

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



Sydney, Australia
Vol.30 No.2 (210) June-July 2011

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

PUSH BARRY BACK!



NATIONAL NEWS; O'FARRELL & PRIVATISATION; RAIL-BUS NEWS; NSW TRAIN GUARDS' NEWS; STATE TRANSIT NEWS FLASH; MARITIME TRANSPORT NEWS; VIC. RAIL NEWS; NSW FIRE BRIGADE NEWS; ITALIAN LABOUR NEWS; BRITAIN TODAY; BOOK REVIEW; THE HISTORY OF GREEK ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM; CRITIQUE OF "RADICAL POLITICS"; NEWS & NOTES

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

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

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REBEL WORKER

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\$25 (Aus.) by Air

\$20 (Aus.) by Sea mail

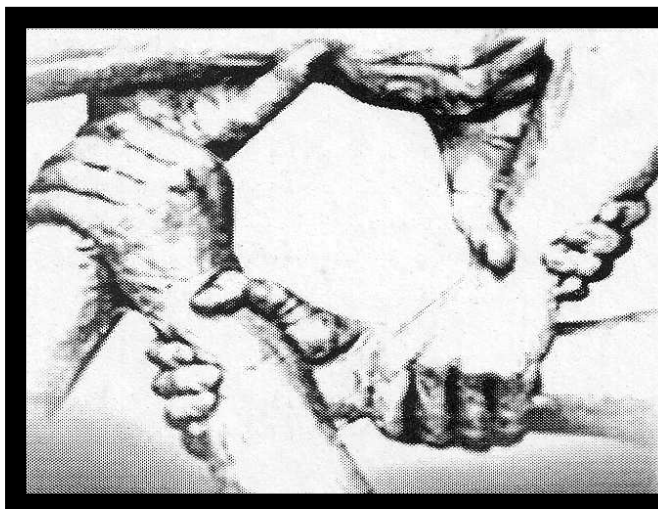
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that drives the marginalised, the poor and all those Australians who are renting or paying off a mortgage into the hands of the climate change flat earthers.

Leaving essential services like energy production and distribution in the hands of the private sector makes governments hostages to the needs of corporations that dominate the energy market place to increase their profits irrespective of the human, social and

accessing via the public health sector, you begin to understand why the public health system is having so much difficulty coping with the demands made on it.

The five percent increase in private health insurance premiums will cost the public at least \$250 million. This will push the public subsidy of the private health insurance industry to over \$4 billion.

It is time the private health insurance industry was forced to stand on its own two feet. Public resources should be used for public good not bankroll the private interests of the more wealthy elements of the community.

environmental costs.

The privatisation of energy manufacturing and distribution has left governments with few options that do not place price pressures directly on consumers to decrease the unacceptable levels of CO2 emissions Australia is currently pumping out. As the biggest per capital emitter of greenhouse emissions in the world, Federal and State governments need to become directly involved in energy producing initiatives that spreads the burden of cutting greenhouse emissions amongst everybody, not just those least able to afford to make the sacrifices required.

A carbon tax, like the GST, makes everybody irrespective of their income pay for the problems caused by the private sector. Until the public through the re-establishment of public enterprises enters the marketplace those least able to afford to will be asked to carry the national burden of reducing greenhouse emissions.

*Thanks to
the Anarchist Age*

National News

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

The 40% of Ambitions who have the disposable income to take out private health insurance will on average be paying an extra 5% to continue the level of cover they currently enjoy. The interesting aspect about this decision is the hysterical reaction of the corporate owned media to the Federal government's decision to allow the privately armed health funds to increase their premiums. Not one article I've read or one commentator I have listened to or watched has raised the issue that 40% of the increase for private health fund members under 65 and 50% for members over 65 will be subsidised by the long suffering taxpayer. When you add the information that the public rebate for private health insurance is not means tested and the rebate covers extras like chiropractic, osteopathic, physiotherapy and many other extras, Australians who cannot afford health insurance have great difficulty

CARBON TAX

The reliance of the Federal Labor Party and the Greens on using a carbon tax to reduce carbon emissions plays into the hands of the Federal Opposition Leader Taliban Tony Abbott and the climate change flat earthers. Forcing people to review their levels of energy consumption by using devices like a carbon tax that puts the pressure for change directly on the shoulders of those least able to afford to purchase the energy required to keep body and soul together is a retrogressive step

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O'FARRELL & PRIVATISATION

Why We Fight Privatisation

By *Crimson Coconut*

The incoming NSW Liberal Government has signalled that it has Public Sector workers in its sights. It continues the process of the outgoing Labor Government which blazed a trail by selling off electricity generation, public transport, rail freight, transport maintenance, roads, water, education and many other services which have now been lost from the public sphere.

Barry O'Farrell's announcement that the Libs were going to circumvent collective bargaining, deny trade unions the right to bargain on behalf of their members and partially absolve employers from compensation claims shows just how far this government is prepared to go. On the other hand it shows how unprepared public sector trade union leaderships are to combat a move such as this. Did no one see O'Farrell's Governments industrial relations move coming?

Weaknesses in the Fair Work legislation are also being shown up by the NSW Libs first attack on workers rights. The Federal Government's Fair Work legislation is not the overarching protective umbrella of workers rights that we are told that it is.

O'Farrell's strategy to weaken the trade union movement is not just about having a defeated labour movement, though that is essential to his governments long range goals. The plan is to weaken workers so that privatisation and outsourcing can take place without hindrance, making potential buyouts lucrative for the corporate sector.

In almost all cases the privatisation of government services is disastrous for working people. One has to look no further than the part privatisation of Telsra and its fall from grace as a world class communications giant.

Another example is the building of private roads and toll-roads at the expense of public transport. Now workers pay exorbitant fees to travel in their cars and trucks over what should be publicly owned roads.

The pre-privatisation process of the railways here in NSW has seen many of the institutions that benefit rail workers closed down.

As they found in Britain, this was the precursor to final privatisation. In Britain, staff savings banks, convalescent homes for rail staff and the internal railway telephone (the second largest network after British Telecom) and data comms networks were all closed overnight. An excellent article on the process of privatisation of British Rail can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privatisation_of_British_Rail

Here the NSW Rail Institute which provided many services such as clubs, sporting and social groups has been sold off with its buildings. The Welfare Fund (a fund which looks after rail workers in need by providing cash and assistance) continues to struggle after support was withdrawn by the government.

Within RailCorp assistance schemes

Nearby in 136 bigger huts, Australian workers live in accommodation whilst better than the 10 feet by 9 feet huts is still substandard.

In the smaller huts where one room serves as bedroom, living room, kitchenette and often bathroom, too, New Australians with as many as 4 children live miserably in an atmosphere of hopeless frustration.

Their embarrassed landlord, the NSW Railways, is not proud of the Chullora Camp. To its lasting regret the Department built these huts years ago to house single men coming to work in the city from the country, or arriving from overseas.

But the single men over the years acquired wives and families and now only 140 of the huts house single men. The other 500 huts laid out 15 feet apart in long straight rows are home to some of the unhappiest



(within Health Services) such as those providing counselling services to employees and other Employee Assistance Programs have been outsourced to private companies and individuals.

A few years ago the NSW Government Railways housed low income rail workers and migrant workers and their families in railway flats at Chullora and a few other places around the state. In 1957 the Sydney Morning Herald wrote an apt description of the accommodation provided.

"In a crowded, run down shanty town at Chullora, 1500 New Australian men, women and children live as tenants of the New South Wales Department of Railways in 640 huts each on 10 feet by 9 feet.

people in Sydney....."

"Pride of possession among the chalet owners shows up in trim lawns, fruit trees, painted fences, polished lino and decorated house names hung outside. I asked the first chalet tenant I saw if he was content with life in the camp.

"I'm very happy," he said. "Anyone who tried to rent a house in Sydney would be glad to live here. I wouldn't care to live in one of the hutments, but this will do me.""

The governments response was predictable. Instead of upgrading or providing better low cost housing, rail worker ten-

ants were forced to seek rental accommodation in the private sector or buy a place of their own. The flats were shut down and the land was sold off.

There are no benefits in privatisation whatsoever for people who have to work for a living then have to pay exorbitant prices for services, that in most cases have declined, so that some crook can make a profit.

NSW Government railways are now called RailCorp to distinguish it from a public owned and operated service. (i.e. corporatised). Almost all of the workshops and rail, station and rolling stock maintenance has now been outsourced.

Some of the effects of privatisation listed below are obvious. Others are less obvious.

Loss of Jobs

This is probably one of the most obvious effects of privatisation; rationalisation through staff reductions. Of course any private employer will not guarantee to keep the current workforce and may bring their own staff. The aim is often just to change workers cultural practices in order to have a timid management-compliant workforce.

Lower Wage Rates

Both in the lead-up to and after privatisation wages will be suppressed or reduced. Since the whole philosophy of the private owners is to maximise profits changing work practices and reducing wages is inevitable.

Erosion of Working Conditions

It is acknowledged that public sector workers are the most highly unionised in the country. However union density in the national public sector fell from a density of around 67% in 1992 to 41% today (ABS), compared to the private sector where union density is just 13.8% and falling. Due to the loss of 120,000 public sector jobs nationwide public sector union density fell from 46.3% (2009) to 41.5% (2010). In NSW union membership declined 63,700 overall and density fell from 21% in 2009 to 18.3% in 2010.

For a summary of ABS figures see (<http://smartwarringah.blogspot.com/2011/05/union-density-down-after-big-drop-in.html>)

It is also a fact that union members enjoy better working conditions and generally higher wage rate than non-union workers. The attack on public union members from all sides has not just reduced the number of union members we have also seen a corresponding attack on workers rights.

The various industrial legislative moves over the years leading to the creation of Work Choices then to today's Fair Work Australia have not been conducive to ex-

tending workers rights. Instead they have entrenched a hostile continual erosion of workers rights and conditions. For instance, there are only 15 allowable conditions around which bargaining can take place or be included in an agreement. Also the only weapon available to workers, the right to strike, has been legally outlawed during the life of an agreement.

I believe though, that this legal curtailment should not stop workers from exercising both their moral and natural right to use industrial action as a mechanism to further their cause.

Loss of Union Rights

Leigh Glover sums up below the problem for unions and workers before and after privatisation by describing the privatisation process in Victoria's transport industry.

"Privatisation meant that unions would be dealing, in most matters, directly with private corporations and would not be able to exert the same political power as when the system was public and their negotiations were with public authorities. However, before privatisation began, union power had been weakened by the scale of workforce reductions, after having been a major force in state politics for around a century." (Signs of Success or Signals of Failure? Symbolic Politics and Melbourne's Public Transport Privatisation 2010 - Leigh Glover)

Health and Safety

Private operators are not as sensitive to Health and Safety concerns which effect workers as they perceive that taking short-cuts saves them money.

Government departments are most like be self insurers and closely monitor health and safety in order not to lose this status. They are also more sensitive, as public servants, to legislative requirements due to bureaucratic brinkmanship played out within public sector workplaces.

Private operators are unlikely to give time for health and safety committee's or provide protective equipment to workers on the job. In most cases there are enough holes in health and safety legislation such as the WorkCover Act for private operators to crawl through.

