The basics of rent strikes are quite simple: convincing people to start and continue withholding their rent, resisting evictions and using other forms of direct action such as occupations in support. Obviously they are easier to organise for students living in halls, but this should also apply for some blocks of flats or council estates. There is also no need for "paid professionals", looking to fund their salaries, to organise on our behalf. No one is saying it's easy or we are guaranteed a victory, but if freshers can manage to organise a rent strike, then why can't we?

Thanks to Libcom

Book Review Corner

Without Bosses: Radical Australian Trade Unionism in the 1970's by Sam Oldham, Published by Interventions

Corporate Unionism & Intensified Employer Offensive

The recent pathetic cave-in by the yellow 'corporate' unions to Wage Freezes and reduced caps on Enterprise Agreement so called wage rises on the Federal and State levels in Australia and seeming acquiescence by the grass roots highlights the dramatic shift from the high levels of militancy and direct action in the late 1960's and 1970's at various levels in the bureaucratic unions of those days. Associated with this militant upsurge was the emergence of a 'workers control' movement sweeping many industries, particularly highlighted with the famous 'green bans' of the NSW BLF (Builders Labour Federation). Some of the last major expressions of direct action and workers control being the work-in of Melbourne trammies on 1st Jan 1990 and subsequent tramway depot occupations in January and February and picket of Jolimont Rail Yard on the Morning to Afternoon 31/1/90 heavily affecting Suburban Melbourne train services. Syndicalists

played a significant role in facilitating these actions in the context of militant traditions. Another important example is 'Drivers for Affirmative Action Group' of March 2004 which heavily disrupted Sydney railways for 4 days in which the ASN has significantly involved and attempted to transform into a strike wave movement. (1) Whilst a wildcat strike by NSW Interurban Train Drivers on Friday 27/11/20 over the initial testing of new trains involving Driver Only Operation in which long range work of the ASN played a critical role, shows it's possible to rekindle the flames of radical unionism and direct action on the job through serious long range strategic organising. Not 'goofy' leftist activoidism which plays into the 'smoke and mirrors' performances and associated media stunts at fake picket lines, marches and rallies of the corrupt and cynical ALP aligned union bosses and the antics of leftist student social clubs.

In the more favourable circumstances of the 1970's lacking an organised syndicalist movement with bases in strategic sectors during the movement's peak of influence, the opportunity to establish

transitional steps toward a syndicalist union confederation as a pole of attraction in the Australian labour movement was missed. Consequently the ALP and Marxist Leninist parties aligned union bureaucracy of those days was able to regain control of the grass roots. It proceeded to centralise more power into its hands via union mergers and constitutional changes with associated rorts leading to the current corrupt corporate unionism phenomena based on State and ALP Octopus election and enterprise agreement ballot rigging. (2) This trajectory occurred in the context of the intensifying employer offensive from the mid 1970's and growing unemployment associated with the end of the post WWII Boom. The book under review throws important light on the scope of the radical upsurge at various levels in the bureaucratic unions in the 1970's and reasons for its emergence and decline.

The author shows the Chiefly ALP Federal Govt. in 1947 introduced Penal Powers to the Arbitration Court and Award System. Subsequently the Coalition Menzies Government amended the legislation to allow no-strike and bans clauses in Industrial Awards. It was designed to bleed the bureaucratic unions financially via heavy fines. So the union hierarchy would police members. Whilst Post WWII boom conditions of full employment led to over award agreements with employers and regular mass meetings of unions. The author sees Shop Committees at the core of union militancy from the late 1960's. Shop committees were combined union committees elected by workers in individual work places. The volume

looks at the background to their emergence such as in the early 1900's agitation by the Chicago Line IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) and the impact of the British shop steward movement during WWI. Shop Committees spread in WWII through State owned industry and in the 1960's spread to most small and medium sized companies in manufacturing and related industries.

