

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

ORGANISE ON THE JOB TO FOIL THE
ALP/UNION BOSS SELLOUT OF POWER
WORKERS TO THE ROBBER BARONS!



**NSW POWER INDUSTRY SELLOFF; STATE TRANSIT
NEWS; NSW RAIL NEWS; SYDNEY FERRIES NEWS;
SWEDEN; POLAND; EGYPT; GREECE; BRITAIN
TODAY; BOOK REVIEW CORNER "REBEL
ALLIANCES" BY BENJAMIN FRANKS; LETTER**

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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vate company responsible for it; business customers DID get preferential treatment and the sale of candles to working people went through the roof!

What is perhaps most interesting is that this privatization push is coming from a supposedly "labor" government - indeed Buses, Trains and now the States ferries are in their sights. Working people expect this type of strategy from state or federal liberal governments as the provision of services to them is always the last priority, but from a state labor government it used to be unusual...

One of the major concerns facing the ordinary power consumer is the recent signing of the Kyoto Protocol by the Federal Labor Government. Whilst this is very stylish if you live in a middle class glass-house, the need for States to comply with reduced greenhouse gas emission quotas to produce power means that you and I are the ones who will be made to pay for alternative energy production. Naturally I believe that NSW should cut greenhouse gas emissions for the overall benefit of the planet; but all of the wide-eyed solutions proposed to do so are based on making energy use more expensive. This means that working people in Western Sydney will not be able to afford (for example) air conditioning in the extremes of summer, but the residents of the North Shore will (albeit at a higher premium). We will burn less coal and therefore produce less greenhouse gases and the planet will thank us. Users such as pensioners at the bottom of the income scale will be placed in conditions akin to Thatcher's Britain during the cold winter months. The problem naturally is that what sounds like high-minded moral ground inevitably results in the haves and the have-nots when it comes to the power distribution.

The United Services Union (USU) has of course beaten its chest in the press, criticizing the government's plans without ac-

tually being seen to disagree with them too strongly. Their criticisms are more concerned with the loss of jobs, which is fair enough of course, but do not address the impact on the consumer. For example in a recent press statement they said:

"The USU has identified major deficiencies in the proposed employment protection arrangements with workers in the female dominated retail sector being exposed to the prospect of forced redundancy, the Government proposal does not provide any guarantee against the off shoring of jobs overseas and does not provide for the retention of core employment in rural and regional areas".

What the USU have not told their members is that even if their jobs are protected, the gradual increase in costs of energy will eat into their pay packets regardless.

The power grid in NSW belongs to the working people of NSW and, just like



Telstra, should remain in public ownership. This is the only way to satisfactorily ensure that power distribution is always fair and affordable to all. The future of energy supply in NSW can be ensured if the Iemma government invests money in sustainable and environmentally friendly energy production now, rather than attempting to rely upon a private company to do it for them.

Sean

N.S.W. Iemma Govt. Power Privatization Push

Recently the Iemma State Labor Government sent a letter to every pensioner in NSW, which contained a personal promise from the Premier that the privatization of the electricity system would not adversely affect them. Pensioner rebates would continue and the cost of electricity would not rise. A lot of people thought this was a rather strange step as they are accustomed to the government just doing what it likes and do not put much trust in promises that any politician makes anyway.

Pensioners (and indeed working people) in NSW do have a lot to be concerned about in the latest arm of the State Government privatization push as such moves have a long history of hardship for those on even the most moderate incomes. Everyone would remember the fiasco created by the Kennett Governments privatization of power in Victoria: The price of power DID go up, the grid did fail continually due to poor or non-existent maintenance and job slashing by the pri-

Rebel Worker Web Site

www.rebelworker.org

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

ALP UNION HIERARCHY HELP STAB UNION REP IN THE BACK!

PORT BOTANY DEPOT NEWS

Rebel Worker: What's been the biggest issue at the depot lately?

Port Botany Driver: The sacking of our union rep Chris Mansergh on undisclosed charges last year remains of great concern to us.

RW: What do you know about the moves to have Chris sacked?

PBD: In the end Chris was caught by a simple trick. A lot of drivers might not realise that new drivers in their first year or two with STA are not 'employees', even though they are in fact paid to work every day like any other employee. But technically they are not employed, merely 'trainees'.