The NSW Liberal Government is attempting put the onus on workers to prove that their employer was negligent in attempt to reduce Workers Compensation payouts and therefore insurance premiums. Workers would not be able to afford the litigation needed to pursue claims in an industrial court.

Basically, at present employers are responsible for workers from the time they step out the front door until they return home. Any changes to this policy would severely disadvantage injured workers.

Service Price Rises

In NSW when the Government Insurance Office (GIO) was privatised and the insurance industry deregulated insurance premiums went to double or triple of what they were within a year or two.

In Victoria TAFE fees have tripled ahead of part privatisation and competition with private education providers. This has driven many students from lower socio-economic backgrounds out of tertiary education.

When electricity was partly privatised in NSW there was a clause that was included in the handover documents that ensures that price rises be set by the power providers rather than a government regulatory commission such as IPART.

We only have to look at the exorbitant fees charged to exit on Sydney's Airport Line or the Monorail to see what private operators would do if they got hold of public transport.

Poorer Services

It is anticipated the if Sydney Ferries are franchised or privatised that many of the existing routes, which have poor patronage, will be axed in favour of more profitable routes. The routes will be decided by the propensity for profit rather than the need of local or isolated communities.

One other aspect of privatisation that leads to poorer services in the long run is that there is no incentive to maintain or upgrade existing infrastructure. Private maintenance companies on contract have a vested interest (i.e. profit motive) in not upgrading lines, bridges or existing government infrastructure. It costs them money.

Private bus companies in Sydney's outer western suburbs, for example, are a far cry from the air conditioned government buses which service the inner suburbs and city.

The Age newspaper reporting on Victoria's public transport after privatisation in March 2010 says:

"Victoria's infrastructure is "barely adequate" and does not meet the demands of a growing state, with rail, electricity and water the worst performers, a report card by Engineers Australia has found."

"Rail infrastructure fared the worst - with a D rating - despite the state government's \$38 billion transport plan."

The continuing loss of a social wage (protective and essential services and benefits for workers provided by taxes and the state) is also a symptom of the stepped up attack on workers.

From O' Farrell blaming of public sector worker wage rises for the massive deficit in NSW, to Gillard's scapegoating of single mums, the handicapped, the unemployed etc. for the lack of a "balanced

budget" federally, it is all a great public lie. It is a distraction from the real and extravagant excesses of the corporate sector and politicians who conspire to sell this lie and create havoc and hardship for ordinary working people.

Taxpayer Subsidies

The NSW budget 2010-2011 allocated \$3.3 billion to rail including \$1.6 billion toward operating costs of passenger services and \$1.3 billion for capital investment.

\$1.1 billion was allocated for government bus services.

By comparison the smaller Victorian rail system which was privatised in 1999 has seen taxpayer subsidies averaging \$1 billion a year since it was hived off to the private operators. (source The Age January 22, 2011) Before privatisation the Victorian Government's costs for rail and transport was around \$700million. Since privatisation the Victorian transport system has declined markedly.

The privatisation in Victoria promised:

To secure a progressive improvement in the quality of services.

To secure a substantial and sustained increase in the number of passengers.

To minimise the long-term costs of public transport to the taxpayer.

To transfer risk to the private sector.

To ensure that the highest standards of safety were maintained

This turned out to be a massive lie and the public have been worse off ever since, the decline in services leading to passenger reductions, massive staff reductions, increased costs to taxpayers, all risk carried by the people of Victoria and an increase in accidents due to poor infrastructure and cost cutting.

Corruption

While I regard the system that we all live under as a corrupt cancer on all working people, corruption is much more likely in the lead up to and following privatisation. Just look at the manoeuvring of the Keneally Labor Government in the lead up to the electricity privatisation. On the night the electricity privatisation bill was agreed to several directors of the public electricity companies were sacked or stood down and replaced with yes men who supported the privatisation. There was complete disregard for public opinion or other members of the Labor Party.

Often the buyers of public services are contributors to the major political parties and know how and who to call for favours when needed. Ex-party stooges, most with shady pasts, such as Graham Richardson are used as go-betweens to get the best deals for their private clients. Bob Carr's

stint at Macquarie Bank, for which he is paid handsomely, gives Macquarie Bank an insiders run on lucrative deals between them and the government.

In dealing with contractors and sub-contractors several RailCorp procurement managers were able to be enrich themselves at the expense of NSW taxpayers by taking bribes and awarding dubious contracts. While they may have been caught and ended up at ICAC very few have been charged or received sentences despite the \$ millions involved.

Just in NSW there are an endless list of crook deals involving the government and the private sector that have been investigated - so far no elected officials have been held to account. The links between Lend Lease and the Barangaroo Development Authority, the Orange Grove affair, the Wollongong development, the Boulderstone ports contract, transfer of public housing stock to the private sector along with dubious maintenance contracts(ad infinitum) are all recent examples of conduct that could be classed a corrupt.

Democracy and the Right to Know

When governments privatise services, agreements between the government and the private sector are classed as "commercial in confidence". This means that many parts of the agreement will remain secret and will not be available to the general public even under Freedom of Information legislation. As NSW residents, and theoretically public owners of state infrastructure and services, we have a right to know about the deals which involve us and our common property. We have the right to ask, "what do they have to hide?" by shielding behind "the commercial in confidence" clauses.

Privatised Services Sold at Bargain Basement Prices

It's usually the most profitable state owned enterprises that are sold off first. The TAB, the State Lotteries Office, Freight Rail, Electricity and many other state services which raised significant amounts of revenue for the State and employed large numbers of people were all sold off. In all cases they raised \$100's millions to fund state departments such as education and health. The question is why?

These sales were criticised by auditors, the media and the general public who believed that they had all been sold far below their realisable value. Why?

In the case of FreightCorp, which was making a profit at the time of sale, the public and union members were told the lie that there was no future for rail freight in NSW. It now turns out that is expected that goods tonnage carried by rail is expected to triple from the sell-off date into the next decade. Despite this being a private enterprise governments are now pumping billions into freight infrastructure and new freight lines.

Such is the nature of privatisation. The private operators take the profits while we the people of NSW provide the means.

Climate Change

"Private electricity retailers would have a financial imperative to increase demand for electricity, thereby increasing our state's greenhouse pollution. This is the exact opposite of what needs to happen."

Perry Brown @ Rising Tide

We have less control over the production, distribution, health and safety of government utilities if they are in private hands.



Innovation, regard for reducing greenhouse gases and increasing patronage of public transport services etc. are not going to be priorities for private owners. Privatisation is a disaster for the environment and for humanity.

Privatisation is Theft

The commonwealth has never existed and employers and their servant politician are at war with workers over the spoils and wealth which workers produce with their own hands and ingenuity. At the moment they have the upper hand. We have no choice but to regain our fair share by fighting back. Privatisation is the theft of what belongs to all of us to enrich the few who believe that they have some god given right. They do not. Like the people of Egypt, we require bold moves to put things back in our favour.

RAIL- BUS NEWS

By The Transport Scrutineer

NSW STATE ELECTION

As was expected the NSW Liberals won the election with a crushing landslide victory over a battered and worn out Keneally ALP Government. The people of NSW have spoken and right or wrong we as unionists now face a new government with



an O'Farrell led Coalition in power. The new Transport Minister has retained the current CEO's and administration of Transport NSW and its agencies including the STA (State Transit Authority) and RailCorp. The next phase will be the total integration of these agencies much like the Public Transport Commission of the 1970's era. With this in mind one good point of this may well be the ability of employees to transfer from one agency to another without loss of service or seniority.

Another less sobering thought is a return to the old PTC policies of cost cutting and rationalisation of services and functions and the ever present threat of privatisation which will inevitably lead to job losses and forced redundancies. Already even before the ink has dried on the signature of the new Transport Minister, the decision has been made to privatise Sydney Ferries Corp. Who will be next?

RAILCORP

The decision has been made to scrap the slow running train schedules and return to faster services for CityRail trains by at least next April. Extra services have been promised but if this was to occur then to operate the services properly we need an increase in Operations staff including properly

staffed stations. Trains will also need adequate recovery time at terminals to avoid late running and cancellations.

Another 99 H Set carriages (OSCARS) have been ordered with the view to eliminate V Sets on the Illawarra and also to increase capacity on Central Coast services. For this idea to work properly the ever reliable V Sets need to continue in service on

Newcastle and Lithgow services. With the prospect of this happening and becoming reality one wonders if the Waratah Train Project will ever get past the testing stage.

Soon RailCorp EBA's will be due for renewal. What will happen? Will the Unions stand up for their members and go for realistic pay rises and workers' conditions? Or will they sell out again?

State Transit

New uniforms and a brand new colour scheme for our buses are being implemented as we go to press, as is also the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) Bus Division's 2011 Log of Claims with 22 Points to be considered. Let us hope our new leadership is up to it, as the old regime was definitely not. Some of these claims are: Four Year Agreement; Increase standees from 15-20 over 4 years. Driver will have discretion with duty of care; Minimum 8 hours worked for each shift; 0.5% income protection based on individual rosters; All converted shifts minimum 8 hours; 10 minutes pre-departure ex-shed (all circumstances); Paid ADO on day; The ability to a block of five ADO's as an extra leave option; Loading time at major termini; Passenger complaints against bus operators to be addressed only if submitted in writing and signed by the complainant (no phone complaints); Minimum 11 hour spread on broken; Ability to use home and duty pass on private buses; One dollar per hour pay increase every year over life of agreement.

Meanwhile, traffic gets worse, buses are running later than ever due to gridlock in the Sydney CBD during AM and PM peaks and on Weekends and the schedulers are doing NOTHING!!! Says a lot for their incompetence, doesn't it? No wonder we have such a large turnover of Bus Operators.

TRAIN GUARDS' NEWS

In regard to the new Waratah Trains, I think mention should be made of RailCorp's attempts to remove the guards whistle from the guard's duties.

As well they are planning to remove the duty of guards watching their trains onto the platform. This is another step in removing the train guards off trains, which will be putting a lot of stress on guards to watch for safety of passengers approaching and departing the platform. They also are claiming to have done thousands of kilometres of testing on the waratah train

but as yet they have not performed testing on the Guards duties relating to opening the doors and viewing the CCTV cameras. We are going to be given the new train and have 20 days of testing to decide if we accept it, certainly not acceptable to the guards.

STOP PRESS

New and continuing issues with the Waratah is the role of the guard with platforms in the city circle tunnels, the amount of time allowed for training crews on the

trains and wanting to stop the guard watching the train into the platform and restricting the guard blowing his warning whistle. The bosses are also still wanting to reduce weekend work for train crews. Numerous faults are also stopping the entry into service of the new train.

Concerned Guard

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Rebel Worker: What's the latest with the STA bosses?

Waverley Busie: The bosses are continuing with their bullying tactics as a softening up measure for more large scale attacks on us. Out of the blue, they have had inspectors playing with their new high tech toy "radar guns", catching drivers doing varying speeds above the 10 KMPH speed limit zone for buses at interchanges and railway square. This is not much more than walking speed. Despite also being union members, the transport inspectors are executing the dirty job with glee! Treating us, as if we were an enemy! There is no enemy! If the bosses are stooping to these low down tactics, we shouldn't make any fuss about passengers having the correct tickets when they catch our buses.