The author emphasises international events were an important factor in workers radicalisation from the late 60's such as the France May 1968 general strike and factory occupations and the first work-in in the world to oppose a plant closure at the Upper Clyde Shipyards (UCS) in 1971.

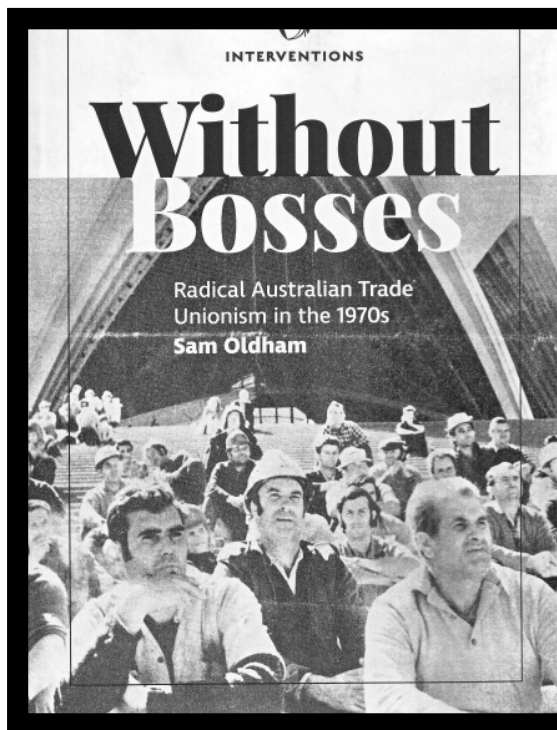
The author sees a major contribution to the militant upsurge as the defeat of the penal provisions of the Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Court in 1969 following general strikes over the gaoling of Clarrie O'Shea Maoist Tramway/Bus Union Official. An important factor was a large leftwing split which occurred in the Victorian Trades Hall Council in 1967. It created a rebel VTHC particularly based upon Metal, Construction and Shipping unions. It led the general strikes to free O'Shea.

The Role of the CPA in the Radical Upsurge

The author shows how the CPA (Communist Party of Australia) was the most important and largest left group supporting radical union struggles in the late 1960's and 1970's. Large numbers of workers involved in work-ins and shop committees were CPA members. It was in the forefront of the development of the shop committee movement. CPA union officials welcomed shop committees. These organisations took on a new role beyond communication links with officials and policing awards on the job – imposing closed shops. The new role was encouraged by CPA controlled unions such as AEU (Australian Engineering Union) and Black Smiths Society and Sheet Metal Workers Union and the NSW BLF (Builders Labourers Federation).

At the CPA initiated Left Action Conference Easter 1969, Workers Control was top of the agenda. The CPA also played an important role in various Workers Control Conferences. The largest being the Workers Control Conference in Newcastle in 1973. It was hotly debated at other Conferences involving the CPA, and in many editions of the CPA's theoretical Journal, Australian Left Review. However CPA members walked out of the Workers Control Conference in Melbourne in 1972 when losing control to more extreme left groups. The author does see genuine sup-

port for Workers Control and militant union tactics by the CPA officials and grass roots people. A critical role of the CPA in facilitating the militant upsurge which the author fails to discuss was its role since formation in producing work place news sheets across industries. In this way assisting militants in the day to day class struggle on the job. An important example was 'The Hoist', paper of the CPA initiated rank and file movement in the NSW BLF. Today hardly any such publications continue to exist. (3) The radical rightward shift of the CPA under the Hawke ALP Govt 1983-91 and its role in designing and promoting the ACTU/ALP Income and Prices Accord certainly points to a significant level of opportunism in the CPA's leftward shift of late 1960's and 1970's.