RW: In what other ways are the bosses preparing the way for major attacks?

WB: I was speaking to a mechanic the other day. He mentioned that as a result of the speedup and the bosses' gutting of the social aspects of the job, the workplace has become empty and we have become listless. There is now a lot less camaraderie. No one wants to be together off the job, such as going to the pub. We are worn out from pressure on all sides. In particular there are no good running times due to traffic congestion. **RW: How are you finding Transport NSW?**

WB: Since NSW Transport arrived with its official announcement on 19/4/11 there has been a multitude of changes. None of the bosses has the guts to tell us what's really happening. At Waverley Depot there has been rumours that the bosses intend moving the old offices located upstairs to down stairs and moving the lockers and meal room upstairs. The Institute has lost responsibility for operating the canteen. It's been effectively closed down with only a shell left and two fridges. The Depot OH&S (Occupational Health & Safety) Committee has been completely inactive in regard to these changes and rumoured changes. Otherwise the toilets which were only given attention when absolutely necessary are being properly fixed up. Ever more complaints have been received regarding the poor quality of the Transport NSW uniforms.

RW: With the election of the O'Farrell Coalition Govt, what is your outlook regarding their agenda for the buses?

WB: There have been rumours sweeping the STA that the Govt has sent represen-

tatives to Adelaide to approach such French companies as Trans Adelaide regarding the selloff of the buses. Whilst on an ABC Breakfast Radio program before the election, Jeff Kennett ex-Victorian Premier, who was behind the privatisation push in that State in the 1990's was interviewed. He boasted how he changed Victoria in the interests of private enterprise. 50,000 public servants were given the sack and had to reapply for their jobs and sign individual contracts. According someone from Victoria, I was speaking to recently, the operation of public transport in that state by private companies doesn't work. As the companies won't spend the money to ensure its smooth operation. They considered, the public transport system in NSW to be much healthier. One

of large scale mechanical section work would fit into an STA and Govt. hidden agenda of franchising this operation to one company.

RW: What are your thoughts on the multinational companies which are behind corporatisation?

WB: There was an interesting program on Background Briefing on ABC Radio at 9.05 am to 10am Sunday Morning recently focusing on the Mining Tax. They focused on how some of these companies despite making huge profits pay no company tax. Such multinationals as Xstrata, Rio Tinto and BHP have relocated their head offices to tax havens such as Switzerland and the Bahamas. Xstrata has been quite notorious in this regard. It was kicked out of the USA and told not to trade, but then relo-



area high on the Liberal's likely agenda for franchising is the mechanical sections at depots, as it would be very easy to have private companies taking over this work. Associated with such a carve up of the STA, the bosses are intending to open a 24 hours motor and gear box overhaul at Port Botany Depot. As a result, the work forces at the mechanical sections at Waverley and other depots are likely to be reduced with these sections focusing just on the smaller jobs. It's very disruptive for the mechanics who would be rotated to work at Pt. Botany. One mechanic I know, as part of his trip to work would normally just catch a train from Wollongong to Bondi Junction. Now he would have to change trains and face a much longer trip to work on the days, he would be rostered at Pt. Botany. It's another case of horse trading people. Dignity has no price tag! Certainly this restructuring and centralising

cated its corporate head quarters to Switzerland. However its mining operations are located in Zambia where it pays minimum tax, with the Zambian Govt mainly getting tax revenue from the mining operations workers. However, it has enormous political clout and can clamp down on Government talk of new taxes. It is cashed up multinational companies such as these which will take over STA operations and make millions in profits. While, we get zilch!

RW: What are your ideas for fighting the Liberals attacks?

WB: We need to learn from the uprisings in the Middle East, which were assisted by new internet computer communication technologies such as twitter, blogs, U tube and chat lines. The Wiki Leaks web site also was crucial to these developments. So alarmed by the effectiveness of this communication technology in spreading the spirit of revolt, governments of such countries as China are trying desperately to

block it. We can use these mediums to expose the attacks of the Liberals and encourage workers and others to fight back. With the help of social media trainers we can develop the skills to create blogs which maintain our anonymity and so keep us off the bosses' radar screen.

RW: What are your thoughts on the web of corruption involving the NSW Government, the ALP, the union hierarchy, the Police, the underworld and the State Transit?

WB: Recently I met someone who left State Transit 12 years ago. He had been a driver on our job. He had quite an interesting and disturbing tale to tell. He told me how he was bashed up on the job by an underworld small fry. He tried to claim compo but was foiled by the collusion of the Carr Govt, the STA and the police with underworld figures. In particular, the Carr Govt introduced certain legislation which precluded his and others' compo entitlements and so saved the Govt. millions of dollars. As a result, he ended up losing a lot of his own money in pursuing the case in the court. To go to a higher court he would have had to spend \$200,000 of his own money. A web of collusion involving the STA and the union hierarchy also characterised the affair of the sacking of Chris Mansergh who had been elected several years back, as union rep at Port Botany Depot. Only a few noted jour-

nalists such as Dr Alfred McCoy who has written books about Drugs & Organised Crime and Asian Crime Gangs, John Pilger who focuses on exposing the seedy side of political parties and Bob Bottom, who writes on police corruption and organised crime in Australia, have had the courage to pursue serious research involving the media, government and crime world webs of corruption and conspiracy. It's a similar spiders web of collusion and intrigue which involves moves to privatise the STA and its carve up by multinational companies.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's happening with the bosses?

Leichhardt Busie: We are continuing to face their harassment. They are now charging us \$100 for each broken mirror. However, one positive development recently was that a woman took the STA to the Industrial Relations Court over the issue and was successful in winning her case. So avoiding the \$100 charge. Another positive development, is that the bosses have been forced to provide drivers with training for new routes.

RW: How are the new articulated buses?

LB: The bosses are trying to have them on more routes such as the 470, 443, 504 and 438, despite the fact that they won't fit into bus stops and create ever more problems with parking at the Quay.

RW: What's your outlook for the new Liberal O'Farrell NSW Government?

LB: He recently went through the Health Department Bureaucracy cutting out management jobs which he considered unnecessary and doing nothing. Will his next move be to take an axe to the State Transit/Transport NSW management bureaucracy?

RW: How are the running times?

LB: It seems with every pay rise, the bosses trim back our running times so where there was a layover break, there is now none or severely reduced. On paper the timetable is made to look nice, but in reality, constant late running causes us to work constant overtime. This late running also raises the question regarding why changeovers are required.

RW: What was the outcome of the recent union elections?

LB: Despite new union officials being elected into office, who were previously depot delegates, there has been no change in regard to our situation on the job. They appear to be like the previous officials, doing nothing to assist us in the fight against the bosses.

Maritime Transport News

Supervisor steals a break

On one shift in early April, an overbearing supervisor at DP World Pt. Botany forced wharfies to work for five and a half hours straight.

One gang was forced to continue lashing a ship and then operate machinery for 45 minutes during what should have been their break time.

For an eight hour shift, the DP World Agreement entitles wharfies to one or two breaks totalling 45 minutes. But any break has to start no later than 3 hours and 45 minutes into the shift.

We have the right to take our meal breaks at the scheduled times. This must not be allowed to happen again.

Qube Logistics buys DP World's share of POTA

Qube Logistics announced on April 18 that it will pay \$106 million for majority ownership and control of P&O Trans Australia (POTA).

After first buying into POTA in April 2007, Qube will now own 94.5 percent of

the road and rail container transport company. Qube is owned by Sam Kaplan and controversial former Patrick boss Chris Corrigan.

Qube's buyout of DP World's stake in POTA follows last year's \$1.5 billion sale of a 75 percent share of DP World Australia



lia to US bank CitiGroup.

Did he really say that?

At the MUA yard meeting held at DP World Botany on March 30, members heard report backs on the upcoming Enterprise Agreement.

During the discussion around permanency, Sydney Branch Secretary Paul McAleer suggested that members should realise that all of us cannot be on a fixed roster with a fixed salary.

Really? This statement not only goes against what has occurred on the waterfront in the past, it also contradicts the Maritime Industry Program of the Communist Party of Australia (of which McAleer is a member). The Program states that "the utmost effort must be placed on the reduction and eventual abolition of total casual employment" and the need to struggle for "casual labour to be reduced to 20% of permanent labour as a first step in this process".

It appears that McAleer has either forgotten these words of his Party's program, or he doesn't agree with them. Either way, comments like these will only hamstring the fight for permanent rostered jobs for all.

Strike action at Patrick bulk & general ports

Frustrated after six months of failed enterprise bargaining negotiations, MUA members at four Patrick bulk & general (B&G) ports took protected strike action in December 2010 and January 2011.

Wharfies at the Patrick sites are demanding 10% a year pay rises, more permanent jobs, career progression, and a better OH&S approach.

Patrick has shown a lack of good faith during negotiations. Its first pay offer was a paltry 2.6% a year. The fact that the key Patrick negotiator is former MUA official Mick O'Leary is certainly not helping matters.

Wharfies in Albany, Fremantle, Melbourne and Geelong have voted to strike. The ballots for protected action required under Fair Work laws have seen votes from 94% to 100% in favour of action. Voting is currently underway in Darwin.

Albany struck for 48 hours on December 30 and for six days from January 29. Fremantle went out for 72 hours on December 27 and five days from January 29. Melbourne's Webb Dock saw a 72 hour strike begin on January 12 and three stoppages from February 4 to 7. Geelong struck for 24 hours on January 10.

The Patrick B&G campaign is vital because its outcome will flow on to the container terminals. The Patrick terminal agreement has expired and the MUA has lodged an application for a vote for protected action. The DP World agreement expires on June 30.

If Patrick management don't cave in soon, an all-out, indefinite strike across all Patrick B&G sites might make them see sense. If not, coastwide strike action that involves all Patrick then DP World container terminals will.

STOP PRESS: MUA officials have called off industrial action over the EBA following Patrick's threat of a lockout.

Patrick fined for OH&S Discrimination

In late January 2011, Patrick Stevedores was found guilty of discrimination against a Health and Safety representative by the Melbourne Magistrate Court and fined \$180,000.

In the first conviction of its kind under Victoria's OH&S laws, the court ruled in favour of WorkSafe Victoria on three of the five charges.

A former Patrick employee and MUA Geelong safety representative was suspended, reprimanded and threatened with the sack for pointing out serious safety breaches.

DP World Australia sold to CitiGroup

Just before last Christmas, DP World announced its sale of 75 percent of DP World Australia to private equity firm Citi Infrastructure Investors (a unit of CitiGroup) and a silent partner.

Worth \$1.5 billion, the deal will see DP World hold on to a 25 percent share and continue to operate and manage the Australian ports. DP World Australia made \$116 million in 2009.

The money raised by the sale will go to reduce the \$115 billion debt of DP World's parent company Dubai World.

DP World has been preparing for this sale for two years. In December 2008, an asset reshuffle saw DP World Australia's non-port assets moved to the wider DP World group. In 2009, moves began to float DP World Australia on the stock exchange.

Citigroup is one of the four biggest banks in the United States. The silent partner is possibly either a media-shy investment fund from Singapore or the Australian government's Future Fund.