'Workers Control' Movement in the 70's

The author shows a major back drop to the wave of work-ins was the decline in manufacturing industry associated with the cessation of Australian involvement in the Viet Nam War. The author proceeds to examine various overseas influences. Most inspirational was the Upper Clyde Shipyards work-in in 1971. It inspired a wave of other work-ins in UK and internationally. Another significant influence was the British Institute for Workers Control (IWC) founded in 1968. The IWC advised shop stewards during occupations and work-ins. Its board included key figures in the British New Left and were influenced by the Yugoslav 'Self Management' experience. The author fails to discuss its fraudulent character. In particu-

lar control of the 'workers councils' by the Yugoslav Communist Party and maintenance of hierarchical relations in workplaces. IWC board members went on to become advisors for British Labour Party Govt. Minister Tony Benn in the 1970's. It exerted influence in Australia through speakers at Workers Control Conferences, provision of literature and the formation of ephemeral Centres for Workers Control.

In examining radical unionism beyond the workplace, the author looks at a range of activities such as opposition to anti-union labour laws e.g. the defeat of the Fraser Govt's Industrial Relations Bureau, industrial action to oppose attacks on Medibank, the green ban phenomena pioneered by the NSW BLF.

The author shows the recession of 1974 associated with Australia's withdrawal from the Vietnam War and the end of the post WWII boom, was a major backdrop for many work-ins in the metal industry. Shop and Site Committees played an important role in resisting the sackings. The author shows the Harco factory work-in in Western Sydney over retrenchments inspired a wave of Work-Ins in Australia. The most prominent was the work-in involving particularly NSW BLF members during the Sydney Opera House construction. Another focus of work-ins and direct action was over OH&S issues. In the building industry NSW BLF members were involved in struggles over electing Safety Officers on sites. Today with the yellow 'corporate' unions, OH&S is a farce and shoddy work rampant on most sites in NSW and other States leading to many accidents and cover-ups by the union bosses and media/State/employers.

Lacking a syndicalist industrial union movement or at least an organised and influential conscious syndicalist movement pushing a revolutionary perspective involving the generalisation and industrial coordination of work place work-ins, militant workers involved in factory occupations/work-ins and resistance to retrenchments and factory closures were drawn into enthusiasm for such dead ends as nationalisation of factories/industries and worker owned cooperatives. In the UK worker cooperatives were supported by the British Labour Govt. as a cunning means to curb the generalisation of workers control in the 1970's, particularly by Labour Left Winger Tony Benn. In the case of the occupied Triumph factory, with Labour Government support it later became a worker cooperative and subsequently closed/ went bankrupt due to economic pressures.

Crisis and Decline of Radical Unionism

The author proceeds to examine reasons for the decline of radical unionism. One factor noted was growing unemployment from the mid 70's associated with a recession from late 1974. A major blow to radical unionism was the deregistration of the NSW BLF in 1974. It was associated with the takeover of the NSW Branch by the National Branch headed by Maoist Norm Gallagher. Facilitated by the lack of solidarity and isolation tactics by other unions apart from FEDFA officials and rank and file members. Whilst the ECCUDO shop committees organisation in the NSW Power Industry was broken up after a 1975 campaign for a 35 hour week. The author emphasises the critical role of Wages Indexation and the ACTU/ALP Prices and Incomes Accord in the 1980's to mid 1990's. He doesn't look at the subsequent 'unofficial' Accord between the union hierarchy and Liberal and ALP Governments and the associated 'Corporate'

union phenomena in regard to suppressing workers militancy and facilitating the progress of the employer offensive. Another contributing factor focused upon was Workers Participation schemes implemented by employers to undermine independent work place organisation such as shop committees. Whilst the South Australian ALP Don Dunstan Govt. was heavily involved in promoting worker participation schemes. Shop Committees were separated from unions and incorporated into the management system. Despite significant grass roots opposition in some workplaces such as in 1974 at Tonsley Park Chrysler car plant in South Australia.

In conclusion the volume does a great job sketching factors contributing to the radical union/worker upsurge of the 1970's in Australia and its wide scope and highlights such as the 'workers control' movement. However the author fails to discuss a key aspect of CPA work which facilitated grass roots workplace organisation and

militancy – the production of work place newspapers for many decades. He also fails to expose the bogus character of Yugoslav 'self management' and how the upsurge could have been pushed further in a revolutionary direction.

Mark McGuire

Notes

1. See, 'Anarcho-Syndicalism in Practice: Melbourne Tram Dispute & Lockout 1990' Edited by M. McGuire on Libcom.org

2. See, NSW Railways News p3 in RW Vol.34 No.1(222) Mar.-April 2015 and 'Were RTBU 2018 Elections rigged? P4 in RW Dec 2018-Jan 2019 Vol.36 No.3(223) on web site www.rebelworker.org

3. See, 'A few rough reds: Stories of rank and file organising' Edited by Hal Alexander and Phil Griffiths, published by Australian Society of Labour History, Canberra Branch. 'Tales of the BLF: rolling the right!' by Paul True, Published by Militant International Publications.

Salud! An Irishman in Spain by Peadar O'Donnell. Friends of the International Brigade in Ireland, Dublin 2020.

Peadar O'Donnell was prominent in the leftwing of the Irish Republican movement, first as an organizer for the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, then as an IRA commander in the guerrilla war for independence, encouraging workplace occupations and land seizures. Rejecting the armistice with Britain, he joined the IRA "die-hards" and socialist Republicans in resisting the new Free State regime in Ireland. Captured and threatened with execution, he made a successful escape from prison and continued his radical agitation. A prolific novelist and playwright, in the 'forties and 'fifties he worked as co-editor of *The Bell*, a prestigious literary journal. In later years he participated in anti-apartheid and anti-Vietnam war activities and in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

This first-hand account of the beginnings of the Civil War in Spain was initially published in 1937. Preceding George Orwell and other participants and observers, O'Donnell was present at the very beginnings of the armed struggle and popular revolution in July of 1936 when General Franco launched a military rebellion against the Spanish Republic. O'Donnell noted that the Irish Catholic bishops had condemned the IRA for its armed resistance to a legally elected Free State government, but praised Franco's rebellion for doing exactly the same thing in Spain.

O'Donnell is quite discreet regarding his own involvement with the popular militias in Barcelona and Catalonia, and in his later efforts in recruiting Irish volunteers for service in the International Brigade. His contacts in Spain were mainly with the



Barcelona anarchists of the CNT-FAI, in de facto control of the city and its environs. He also later visited Madrid at the beginning of the Fascist siege. In contrast to Catalonia, the Spanish Communist Party

held sway in the capital. News from the frontline were censored, Loyalist setbacks ignored, with positive propaganda for the Republic replacing straightforward reporting.

Although obviously a partisan of the Left, of the factory occupations and breakup of landed estates, O'Donnell retained a great objectivity in his assessment of the early days of the Civil War, and went out of his way to speak to a wide cross section of Spanish society – not only leftists of various persuasions but also peasants, villagers, small business owners, workers, fishermen, women, members of the clergy, the bourgeoisie. Among the latter he found a general fear of any disorder that might threaten their social position and for some almost a paranoia that their servants and maids might denounce them to the rabble, the revolutionary militia. "You felt," he writes, "that these people could be terribly ruthless if they had the power to win back their passing privileges" (145).

As to the burning of churches that so inflamed Catholic opinion in Ireland and around the world, the author insists that "the attacks were the work of a minority, which attached to itself the derelicts of the slums" (80). He observes the sacking of a village church in Catalonia in which only a few take part, "dragging furniture after them" (48). For many Spaniards the Church was identified with reactionary monarchy, feudalism and oppression.