DP World Port Botany boss packs his bags

DP World Port Botany General Manager James Mather handed in his resignation on

November 11, 2010. Despite DP World denials, many believe that his resignation came as the result of a botched computer system upgrade that caused massive trucking delays at the Botany terminal.

The delays began after DP World installed the new N4 Terminal Management System on November 7. According to the Australian Trucking Association, this led to five days of trucking delays that stretched for up to five hours and cost the industry "hundreds of thousands of dollars".

DPW Botany MUA survey

As part of upcoming DP World Enterprise Agreement negotiations, some (but not all) MUA members at DP World Botany received a survey from the local MUA site committee in the mail.

Not mentioned in the survey was the company's National Selection Criteria (where seniority accounts for only 10% of all selection points). This is despite strong opposition to the current policy, which has seen 300 members sign a petition for a seniority-based system and an MUA forum attended by 200 members.

An item dealing with rosters asks members to indicate how many hours a week (from 35 to 42) they would like to work. But working more hours goes against the MUA policy of reducing hours to a 35 hour week with no loss in pay [see April 2008 MUA National Conference resolution 1.54]. This survey, despite its stated aim, will not give MUA negotiators a better understanding of what members at DP World Botany want in the new enterprise agreement. (From "Vigilance" No.50 Feb. 2011 & No.51 April 2011) "Vigilance" is a socialist bulletin for MUA members in Sydney produced by Shane Bentley - the "Port Botany Wharfie" See www.vigilanceBulletin.org

In previous issues of RW mention has been made of Human Resources trying to control V/Line over departmental heads. In this issue once again Drivers, Conductors, Station Staff and Staff from head office have combined to talk about the removal of a Manager at Spencer Street Station. As in previous issues, names have been changed.

RW: What happened at Spencer Street?

Clarence: A manager has been forced to resign on a trumped up sexual harassment charge.

Jethro: Yes one employee and another manager made a complaint over a joke the manager made.

Sheona: You see being in Head Office, we consider there was nothing wrong with

Vic. Rail News

the comments made by the manager but Human Resources wanted to terminate him.

RW: Why?

Jethro: You see there was one manager too many at Spencer Street and due to the

change of Government, there had to be budget cuts. You see during the Regional Fast Rail Freight Project, the Chief Manager at Spencer Street was seconded to Head Office to work on the project.

Clarence: Another manager from another District was seconded to the Chief's position at Spencer Street.

Sheona: To replace the seconded manager in the other district, a new manager was appointed from outside.

Clarence: When the Regional Fast Rail Project was completed, the seconded manager was returned to his position at Spencer Street. You see Human Resources stuffed up. There was one manager surplus.

RW: What did they do?

Jethro: They created a new position at Spencer Street.

Clarence: Yes a new position was created to accommodate the manager who was seconded. Instead of two tiers of management, there was three.

Sheona: You see why this manager had to be terminated. It was to cut costs. They held an enquiry over the complaints, but this was a sham. The manager had to go.

Jethro: This manager was a friend of the workers. He would help you if you needed help and he helped many an employee on towards a career path.

Rastas & Roscoe: At this point may we join the discussion. We have just had a management change over at the Drivers Depot. Our esteemed Crew Manager Dr Dolittle is being shunted sideways to the training area and the senior driver trainer is going to be our new boss. You see management is frightened if a particular Driver is elected as our union Union Secretary. This driver has promised to stand up to Human Resources if elected.

Sheona: You see Human Resources are frightened of the drivers. They want to smash them, but the drivers fight. What makes myself sick is the Drivers' Manager survives yet the Manager at Spencer Street was sacked. You see the remark was a joke.

Clarence: The manager was honest and to Human Resources the remark he said was only a joke.

Sheona: Human Resources are not interested in honesty only professionalism. In other words you can lie at an enquiry and get away with it. Honesty has gone out the door. They claim the manger was not professional.

Clarence: In other words Human Resources has broken one of V/Line's principles to suit themselves.

RW: Can you tell us about the persons who complained?

Jethro: One of the complainants is the Catering Manager and he is on stress leave. You see he will not return until this manager is removed. He and the manager who was removed have not see eye to eye for the past five years. Since he has been on stress leave, the catering department has run successfully.

RW: Is this person pulling a rort?

Rastus: Maybe so why don't they get rid of him and put the sacked manager in his job? I say the department would run better. I have been told the complaint was trivial yet Human Resources blew it up.

RW: What about the other person who complained?

Jethro: This person works at Spencer Street and the manager's remark was said as a joke and this person could not take the joke and complained.

Rastus: You can say that but you see we drivers hate this person who complained. You see this person is a Bully. This person treats passengers on trains as if they are rubbish.

Roscoe: Yes this is correct. I was on a train travelling to work in uniform and this person demanded I show my employee's pass. The rule book says an employee in uniform does not have to their pass.

Rastus: This person has also stated to another driver that if this person observes a person in the can of the Railmotor as well as the driver, they will be put into Human Resources.

RW: What type of a person is this cretin?

Clarence: This person also treats station staff like dirt. One day one of the female platform staff because the weather was cold let the passengers on the train. This person turned up late and turfed all the passengers off the train, saying it was not prepared. Then this person started to bully the platform supervisor reducing her to tears.

profits are at an all time high with the four Australian banks reporting a \$12 Billion profit then major mining corporations reporting \$20 Billion profit. The economy is short of workers and going gangbusters - so we cut our wages to protect conditions ??

Perhaps the union may have come up with a better strategy if it had asked fire fighters across NSW what they think, or asked what the other branches of the United Fire fighters Union are doing. If the union secretary was getting better advice from his senior industrial officer we may have actually had a reasonable strategy for dealing with the next decade of conservative government. Then again Chris Read is the

Rastus: The driver of the train was disgusted at the way the supervisor was treated and told the other drivers.

RW: Why is this person still on the job?

Clarence: Well you see management is using this person for their own use and what this person does not realise was once this manager was fired then they will be fired.

Rastus & Roscoe: Well this idiot does not realise what trouble they have caused.

Jethro: Once it was clear the manager was going to be fired a group of workers gathered up a petition to save the manager's job.

Rastus and Roscoe: Yes the drivers signed the petition as well as other staff.

Jethro: One of the workers presented the petition to some of the salaried staff to sign as one said they would not sign the petition as he was a supervisor, yet the sacked manager had helped this person obtain a position.

Clarence: Whilst the petition was being collected a notice appeared on the sign on area at Spencer Street, saying the manager resigned.

RW: This is very sad. It appears the manager was popular with all employees. There could have been a mediation session between the manager and the complainants and a compromise could have been worked out.

Rastus & Roscoe: Once again in having the final say, the sacked manager has been treated very shabbily. As for the two persons who complained these cretins should get out of the industry. As for the persons who would not sign the petition, they are gutless. This was an issue to fight for. As for professionalism versus honesty. Honesty comes out superior. As we said in previous issues of RW DON'T FRONT HUMAN RESOURCES.

same senior industrial officer who ran our last big wage case in the courts and lost key clauses that protected training and our 10/14 roster.

Whether it's splitting the national union and then being too incompetent to sign us all back up into another organisational structure. Or selling off the six Logistic Supply Vehicles and allowing the employer to create a pool of fully qualified casualised fire fighters. The decision to try sneaking through a 3 year deal that will cut our wages was a very, very bad tactic. The union's senior industrial officer had been negotiating with management for at least a fortnight before the deal was raised and its details were sprung on members as they arrived at meetings. An entire platoon was denied a vote because the union leadership

N.S.W. FIRE BRIGADE NEWS

Bad Strategy - Worse Tactics

By any tangible measure pushing to lock down wages for 3 years at a rate lower than inflation has been in decades is a desperate strategy. Our economy is growing at the fastest rate in the world and will stay on the boil for at least the next three years. Unemployment is at a record low. Corporate

knew it couldn't carry the argument if members had more time to consider it. A meeting in suburban Miranda was cancelled with little or no notice to members, a slap in the face for those who were going to vote no.

Victorian fire fighters were in exactly the same circumstances just six months earlier. They won a long campaign for more wages and additional jobs giving them up to 23% increases (by altering the relativities between ranks) and 450 additional permanent jobs over 3 years. If we hadn't started sledging the UFU and pushing fines to resign we may even have benefited from their strategy.

1st Responder Here We Come

Ambulance work for ambulance workers – fire fighting for fire fighters. It's not hard to figure out the vast majority of fires don't want to do ambulance work and paramedics don't want us to either. The NSW union administration has just about thrown its hands up and surrendered to fire fighters responding to medical emergencies on a widespread basis. This is not inevitable and it's now high time fire fighters put this nonsense to bed once and for all. At a meeting of well over 100 fire fighters in Western Sydney the union leadership was given a clear direction that it's not on and the union leadership needs to grow some balls and start saying no.

Clearly NSW management wants fire fighters responding to medical incidents. It has a long-term strategy of pushing fire fighters into medical work. First we were loaded up with heart defibrillators and told they were for our own protection. Then we were all trained in emergency life support

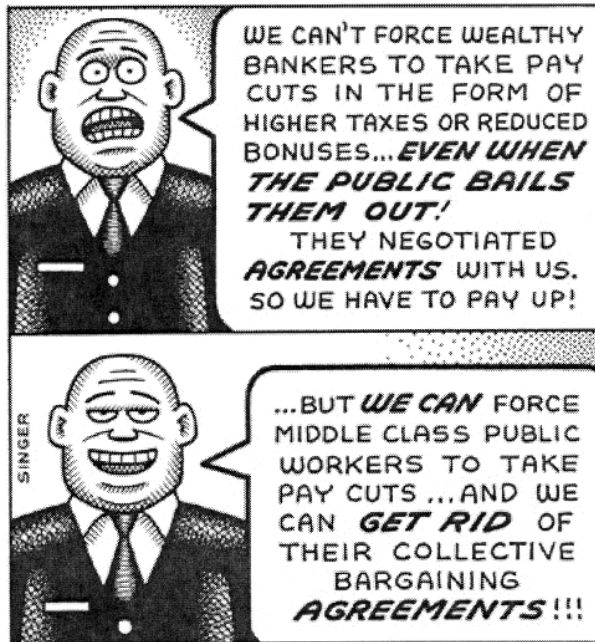
ambulances. We are now being railroaded into the greatest increase in workload, skills and experience in the history of fire services in Australia.

Given the consequences for fire fighters should we take this work, one would expect a proportionate increase in training, resources and remuneration. That simply won't happen under the current union administration. The union's senior industrial officer Chris Read has now put an ambit claim of \$100 per week for each retained fire fighter designated a first responder. If this ambit claim is accepted by the IRC, a precedent will have been accepted which will set the benchmark to pay permanent fire fighters for ambulance work. Effectively the union administration has claimed a 6% - 7% wage rise for all this extra work.

Strange days. Stranger still given Jim Casey has emphatically denied the union has claimed a 5% wage rise for ambulance work. Sadly Jim Casey actually believes what he is saying and simply can't figure out that whatever amount is settled on paying retained fire fighters will establish a benchmark for paying permanent fides. This profound and basic ignorance of how wages and allowances are set is frightening and will have dire consequences for our job. We are now being played off a break by management, government, the UFUA and now by a union employee. The FBEU now has its weakest leadership since the retirement of Frank Bryce and once again we are going backwards.