Of the spontaneous shootings of right-wingers and priests by the popular militias in the early days of the conflict, O'Donnell argues that it was difficult to separate fact from rumor, although he did

observe the formal trial of three young Fascists captured carrying incriminating documents, who admitting their guilt, were summarily executed. In regard to the clergy, "Quite a number of nuns," he writes, "now dressed as women of the world, stuck to their posts in the hospitals....It was easy enough, too, to meet priests who had established their bona fides with the local militia...and who were moving around quite freely" (81). O'Donnell was able to attend an anarcho-syndicalist sponsored conference in Barcelona on land reform, an issue with which he had experience in Ireland. He was impressed by the openness of the discussion and with the various arguments made by landless peasants, tenant farmers and small holders in favor of collectivization, cooperation or simply the parceling out of the large estates for individual ownership. The urban anarcho-syndicalists, he observes, were

"puzzled, impressed, a little startled" (108). Land reform and redistribution posed different problems than the occupation of a factory or a mine. "'Comrades,'"



one speaker calls, 'Let us get all the ideas we agree on written down'...the hall goes off again in a maelstrom of crosstalk...Salud, Catalonia" (109).

O'Donnell's memoir ends in the first heady months of war and revolution. But that social revolution, governance by local committees and freedom of discussion observed by the author would be increasingly suppressed as the war went on and the power of the central government advanced. The Russian monopoly on arms for Spain would assure Communist domination of the Republican state with many of O'Donnell's anarchist acquaintances imprisoned or shot. Used as a pawn in Stalin's diplomatic schemes, the Spanish Republic would fall in 1939.

Martin Comack

Boston Labor Solidarity Committee

Bruno Salvadori 1910 - 1982

A short biography of Italian anarchist and Spanish Civil War fighter Bruno Salvadori, alias Antoine or Antonio Gimenez.

Bruno Salvadori Alias Antoine or Antonio Gimenez, born 14 December 1910, Italy, died 26 December 1982, France

Bruno Salvadori was born on 14th December 1910 at Chiani, in the province of Pisa in Italy. His father worked in public works (Bridges and Highways). He fought in the First World War and died in Lyons, France. His mother and his 2 sisters lived in Livorno in 1919, meeting up with his father who was working near Venice for the holidays.

Around about 12-13 years old during 1922-3 he came in contact with the anarchists in Livorno as a result of the street battles with the Blackshirts. He briefly met famous anarchist Errico Malatesta, and was initiated into anarchist ideas. He devoured the works of Peter Kropotkin and Malatesta, the poems of Pietro Gori and "an infinity of pamphlets". His mother died as a result of a liver condition around 1928 towards the end of his adolescence. This had a traumatic effect on him.

He moved to Marseilles at the beginning of 1930. He was expelled back to Italy in October of the same year, to do his military service. He was issued with a year passport for France for convalescence during his military service in 1933. During his stays in Marseilles he met the friends he referred to as Jo and Fred (they were later both killed in combat alongside him in

the Spanish Civil War). During this period he lived the life of a tramp or hobo. He took part in smuggling and the passage of anarchist newspapers and pamphlets over the border. During this period he was arrested on a number of occasions by the French authorities and served a total of 10 months in prison. He was also arrested in Barcelona in 1935 for attempting to sell his passport, which led the Italian fascist police to



open a dossier on him as a subversive element. He frequented anarchist circles in Barcelona and was expelled from Spain to Portugal in June 1935. He was again arrested in early 1936 and was imprisoned in the Modelo prison in Barcelona. He started corresponding with the Italian anarchist Giuseppe Pasotti who was running an efficient network in Perpignan in southern France for the evasion of people, the distribution of propaganda and to support imprisoned comrades in Spain. After having served his sentence, he was expelled to France.

Now he became known as Antonio Gimenez and the Italian police lost his trace. He returned to Spain and worked on the land near Lerida. He had joined the anarchist trade union the CNT by now.

With the revolutionary events of 1936 he joined the Durruti Column - named after Buenaventura Durruti - and then its International Group. He took a part in the fierce battles of Sietamo, Farlete and then the horrific events at Perdiguera, where he lost many close comrades and friends. He got to know Antonia Mateo-Clavel and her daughter Pilar at Penalba, in Huesca province and they established a relationship as partner and step-daughter.

He was profoundly disgusted by the betrayals of anarchists Federica Montseny and Garcia Oliver, who had both joined the government, at the end of the May Days in 1937. He was demobilised in 1938 along with all other foreign volunteers. He lived for a time in Barcelona before the ultimate defeat and the withdrawal from Spain. He left Spain via Port Bou the 9th February 1939. He was interned in the Argeles concentration camp and was a part of the anarchist group Liberté o Morte there. This organised on the basis of survival and collective defence in the face of malnutrition, hostility from the Communists in the camps and bad treatment. A Senegalese camp guard was blown up with a grenade as a result of his behaviour by the group.

He worked on the Atlantic Wall in the labour gangs for a while in the Royan area, and he participated in acts of sabotage and resistance. He was freed from the labour gangs in October 1944 and was allowed to settle with his family in Limoges, where they lived from 1948-51.

See Page 20

NEW & NOTES

Some of the most important and inspiring news lately in NSW on the industrial front, was the wildcat strike by NSW Inter-Urban Train Drivers on 27/11/20 over the testing of Driver Only Operation (DOO) of new trains. In this edition of RW we throw new light on this effective action. Particularly looking at the moves such as 'fake safety' negotiations by the union hierarchy to sell out the workers' struggle. Associated with the DOO push is a dirty deal made at back room meetings with the union bosses, management and the NSW Government to facilitate the privatisation of the NSW Railways. This push will provide a new spearhead of the employer offensive, leading to a range of spin off's and flow on effects across industry and worsen safety in public transport. The wildcat must be seen in the context of serious long range industrial organising by the ASN which has assisted grass roots militants to outmanoeuvre the corrupt ALP aligned union bosses and management/Government over many years on various occasions. (See article page 3.)

Another important issue we focus upon in this edition is the Wage Freezes and Caps on the State and Federal levels. It just goes to show again the bankruptcy of enterprise bargaining and the Yellow 'Corporate Unions', which are collaborating in the new big attack on workers. (See article page 3.)

In this edition of RW, we also look behind the scenes at the new timetable changes affecting Sydney Buses, and expose vicious new attacks on bus workers with the connivance of the union hierarchy. (See article page 6.)

Help build Rebel Worker! Your help is particularly sought with distribution. So why not order bulk copies to distro. Sell at your local shopping centre on Saturday mornings, leave at the lunch room at work and at your local café, library or cinema. Your Assistance on the financial plane is most welcome.

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A.S.N. DIRECTORY

ASN Sydney Local

PO Box 92
Broadway 2007 NSW

ASN Melbourne:

J.Dixon
Jeremytrewindixon@yahoo.com

ASN Newcastle

PO Box 106
Kotara 2289 NSW

Anarchist Media Institute

PO Box 20
Parkville Vic. 3052

SPARKS

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

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Rank & File First

Grassroots NSW Public Transport
Workers Organisation
Rankandfilefirst@outlook.com

STOP

"Sydney Transport-Users Opposing
Privatisation"

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Leichhardt 2040
Facebook STOP Privatisation
@STOPPrivatisation

Where we stand:

1. Our aim is to create a free and equal society

2. We are a revolutionary labour movement that uses as its only means of struggle, direct action in all its forms – occupations, strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc. We are independent from all reformist and hierarchical unions and political parties, and we are creating an alternative to these and to existing society. We do not seek to gain political power, but rather to see it distributed amongst all.

3. We are a network of anarcho-syndicalists practising co-operation and mutual aid. We have an equal part in the making of decisions. Responsibilities within the network are subject to agreement by the members.

4. We are engaged in struggle where we work and where we live, to develop self managed production, distribution and servicing for the world community, to meet human needs rather than profit. We give solidarity to others in these struggles.

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name
Address.....
General Secretary
PO Box 106 Kotara 2289 NSW.