Thanks to Sparx

IT'S CLASS WARFARE ...AND GUESS WHO'S WINNING...



when we couldn't get training in basic fire fighting. The AIRS database was changed to record virtually every MVA we attend as medical emergency. A number of retained brigades are now regularly being responded to medical incidents instead of

ITALIAN LABOUR NEWS

Fascism in the workplace

By *Commissione Sindacale FdCA*
(Anarchist Communist Federation)
23 Apr 2011

"The company is a war machine, its workers are the soldiers" — It was struggle by the workers which created the social bonds we have enjoyed to date, including the welfare state, through collective bargaining and rights which could be enforced. But today's deterioration in democracy is becoming all too plain to see - authoritarianism is spreading throughout society. — "The company is a war machine, its workers are the soldiers". This definition comes from a speech given by

Sergio Marchionne, CEO of FIAT, and makes clear once and for all that today's liberalist policies are based on the logic of the "total" company and are guiding the current management of the company. — Workers are used against each other by means of competition: workers in one company against those in another, either in the same place or at a distance of one to ten thousand kilometres away. If a product is to be competitive and continue to be profitable it must always cost less, so the extraction of surplus value from each worker must always increase.

Thus competition spreads onto the terrain of wages - which continue to drop, of work hours - which continue to rise, and of rights - which are detracted, or better still, eliminated - because rights cost money and make a company ungovernable.

There is no need to underline that workers are increasingly open to blackmail with the excuse of the crisis or the particular needs of the bosses in this particular phase.

So how have they been able and what have they done to be able to achieve this repeatedly-stated objective, that is to say that the workers must not only be blackmailable but also blindly obey commands, subjected to the most absolute control?

The answer is a two-pronged attack:

all forms of collective bargaining based on the interests of the workers are being eliminated: the only important thing is now the interests of the company and everyone must bow to them alone; total control by the bosses over how work is performed, working conditions, the intensity of work, even going so far as to control the workers' bodies, when they must work, for how long, maximum flexibility with regard to hours and methods for each single task being performed, leaving no place for periods of physical or mental relaxation.

All this is brought about thanks to the application of systems such as TMC-2 [1], the time allotted for carrying out a task and the application of WCM (World Class Manufacturing) - how the company organizes the workplace. The end result is a radical version of Taylorism.

The workers organize themselves through their union representatives and can take strike action (applying their right to do so), only now they can't, since the rules - established by the company - are now laid out in a "new-style contract", endorsed by compliant unions and applied to each single worker who must endorse the agreement when he or she is taken on. And, as in the case of FIAT, all employees are re-hired by a Newco and all have to sign up to these conditions.

Naturally, if your union does not endorse that agreement, it is expelled from the company - in other words it can no longer represent you: it has no power to act, its delegates can no longer do union work during work hours and the company stops paying union dues.

But can't workers still join together in protest, even without a union? No. Because now they make you sign a "joint responsibility clause", complete with sanctions for non-observance. In other words, you will be disciplined - you cannot damage the company's interests (strikes, for example, cause a drop in production) and you run the risk of being fired.

Collective bargaining is a social bond which recognizes that the interests of the workers are non-compatible and non-subordinate to those of capital. But collective bargaining has been eliminated.

And as if this weren't enough, then there's the law. For example, the latest piece of labour legislation (Law 183/2010, known as the "collegato lavoro") and all the other modifications to labour law made over recent years, not to mention those yet to come which, amongst a hundred other things, place even more restrictions on the right to strike.



It all has a very authoritarian slant. And if this is what's happening in industry, think what could happen to society as a whole? It was struggle by the workers which created the social bonds we have enjoyed to date, including the welfare state, through collective bargaining and rights which

could be enforced. But today's deterioration in democracy is becoming all too plain to see - authoritarianism is spreading throughout society.

The Labour Charter of 1927 provided the foundation for the corporative Fascist State. And it makes an interesting read today - even more so as it rings so familiar... all it takes is to swap some terms and swathes of the document can be seen to be in force again today!

Marchionne, and many other bosses too, has stated that the class war is over. It's up to all of us to show him it isn't!

Labour Commission

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

20 April 2011

Notes:

1. TMC-2 ("times and movements connected") is an updated version of a system brought in the 1970's, and serves to determine the time needed for each single operation and, by simplifying the number of movements required by the use of theoretical tables, cutting the allotted time for each worker to perform each single operation, down to the hundredth of a second. It was responsible for an increase of 25% in production at the Piaggio motorbike factory in Tuscany when introduced there.

Related Link: <http://www.fdca.it>

Thanks to A-infos

Tunisia: Labour News

Tunisia, The UGTT: caught between struggle and betrayal

24 Apr 2011

The Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT - Tunisian General Labour Union), the sole union in Tunisia up to now, has for many years played an ambiguous role as part of the dictatorial state apparatus with multiple links to the ruling party while being at the same time the centre of combative, independent trade unionism. — Both poles have coexisted because they needed each other. The UGTT's bureaucratic leadership apparatus has needed, and now needs more than ever, this veneer of militancy and struggle

that the militant sector gives the union in order to maintain its share of power within the state apparatus and to survive the dictatorship in circumstances such as those at present. For its part, the militant sector has found in the UGTT the infrastructure that is essential if it is to reach the workers and enjoy legal coverage, even though that coverage has often not prevented repression in such a context where there is a total lack of freedoms.

A little history

As in most North African countries, the first Tunisian trade union was created following the example of French syndicalism. In 1924, Mohamed Ali El Hammi and

Mohamed Tahar Haddad created the first workers' organization in Tunisia, the Confédération générale des travailleurs tunisiens (CGTT - General Confederation of Tunisian Workers), which was quickly repressed by the colonial authorities.

In 1946, after a process of union-building lasting two years from south to north, the UGTT, the first union in North Africa, with Farhat Hached (later killed by extremist French colonists) and Ahmed Tlili leading it. From its birth the UGTT was closely linked to the nationalist movement and marked by the subordination of the class struggle to the struggle for national independence, a condition which determined its dependence on the new national state apparatus.

During the Bourguiba dictatorship there were ongoing tensions between its submission to the single party and a certain autonomy that allowed it to put pressure on the power in the '60s and '70s. The general strikes of '78 and the bread revolt of 1984 amounted to the highest levels of confrontation and repression against the UGTT by the State, and many union activists suffered long years in prison.

The UGTT and Bel Ali

In 1989, Ben Ali's regime imposed direct submission on the UGTT leadership, led by Ismail Sahbani, who collaborated in the implementation of neoliberal economic policies and fought the trade union left fiercely. Tried and convicted for embezzlement, he was replaced at the congress of Djerba in 2002 by the current secretary general, Abdessalem Jerad.

The double game played by the UGTT leadership

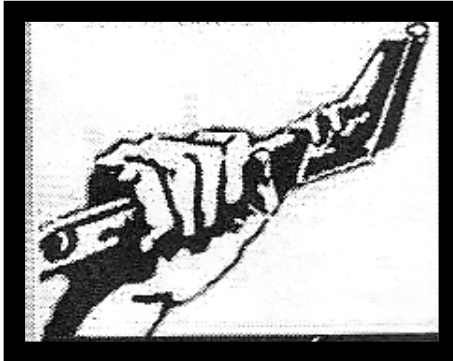
The history of the leadership of the UGTT is a story of betrayal and manoeuvring. From its support for Ben Ali's candidacy in the elections of 2004 and 2009 to social welfare reform, from the implementation of neoliberal economic measures to their abandoning of the Gafsa UGTT activists, jailed during the 2008 uprising, when they limited themselves to a simple request for the release of the prisoners.

Surprised by the uprisings in Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine, the leadership only permitted strikes at the local or regional level and demands for democratic reforms once the rebel movement had spread throughout the country and many local unions had become directly involved. A general strike in Tunis was not called until 14th January. And on 13th, Abdessalem Jerad, secretary general of the UGTT, was in talks with Ben Ali, looking for solutions to the situation. A week earlier, he had allowed students and unemployed workers who had locked themselves into the premises of the UGTT in Tunis to be violently evicted by the police, and many of them were tortured and imprisoned.

After Ben Ali had fled, the leadership agreed to participate in Mohamed Ghannouchi's provisional government of national unity with 3 ministers, before withdrawing their representatives under pressure from the people on the streets and the UGTT's more radical wing. While people were fighting Ghannouchi's government on the streets, the leadership of the UGTT called for a "government of national salvation", without clarifying what it was to be or how it was to be made up, in an attempt to please everyone.

UGTT involvement in the Tunisian revolution

As I said in the first paragraph, the UGTT has always been an area of convergence for militant trade unionism and the struggle against power. With most opposition political parties banned, with any other trade-union option prohibited and with any organized structure not controlled by the government suffocated (such as the Tunisian League for Human Rights - LTDH, restricted to its central premises in Tunis, always guarded by the political police and prevented from organizing any public event), the UGTT remained the only place from which it was possible to struggle against the system and where the various militant sectors were obliged to work together in order to deal with the union bureaucracy. This historical reality has allowed the formation within the UGTT of a current that for years has struggled for common goals - the radicalization of the UGTT, an end to the dictatorship and internal union democracy, at a price of enor-



mous sacrifice (prison, exclusions, etc.) - and has reinforced its presence in the intermediate levels (general unions, regional unions, etc.) and, consequently, the National Administrative Committee.

All this has resulted in the UGTT playing an important political role in the popular revolt in Tunisia. Involved from the start of the uprising in Sidi Bouzid, its premises have been open, in most cases, for the purpose of organizing demonstrations - often being the starting point of marches. It has organized rallies, marches and regional general strikes in various governorates and is currently committees involved in the committees to safeguard the revolution.

Whither the UGTT?

The coexistence of such conflicting trends within the same organization has been possible due to the situation of dictatorship and lack of freedom. It is still too early to know what the outcome of the Tunisian democratic transition will be and, indeed,

the outcome of the next UGTT congress, but it is clear that both issues will influence the maintenance of UGTT as a single union.

The processes of popular self-organizing that are in progress, such as the Union of Unemployed Graduates or the committees to safeguard the revolution, to the extent that they are maintained and consolidated, will influence the future of the UGTT. Even taking into account the weight of a tradition of trade-union unity in the UGTT, in terms of democratic freedoms, sooner or later the impossibility bureaucratic unionism controlled by the state and autonomous, militant trade unionism will manifest itself.

Other options: the CGTT

In 2006, a group of former leaders of the UGTT decided to create the Confédération Générale Tunisienne du Travail (CGTT - Tunisian General Confederation of Labour) as an alternative to the UGTT's dependence on the state.

However, the failure to legalize the union meant a cessation of its activities, and it focused almost exclusively on the celebration each year of a summer school for union training through the Association Club Mohamed Ali de la Culture Ouvrière (Mohamed Ali Club Association for Working-Class Culture, the name Mohamed Ali being a reference to the founder of the original CGTT).

On 1st February 2011, the CGTT was finally legalized and began organizing. However, it is still developing a clear union line and, more worryingly, it seems to be somewhat aloof and uninvolved in the current revolutionary process. From 3rd to 5th December, it is due to hold its first congress, where the line will be established together with its trade-union practice.

The former secretary general of the UGTT, Ismail Sahbani, has also created a third union, the Union of Tunisian Workers (UTT) as a bureaucratic apparatus more for the sake of competition within a possible framework of purely formal democracy.

If the Tunisian revolutionary process continues to progress, Tunisian workers will know the best way to organize themselves. If it retreats or comes to a halt, the various union bureaucracies will continue to play their role in order to avoid any autonomous self-organization by Tunisian workers.

Mouatamid

** By North Africa Working Group of the International Secretariat of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union CGT*

14 April 2011 Translation by FdCA International Relations Office

BRITAIN TODAY

Bristol AF(Anarchist Federation) on the 26th of March Protest Against Govt. Austerity Policies

The TUC (Trade Union Congress - British ACTU) predictably have turned their backs on the Anarchist groups, students and anyone else in attendance who chose to use more direct tactics than marching from A to B. Brendan Barber TUC general secretary said he "bitterly regretted" the violence, the deputy defence secretary described those involved as "tiny minority of violent, parasitic unrepresentative hooligans", while London's Deputy Mayor Kit Malthouse said they were "fascist agitators". Worryingly, shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper urged home secretary Theresa May to "consider co-ordinated action against so-called anarchist groups."

In response we would like to state we support all those who took part in any of the marches on the day no matter which tactics they used to make their point or their specific reason for being on the march. We recognise those within the TUC, who genuinely worked hard to make the protest inclusive and successful. We even support the woman who said "Anarchists should be banned from demonstrations", and the man from the fire brigade union who accosted one of our comrades and chastised him for having a face mask.

We do however condemn the actions of those scum we saw attempting to smash the window of a coffee shop while an elderly couple sat on the other side of it, and those idiots who threw paint bombs, sticks and even metal fencing from the back hitting and injuring fellow protesters.

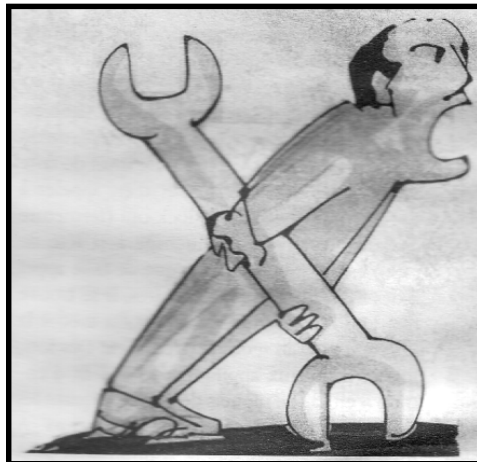
The TUC dubbed the march "The March for the Alternative"; many people and also the media are left asking what this alternative is. Well, we have the alternative: class struggle ending in the complete destruction of capitalism and the hierarchical state system, to allow us to finally live as equals, with genuine freedom, working together to benefit our communities rather than our 'leaders'.

Lecturers strike over pensions

After talks broke down between the college lecturers' union UCU and the Employers Pension Forum (EPF), a wave of anger swept through colleges around the country. Changes proposed for the Uni-

versities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension fund provoked this outrage. Even though the USS is in very good shape there were proposals by the EPF to reduce benefits and increase costs. Lecturers at 63 colleges involved in the USS voted for strike action and action short of a strike.

As a result lecturers in Scotland went out on strike on March 17th at Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heriot-Watt, Strathclyde, St Andrews and the Open Universities. In addition lecturers struck at Warwick University on the day. As we go to press, further strike actions were planned in Wales on the 18th March, Northern Ireland on the 21st and England on the 22nd, to be followed by a second day of strike action for colleges



and universities throughout Britain on 24th March, which could involve as many as 120,000 workers.

Council workers and teachers in East London

Council workers and teachers in Tower Hamlets, east London, planned to strike against cuts in the borough on 30th March, while in Camden teachers planned to go out on strike on the same day. Earlier the HQ of Barclays Bank in Canary Wharf was occupied by 20 teachers as the company announced huge bonuses for the bankers employed there. Tower Hamlets has the highest child poverty rate in Britain. Council cuts will affect nurseries, disability services for children and youth workers.

Speech therapists

Southwark speech and language therapists went on strike on February 3rd after they were informed that eleven of their jobs

were to be axed in March. This would mean that a third of staff would be made redundant. Twenty therapists were on the picket line, in a service where there is no history of militancy. Some jobs were saved as the local Health Authority rapidly made some concessions. The strike immensely increased the confidence of therapists and dispelled the sense of hopelessness and apathy that is afflicting NHS workers. If strike action from a small number of workers who have never taken action ever before can win some limited concessions, think what could happen if more workers and in other sectors, both inside and outside the NHS, were to go into action.

BP workers in Hull fight back

An unofficial strike for one day took place at BP Hull on 2nd March over redundancies planned by Redhalls, the main construction contractor. A mass meeting of workers discussed and rejected the proposals from the management to ignore the NAECI (national industry agreement) which states that length of service will be on the specific contract, and to use length of service with the company. A strike was called with 400 construction workers blocking BP's main gate.

Electricians and scaffolders refused to cross the picket line. As a result rush hour traffic came to a complete standstill in the surrounding East Hull and Holderness areas before being forced to turn back.. The following day another mass meeting voted to go back after management backed down. A rigger who had been made redundant the week before was reinstated at the same time. This week, the blockades have continued with police warning motorists away from the area all week. BP has now made 400 redundancies due to a breakdown with the sub-contractor Redhill. A pay settlement offered has been rejected and further widespread action has been suggested.

Southampton Medirest workers strike for 3 days

Medirest NHS cleaners went on strike for 3 days from 7th March over unpaid wages and sick pay. Management failed to implement the NHS job evaluation agreement Agenda for Change in 2006 which has left the workers without their right to NHS terms and conditions. The dispute is ongoing.

Thanks to Resistance

A Feature Review by Graham Purchase

Part 1 Anarchism, Anthropology and Asia

The Art of Not Being Governed:

An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia

By James C. Scott

Yale University Press/Orient Black Swan 2009

Continued from last edition

Culture and Social Structure of Escape and State Prevention:

"Jellyfish Tribes" exhibit "social shape changing" by choosing a variety of "patterns of social and political organization that are resistant to monitoring and subordination. Social structure is not a given, it is a choice that is in a broad sense political. Social structure is not a permanent social trait of a particular community but a variable that changes in response to ongoing relations with neighboring civilizations."

Like pastoral nomads many of the more egalitarian and democratic stateless hill groups have the "capacity to divide and segment into small independent units and reassembled as required". The "disintegration into minimal units and the adoption of subsistence strategies that favor small, scattered bands" is a "deliberate choice" that "impedes the development of large permanent distinctions in wealth or private property" and evades the tentacles of civilization through acting upon the principle of "Divide that ye be not ruled." (p. 207-11). "An open common property frontier seems particularly vital to the maintenance of egalitarianism" because it "equalizes access to subsistence resources and permits the frequent fission of villages and lineages. Certain peoples have for so long manifested these state-repelling and state-preventing characteristics that the invocation of the very name conjures up statelessness. The Lahu, Lisu, gumalao Kachin, Akha, Wa, Khmu, and Hmong to mention a few, largely fit this description." (p. 278-9)

Against Primitivism: Ethnogenesis as Universal Social-Evolutionary Process

Kropotkin as an act of rebellion against court life in Tsarist Russia joined the Mounted Cossacks of the Amur. In the 19th Century Siberia (N.E. Asia) like the S.E. Asian Massif was refuge and melting pot for all manner of political exiles and other people wishing to escape from the grasp of an aggressive and expansive imperialism. In Siberia dissident intellectuals, mobile peasant villages, convicts and rebels all mixed together with barbarian tribes and remnant aboriginal cultures. In Siberia Kropotkin was deeply impressed

by the social life and co-operative practices and traditions of both animals and remote human communities. These impressions informed his famous book *Mutual Aid* (1902) that is based upon two pivotal premises in human biological and social anthropological theory and history: That humans were social before they were human and evolved complex cultures prior to the evolution of civilization such that mutual-aid practices always re-emerge wherever and whenever the state is absent. Secondly, human populations had undergone a radical intermixing or secondary remixing in response and as an effect of the rise of the state. In those sections of *Mutual Aid* dealing with social co-operation and the evolution of human communities Kropotkin divides our history into two distinct stages, the aboriginal and barbarian periods that are dealt with separately in two sequential chapters.

In his pioneering anthropological work Kropotkin argues that the integration of hierarchical religions with economic and military statecraft led to continual large-scale and widespread conflict:

"When we observe the savages whose manners of life are still those of Neolithic peoples, we find them closely bound together by an extremely ancient clan organization which enables them to enjoy life in common and to progress. However as soon as we come to a higher state of civilization we are bewildered by the struggles and conflicts. The old bonds seem entirely to be broken and out of this chaotic contest of hostile forces, mankind issues divided into castes, enslaved to despots, separated into states always ready to wage war against each other." (*Mutual Aid*, 1915 popular edition page 91).

Kropotkin thought that the cataclysmic effects of state expansion and warfare had historically been exacerbated by environmental catastrophes particularly adverse climatic change leading to massive waves of migration:

"Races were mixing with races during those migrations, aborigines with immigrants and it would have been no wonder if their social institutions had been totally wrecked. But they were not wrecked; they simply underwent the modification which was required for the new conditions of life." (p.94)

The convulsive effects of statism resulted in the decomposition of original aboriginal or primitive communities remnants or glimpses of which were only to be found in remote regions that had only very recently become subject to state violence, corruption and incorporation.

Kropotkin argues that people's reaction and revolt against onslaughts of state slavery, religious trickery and ecological change resulted in the natural re-emergence or novel re-evolution of mutual aid practices among hybrid barbarian tribes some of which evolved egalitarian and anti-hierarchical cultural traditions in the context of their village confederations that bore some similarity to the tribal-communism practiced by aboriginal populations (Scott follows Kropotkin when he states that "confederation constitutes the most complex level of stable integration" among barbarian hill tribes, p. 36).

Kropotkin and the Reclus brothers didn't regard the state-barbarian evolutionary dynamic as obviously or necessarily an improvement or socially progressive development. All three anarchist-anthropologists argued that extant aboriginal or 'primitive' cultures (of Australia, Papua and the Bushmen of S. Africa) exhibited communistic practices only rarely replicated in the barbarian re-tribalization of non-state and anti-state peoples on the periphery of slave-based civilizations.

Ethnography and the History and distribution of Ethnogenesis:

"Comparative ethnography" was pioneered by Elie Reclus and describes, compares and categorizes the practices and distribution of different peoples around the world upon the basis and perspective of "moral and intellectual equality of these [primitive and barbarian] cultures to that of so called civilized states" (B. Morris, *Anthropology and Anarchism*, London University 2005, p. 2).

Scott's historical ethnography focuses upon the ethnogenesis of statism & barbarianism in S.E. Asia. But, this book is also a work of comparative ethnography specifically premised and informed by the principle of moral and cultural equality between states and barbarian societies. Scott examines and compares the historical co-evolution and ethnogenesis of statism & barbarianism within various ethno-geographical regions and upon different continents. Scott compares the ethnogenic histories of the Incas (p. 131), Berbers (p. 30-1), Cossacks (p. 133, 260), Iraqi Marsh Arabs (p. 170), Roma (p. 133), and Slave/maroon settlements of the Americas such as: "The Great Dismal Swamp on the E. Virginia-N. Carolina border that was home to thousands of escaped slaves for several generations, right in the midst of the strongest slave-holding communities in the south" (p. 170).