If undeliverable, return to
PO Box 92 Broadway NSW 2007

Continued From Page 18 They then settled in Marseilles where he worked as a building worker and he continued to work there up to his early retirement as a result of back problems. He appears not to have been politically active in this period.

He loved literature and began to write poetry and novels mixing autobiography and fiction. He wrote his *Memoirs of the War in Spain* during 1974 and 1976, a document that is profoundly moving, relying on his memory alone. He tried to get it published but did not get a positive response even from libertarian publishing ventures.

In 1976 his granddaughter Viviane's political curiosity led him to re-establish contact with our movement. He started attending meetings of the Marseilles group of the Federation Anarchiste and was often to be seen at the permanences ("at home") of the group. Everyone knew him as Antoine.

He died of cancer on the 26th December 1982, surrounded by all the comrades and friends of the group. His death was registered under his false identity, which had been given to him by Pasotti.

The last sentence of his *Memoirs* reads:

"I see the Earth, my country, I see Humanity, my family, slowly poisoned by the spirit of lucre, by the sordid interest of a

few who are advancing to death, to total destruction, and in thinking of you, my friends vanished in fighting for an Ideal of absolute equality, of total liberty, I say to myself that you were right: only a libertarian society can save men and the world."

Nick Heath

More information

If you speak French you can read his Memoirs and much more besides at www.plusloin.org/gimenez/

This document needs someone to translate it into English as it is one of the most moving, poignant and profoundly human documents of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War

Jacques 'Jacky' Toublet 1940 – 14/6/2002

A short biography of French anarcho-syndicalist print worker Jacky Toublet.

Jacky Toublet was one of the 30-odd comrades of the Alliance Syndicalistes Revolutionnaire Syndicalistes et Anarchosyndicalistes (ASRAS) I met in the early 70s when I was living in Paris. Once a week, I went to their centre to attend lively meetings. Alongside Bulgarian exiles and the granddaughter of the Spanish libertarian Juan Peiro, victim of Dictator General Franco's firing squads, were people like Alain Pecunia, who had served time in Franco's jails for active solidarity with Spanish anarchism. and of course Jacky Toublet.

Son of a proof reader, himself an anarchist (Julien Toublet, secretary of the CGT-SR, anarcho-syndicalist union in the interwar period) Jacques decided to enter the profession after courses in typography. He

started work at Georges Lang in the 19th arrondissement of Paris. This was one of the largest print shops, employing many workers from the 50s to the 80s.

He joined the CGT union central, and was active in the proof readers syndicat of the Parisian region. This union was a rare stronghold of anarchism within the Stalinist-controlled CGT. He did his military service in Algeria. In 1965 he got work in the municipal print shop of the Ville de Paris. He became an anarchist a little later, notably as a result of meeting Gaston Leval in 1967. This veteran had survived the First World war and had witnessed the 1936 Spanish Revolution.

He became active in the ASRAS from 1968 to the beginning of the 1980s. He struggled hard to create a libertarian tendency within the unions and reach convergence and common orientation of the diverse libertarian militants, not without difficulties.

At the end of the 70s the majority of ASRAS decided to join the Federation Anarchiste. He became active in the Pierre Besnard Group (19th arrondissement) of the Federation Anarchiste from 1981.

In the 70s he was extremely active in solidarity work with the Spanish movement. He enthusiastically welcomed the reconstitution of the Spanish anarchist trade union the CNT in 1976.

Whilst remaining in the CGT, he participated in the building of the French CNT and in the editing of its theoretical review *Les Temps Maudits*. Equally he put his professional know-how and his talents as a writer at the service of *Le Monde Libertaire*, the weekly of the FA. He became director of this publication.

In the last years of his life he fell prey to a debilitating disease. He left the FA in May 2001 and then joined *Alternative Libertaire* in February 2002. His illness meant he was unable to attend many meetings in this period, but he hoped to overcome it. Alas, it was not to be, and he died on the 14th June 2002.

By Nick Heath

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