To be Continued

THE HISTORY OF GREEK ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

Speras, Constantinos, 1893-1943, a Greek anarcho-syndicalist, and one of the pioneers of the working class trade-union movement in Greece.

During the early 1900's, in Egypt he became a tobacco worker and came in contact with anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists. These were mainly Greek and Italian immigrants, who during that period were very active among the tobacco workers of Alexandria and Cairo. He travelled to many European countries and was fluent in French and Arabic. When he returned to Serifos, Greece, financial hardship forced him to sell his mother's allotment, and he was soon immersed in intense syndicalist and political activity. He was among the founding members of the Worker's Centre of Athens (Ergatiko Kentro Athinas - EKA) in March 1910, and became a member of the Socialist Centre of Athens (Sosialistiko Kentro Athinas) at a time when socialists of various orientations rallied behind this organization founded by Nikolaos Giannios.

In March 1914 he found himself in Kavala, where he participated in the large tobacco workers' strike, during which he was arrested and sent to a prison in Tripoli.

The 1916 Serifos miner's strike

In 1916, at the request of the local miners, he returned to Serifos, where he set up the local union, the Union of Workingmen and Miners of Serifos (Somateio Ergaton Metallefton Serifou) and became its first president. He also drafted the union's "Constitutional Resolution", which is considered [attribution needed] as one of the most radical and revolutionary of that period. As the union's president, he undertook the defence of the rights of the workers against the absolutism of the mining company, which maintained very close links with the government in Athens. When the workers realized that their continuous protests to the Syros and the Athens newspapers bore no results, the historic miner's strike of 1916 broke out. The strike was brutally suppressed by royalist gendarmes, who came to the aid of the mine owners.

The clashes between the miners (assisted by their families) and the troops left four workers and four gendarmes dead and dozens injured. The dead workers were Michael Zoilis, Themistoklis Kouzoupis, Michael Mitrofanis and Ioannis Protopapas. In the wake of the strike Speras was arrested and imprisoned along with other strikers in the Syros jail. It was there that he wrote a chronicle of the

events of the strike, which was published in 1919 under the title 'The Strike of Serifos, that is a narration of the bloody scenes of 21 August 1916 in the mines of Megalo Livadi of Serifos'. In 1917 he was transferred to the jail at the Firka Fortress in Chania, Crete. While there, he addressed an appeal to the Labour Centre of Chania (Ergatiko Kentro Chanion), seeking their support. In August 1918, Speras in collaboration with Kostas Bastounopoulos, a moderate socialist, and others founded in the town of Ermoupoli of the Syros island, the Educative Labour Society (Morfotikos Ergatikos Omilos). The Society assisted in the publishing of the newspaper Ergatis (Worker), the organ of the Labour Centre of Cyclades (Ergatiko Kentro Kykladon). First congress of the GSEE Speras actively participated



in the fermentation that led to the foundation of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), representing the anarcho-syndicalist tendency. This tendency comprised a large number of delegates and its main representatives were Speras, Giannis Fanourakis, and Stavros Kouchtsoglou. Kouchtsoglou was one of the most prominent Greek anarchists of that period. He was self-taught and was very active in Egypt, Greece and Turkey. He wrote pamphlets and articles and had personally met Errico Malatesta. The first congress of the GSEE was convened between October 21, and October 28 of 1918. Speras was first to address the delegates in his speech that upheld the principle of class struggle. He argued that the Confederation should remain free from the influence of all political parties, and backed the anti-parliament action of the Confederation members.

These positions were in full agreement with those that the European anarcho-syndicalists would adopt five years later during the Congress of Berlin, which convened from 22 December 1922 until 2 January 1923. The representatives of the various socialist tendencies of the

era put forward views opposed to those of Speras and the other anarcho-syndicalists. They argued in favour of the close interrelation between the GSEE and the Greek Socialist Party (Sosialistiko Komma) - which was founded a few weeks later. In this frame they presented a draft resolution, whereby the Confederation had to remain independent solely from any bourgeois influence. The issue was debated long and hard during the Congress and the representatives from both tendencies stood their ground doggedly. E. Delazanos - one of the delegates from the Proodos (Progress) Federation and a close ideological ally of socialist N. Giannios - addressing the Congress shortly before the voting said: "Workers beware! Do not fall for the beautiful words of the anarchists. The first instance of anarchy must be crushed. 'Outside of all politics' is an anarchist slogan, which in effect serves the interests of the bourgeoisie." In the voting that was carried out, the authoritarian socialists' resolution was voted 158 to 21. This voting marked in a tragic way the course of the working class movement of Greece, which henceforth was to be dragged on, tied to the influence of the state or the political parties - particularly the Communist Party - and their objectives, so that we can now answer with certainty the question "who really did serve in practice the interests of the bourgeoisie?" However, Speras was elected member of the Supervising Committee of GSEE and his election confirmed the dynamism of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency during that period.

The foundation of SEKEA

A few weeks later, on 4 November 1918, the most prominent representatives of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency participated in the founding Congress of the Socialist Worker Party of Greece (Sosialistiko Ergatiko Komma Elladas; SEKE), which subsequently evolved into the Communist Party of Greece (Kommounistiko Komma Elladas; KKE). Judging by the positions they upheld in the period from the founding Congress of the organization to the second congress, it is obvious that the anarcho-syndicalists did not oppose the creation of an independent and multifarious socialist body. It did not take long before things between the two hostile tendencies came to a head. In March 1920, Kostas Speras participated as special secretary in the conference of miners and coal miners held in Athens, aiming at the foundation of the Miners' Federation.

In April, 1920, the SEKE held its second congress. There Constantinos Speras and Giannis Fanourakis were expelled from the party as anti-party elements. The newspaper O Rizospastis (The Radical) - the official organ of the Greek Communist Party - also reported an attempt to expel

Speras from GSEE. However this turned out to be impossible, due to the considerable influence that Speras exerted on the Athens working class and on a large number of its delegates.

On 17 May 1920 Speras was arrested and the newspaper Kokkini Simaia (Red Flag), the organ of the Communist Organization of Athens (Kommounistiki Organosi Athinas) reported: "...to us this is an honour because our comrade is jailed for his working class ideology..."

The second Congress of GSEE

In 1920, the second congress of the GSEE was convened between 30 September and 3 October. Speras participated as the secretary of the Association of Tobacco Workers of Athens, the anarcho-syndicalist tendency turned out particularly strong, consisting of one-third of the delegates. As soon as the Congress opened, Speras proposed the withdrawal of GSEE from the Trade-Union International of Amsterdam, a social democratic organization. The opposition to this proposal came from the part of the SEKE. It must be noted though, that during that period, all the major working class anarcho-syndicalist federations were actively participating in the process of the foundation of the Comintern. The central issue of the Congress was GSEE's collaboration and interrelation with SEKE. Speras and the other members of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency advocated the independence of the Confederation, while the SEKE members insisted on the collaboration between the two bodies. The latter view was voted 157 to 54. The second issue of the Congress was the question of the parity between SEKE and GSEE. The anarcho-syndicalists, through Giannis Fanourakis, argued that the two bodies (SEKE and Confederation) should be represented by an equal number of delegates, who would stand on an equal footing in all political issues.

The SEKE supporters insisted that the party should assume the guiding role and in the subsequent voting they confirmed their domination with 107 delegates voting for their motion against 40. As a matter of fact, when during his address, N. Dimitratos (one of the SEKE supporters) attributed the political guiding role to SEKE and the responsibility for the trade union movement to the GSEE, Speras reacted furiously. Reading a relevant circular of the Comintern, he upheld the unified and mass character of the Confederation and denounced "those who sought to divide" the working class. In his addresses, Speras supported the direct democratic operation of the unions. He contended that the workers should directly participate in the decision-making process through rank and file assemblies. Thus he came in direct opposition with the SEKE leadership

group, who upheld that this right belonged exclusively to the industrial workers. The contribution of the anarcho-syndicalist group in the amendment of certain statutes of the GSEE was equally important. They proposed the decentralization of the decision-making process from the Federations to the local Labour Centres.

Speras also advocated that workers should be organized not in craft union federations but in unified workplace federations, a principle upheld until the present day by the anarcho-syndicalist organizations.

Nea Zoi and The Independent Workers Party

Despite his ejection from SEKE, Speras maintained his influence on the working class masses. He was elected secretary of the dynamic Federation of Tobacco Workers and induced many to abandon SEKE. Along with them, he formed a cohesive group, Nea Zoi (New Life), which in March 1921 published a bi-weekly communist newspaper under the same title. While a communist organisation, Nea Zoi was not exclusively Marxist or Leninist. Most members were anarchosyndicalists or anti-authoritarians, and had no adherence to the "orthodox" Communist Party etc. At the start they supported the Third International but withdrew their support as many anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists did in this period. The group exerted an important influence over the working class of Athens, and Speras and Fanourakis participated in the administration of the Labour Centre of Athens (EKA) for a considerable period of time. They collaborated with other groups and organisations which had been formed in the wake of the far left's expulsion from SEKE, such as the group Kommounismos (Communism) and the Anexartiti Kommounistiki Neolaia (Independent Communist Youth), both followers of the tenets of Bolshevism. In November 1921, following the strike called by the Federation of Tramway Workers, Speras was once again arrested and jailed in the Sygrou Prison. In the winter of 1922 the organization Nea Zoi (New Life) founded the Independent Labour Party (Anexartito Ergatiko Komma; AEK). Similar moves by syndicalists were to take place a few years later in Europe, including the 1932 founding of the Syndicalist Party of Spain, by Angel Pestaña, a reformist former member of the Spanish CNT. The majority of the new party's members were workers. The newspaper Ergatiki (Labour Gazette) reported that workers were joining the new party en masse throughout Greece. Its labour oriented character, as well as its distance from the tenets of the Comintern, were reflected in AEK's "Declaration of Aims and Principles":

The workers, through their unified confederation, over and beyond their political differences, can promote their interests. The AEK was dissolved in 1925, as a result of repression under the dictatorship of Theodoros Pangalos.

Expulsion from the GSEE

On the afternoon of the fourth day of the third GSEE congress, Tuesday 30 March 1926, Speras was ejected from the GSEE despite the protests of various delegates. This had followed a relevant proposition by Tzimas, a delegate of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Avraam Benaroya, Speras' principal opponent ever since the GSEE's first Congress, gave testimony which characterized Speras as "an enemy of the working class," and the expulsion as "fair". In his defence, Speras argued that the attack against himself was orchestrated by the leadership of the KKE (formerly the SEKE), and had been initiated on the second day of the Congress by the KKE delegates Giakoumatos, Marnieros and Evangelou. Speras also denounced the Communist Party for unleashing a war against him, as a result of which he could not even get a job.

The reason, Speras' claimed, was his opposition to the adhesion of the GSEE to the Comintern. Speras defended himself as an anti-militarist and countered the accusation that he was a "state agent." He denounced Evangelou (one of the leaders of KKE) for attempting to bribe his way to the post of General Secretary of the GSEE over the sum of fifty thousand drachmas promised to the Alliance of the Working Classes (a socialist grouping) via Vouros, a journalist. Final years Little is known about Speras' life following his ejection from the GSEE.

From 1930 onwards he worked as a ticket booking clerk in the Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways.

It is certain that he participated in the railway workers movement and in the big strikes that broke out during that period. It is equally certain that he clashed with the leadership group of this trade-union.

His last stint inside a jail was during the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas, during which he spent time in the prison of the island of Skopelos. He was released, half dead, shortly after the Greco-Italian War was declared.

Death

On 14 September 1943, captain Orestis summoned Speras to a meeting in the village of Mandra, which was a remote place outside of Athens. "Orestis" was a pseudonym of Christos Moudrihas, a prominent KKE rank and file and one of the leaders of the communist led resistance forces.

Shortly afterwards Moudrihas and his followers decapitated him. *Thanks to Libcom*

“RADICAL POLITICS” IS NO LONGER “RADICAL” SO WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD IN AUSTRALIA?

Once upon a time greenies were radical people who had long hair, poor hygiene (all that living with nature..) and chained themselves to trees in the way of bulldozers. Ordinary looking working people stood puzzled on news reports as these “tree huggers” stood in the way of them earning a living and feeding their family. Now of course everyone in Australia is encouraged to be “green”. It is a nice safe way that the average middle class person can feel they are making a difference to the world without the risk of anything in their cosy little world ever changing to their disadvantage.

People like Earth First (and those few extremists left in the Wilderness Society) are looked down upon as “taking it all too far”, after all “isn’t everyone now trying to make a difference?”.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m not disputing the argument of an ecologically sustainable earth, it would be insane ala Tony Abbot to do so, but what I am pointing out is that the argument and the pace of that argument has been successively diluted by a decade or so of “green awareness” carefully constructed by the state.

Indeed pretty much any radical movement has been co-opted into a safer form by the state: look for example at radicalism surrounding gender, which started off as a grass roots fight for equality for women (even just the right to vote at its earliest beginning’s) and has now been carefully “guided” into a philosophical argument for middle class women.

Working class women still form the largest (and lowest paid) workforce worldwide in factories and sweatshops, while their middle class “Sisters” use concepts like the “glass ceiling” as weapons to climb the corporate ladder with greater speed than their male counterparts.

World peace has of course also been co-opted. Some people of my generation believe it was because of our efforts as peace punks and the like, we made the society change and removed the threat of nuclear war by our youthful enthusiastic actions - a threat between America and Russia that was very imminent for everyone at the time.

But the reality is world capitalism benefits nothing from nuclear Armageddon and it successively put world leaders into power who agreed not to blow the world up. Once it became clear to world corporations that they would lose everything if a

nuclear war occurred (and this paranoia amongst them really began back as early as the Cuban missile crisis) it was only a matter of time before their careful guiding of everything we see and hear brought change about. What we as individual people wanted was irrelevant. This didn’t stop them using us as pawns to help the Middle class (the people governments actually do listen to) feel less guilty and more righteous in speaking for peace. Who could forget the tear jerking 1980’s episode of “A Country Practice” when Bob Hawke guest starred and spoke of the need for World peace at the level of us ‘plebs’ (yes I admit to watching just the one episode).

Corporations ‘herded’ the working class into performing this duty for them using the usual means at their disposal: control-



ling everything we see and hear. In the sixties the radio was filled with peace songs, in the eighties (closer to the fall of the Soviet Union) Sting ala Universal Corporation started singing about “Russian’s loving their children” (also about miner’s strikes on the same album to ensure we ‘connected’ correctly). One frightening film after another invaded the TV and the movie screens: In the sixties sorry-you-get-no-happy-ending films like “on The Beach” (ala MGM Corporation) premiered simultaneously in several major cities around the world, including Moscow. On TV ‘The War Game’ ala BBC Corporation (with a fair bit of private corporate production money as I understand it) featured the consequences of Nuclear War in frightening detail. In the eighties films like ‘The Day After’ (Apparently Ronald Reagan saw the film and said that it “contributed to his feelings of hopelessness about a nuclear confrontation”) and

far better British ones like ‘Threads’ (Channel 7 Corporation Australia put money into it too) without the happy ending, that actually state it would be quite worse.

Many people from the sixties movements against the Vietnam War argue that mass people power for the first time stopped the War, an argument that has recently been exposed similarly. Major corporations initially saw the Vietnam War along the lines of an insignificant African war (‘going on all the time’).

Once they began to see it as a threat to world peace and it escalating into the possibility of an American-Russian nuclear war (which had almost happened in Korea) they acted quickly to stifle it. Suddenly the TV screens were full of the shocking and horrific images we all associate with the Vietnam War. Again this horror was revisited when a more significant effort was made by corporations for full nuclear disarmament in the eighties; suddenly the TV and the cinema were besieged with films recollecting the Vietnam war and its horrors.

Again, don’t get me wrong, this doesn’t mean that large corporations are somehow the world’s most highly moral pacifists (a great many of them had no moral problem for example assisting with the Nazi Holocaust). They just identified a threat to their profits and removed it using their control of everything we see and hear. If the threat was trade unions and worker organization they removed that too in the same way with

headlines in large type condemning strikes and demonizing the strikers (who can forget the hatchet job the press here did demonizing the BLF (Builder’s Labourers Federation)).

It could be argued that the all too eager acceptance of corporate Australia to now assist the government to scapegoat welfare recipients (once the term ‘dole bludger’ was used carefully and discretely..now it is bandied about very indiscriminately in the media) is perhaps an attempt to create a more docile workforce. If you threaten people into work and give them no option other than to obey their boss or starve, then you remove profit-destroying industrial strife. By helping to destroy the safety net (oblivious to those people who through no fault of their own actually desperately need it or face starvation) then you remove anywhere for disobedient workers to run to. See Page 20 You don’t lose the time

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news in NSW has been of course the election of the O'Farrell Liberal Govt. Already it is going on the war path regarding public sector workers. Particularly in the form of new Work Choices style laws, which seek to cap wages rises to 2 and ½ % pa which is below inflation, remove the independent role of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission, amongst other attacks. Another key agenda item of his government is the fast tracking of privatisation. Since gaining office, he has announced plans to franchise the Ferries. Privatisation of public transport will have severe effects on workers generally and on our families. (See article page 3.)

Associated with the privatisation push by the O'Farrell Government has been a new wave of harassment directed at public transport workers. In RailCorp, customer service managers are carrying out a disciplinary blitz against workers over minor issues. Whilst in State Transit, the bosses are resorting to high tech means of cracking the whip, in the shape of radar to monitor bus speeds. (See article page 7.)

In RailCorp, management is pressing ahead with moves to curtail the role of guards on the new Waratah trains as part of a move to eventually abolish them altogether. This move is being assisted by the current RailCorp Enterprise Agreement which approved the introduction of the Waratahs and changes to RailCorp HR regulations which limits to a maximum of 26 weeks of redundancy payments. (See article page 6)

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Workers' Organisation

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Grassland Infoshop

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Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name

Address.....

General Secretary

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Continued From Page 18 and money
you spent
training
people because they will submissively
have to accept whatever you decide in the
interests of your greater profits.

Why risk a strike or the sack in Australia currently? The unions can't be relied on to pay your mortgage, feed your family and unemployment benefit is no existence for anybody. Of course if corporate Australia can make welfare non-existent this removes the last profit threatening aspect of the equation: do what we say and accept precisely our terms or starve on the streets as they do in less civilized countries like for example America and Italy (Of course if people then turn to crime instead of starving you can always blame it all on drugs and criminal gangs!).

Maybe less than a decade ago, when we saw a "demonstration" on the evening news, it was people showing concern for an issue that affected the lower half of society; somewhere this has shifted. Now it is quite acceptable for rich people to hold "demonstration's" because a housing minister wants to build public housing in their affluent suburb; "demonstrations" because an area of land might be opened up for working people to build houses (of course the "demo" is about the ecological damage, not the real fact that it will spoil their view and bring "plebs" into the area). Now people are expected to ask the police for permission to march publicly. So-called "radical politics" have been very carefully co-opted into the norm of things in a way that can be safely controlled by the state.

So if radical politics is a waste of time, then is there really anyway left we can affect change as a community? As it would appear this fundamental tool has been taken away from us and co-opted by the state. To succeed in real and sustainable change, it is us who must now take away a tool used by corporations.

Efforts have been made over time by working people to take back control over

what working people 'see' and 'hear' in the form of Indie media websites and even modest efforts (relative to the finances available) of publications like Rebel Worker - Community Radio was once a great forum also, before it was co-opted by the middle classes for the display of their ego's rather than positive things like independent left wing news services. Community TV is only just beginning in this country, but looks to be heading the same way from the start.

Whilst, don't get me wrong, I don't believe our efforts are entirely in vain in providing an alternative to mainstream media (if people want to read or hear or see something bad enough they will find it - the internet is a good example of this), we need to look also towards changing the media organizations themselves. Whilst we are not quite at the stage of "sacking the boss" and the workers at the Daily Telegraph producing the paper themselves for example, industrial action in the sectors of Radio, TV & Newsprint is something that must be seen as fundamental to any industrial action in any other sector succeeding. The state is aware of this, this is perhaps why industrial action in these sectors (the recent journalists strike for example) was so ruthlessly dealt with.

One major problem with radicalizing workers in these industries has always been that the output 'voice' of the media is that of the middle class. Journalists in every media industry self-regulate themselves into a culture, such that even those from working class backgrounds that manage to 'slip through' are quickly absorbed into a state-supporting approach to their work (this is not always the case of course, but most often it is). Media jobs are highly prized and anyone that publishes outside the culture will find themselves very quickly replaced by thousands of others with the same university degree who would rather write for the Daily Telegraph, than work as a call centre worker for Telstra. The Media industry suffered

also with the mass union amalgamation's of the last decade, with mega-unions able to trick more workers out of effective industrial action as we know.

When we look at radicalizing these industries we must look towards the means of production itself: the technicians, the printers, the creative writers etc. Without them the voices of the journalists and highly paid no-talent-of-their-own personalities will reach nobody.

If you want to be involved in radical politics forget the green myth, forget fighting for peace, forget fighting for women's rights, forget fighting for fair and equitable welfare, stop wasting your time at demonstrations: the State and Corporate Australia well and truly own these struggles. Instead apply for a job at say News Limited sweeping the floor (or the company contracted to do it these days..we can thank the unions for that), this would be a good start to achieving all these things.

Sean

Comment:

These days however due to the ferocity of speedups, low morale, repressive IR laws the control of unions at various levels and other sectors by the Rightwing ALP machine, extensive networks of bosses stooges, new surveillance technologies etc - just getting a job in the media area may not get you very far regarding the class struggle.

Militants there would still need a lot of help from outside the job, like the ASN is doing in transport in assisting getting the wheels of grass roots organisation on the job moving. Big actions by say workers in such sectors as transport would play an important role in raising the morale of workers in media and other sectors. As a result, the tide would be turned against the employer offensive and the transitional steps toward a mass syndicalist union confederation would crystalise. Whilst the strangle hold of the various factions of the ALP on the labour movement would be broken.

Ed.