Now one advantage of that, from the company point of view is that getting rid of trainees is much easier than getting rid of employees. Despite having years of experience as a professional driver behind him, Chris was still a new driver with STA and when his technical 'traineeship' period ended, he got a very sudden message that basically evicted him from the workplace!

No concrete reason given. This is pretty shabby treatment for an elected union delegate, but because Chris was now barred from the premises, there wasn't much he could do to let other workers know what was going on.

RW: So Chris wasn't exactly popular with the bosses?

PBD: Ha ha, certainly not! He was a thorn in their side. And there was nothing sneaky or underhanded about his tactics either. As a union rep and negotiator, Chris's style was always up front, he hammered the issues but he did everything by the book, he made sure he read all the fine print and he was a stickler for proper procedure. That was his strategy, and you can imagine how infuriating it was.

RW: How was Chris regarded around the workplace?

PBD: Attitudes seemed to be very mixed. Remember he was voted in as union delegate with a clear majority. This was after he put up notices around the workplace with well thought out ideas for improvements. From that campaign, anyone could see he was passionate about workers' rights and had given a lot of thought to how we would actually do the job if he was given the chance. So he had a fair bit of support just for that reason. But once he



was voted in, it became apparent he had enemies working to bring him down.

RW: You mean the bosses?

PBD: No I mean amongst the workers, actual union members. As soon as Chris was in office a covert campaign got underway to block his program and make trouble for him generally. Chris kept asking for any members with issues to come forward and meet and discuss the problem with him. Instead there was constant backbiting and backstabbing, with union members even going direct to management to complain about their elected delegate. How anti-union is that?

RW: When the sacking crisis happened, what was Chris's response?

PBD: He decided to fight it every inch of the way.

RW: And the union bosses stood with him to fight the case?

PBD: Obviously they should have. Around the workplace people were saying things like, if the union hierarchy doesn't get behind a union delegate in a case like this, then what hope is there for ordinary members, and what is even the point of being a member? So it was most disturbing when it turned out that the higher union officials wouldn't lift a finger to help the case, and instead were harming him by badmouthing him generally.

RW: How was that?

PBD: For example, in a workplace meeting immediately following the sacking, a union official came to address the members about what had happened. The explanation included quite a few bald faced lies all of which put Chris in a bad light, lies which were never later retracted or apologised for. In the face of stalling tactics from the union, Chris obtained his own legal advice and found he had a good case before the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) for overturning the sacking and getting reinstated. This law firm originally took the case on a 'no win, no fee' basis. But then during proceedings, they flopped and said that while the case still had excellent prospects they were demanding their fees up front. Remember the other side has whole teams of lawyers on a case like this. No ordinary worker can afford to fight them on his own. Without the 'no win no fee' arrangement Chris was stuffed, basically.

RW: So that was the end for Chris?

PBD: Not quite, there was one dirty blow left. When his lawyers turned round and demanded fees up front, Chris went to the union and asked again for backing, after all this was a significant case for all trainees, all delegates, all workers, all union members. It was urgent too, there was a commission deadline approaching in days.

The union hierarchy told Chris, of course we will consider your need for assistance in this significant case, we will have an answer for you as soon as we put it to a meeting of the executive committee – in another six months time. So there you have it. Chris had no choice but to finally give up and pull out of the case.

RW: So what do you think is the moral of the story?

PBD: All I will say is, there is a lot there for us all to think about.

RW: What's the situation with fare evasion?

PBD: Particularly in the southern suburbs and housing commission areas where we operate there is tremendous fare evasion which management is failing to take any serious action to tackle. The bus driver on his or her own can hardly do a thing about it. Every bus driver in our area is aware there are whole families of fare evaders, the parent gets on with five older kids and no one pays a cent. It is taken for granted, not just kids but adults will hop on the bus and say 'free ride please driver'. This leaves a bad feeling when you have ten little old ladies up the front of the bus who each get a bus ticket every day out of their tiny pension income. But the driver has little choice but to let it go. Because refusing or even questioning someone about their request for a free ride, could be inviting violence. It has happened often enough. For example, not too long ago one of our drivers got spray painted - right in the face! - by a local kid, for just raising a question about the 'free ride' the kid was asking for. This is what we face on the job!

RW: Can anything be done about the problem?

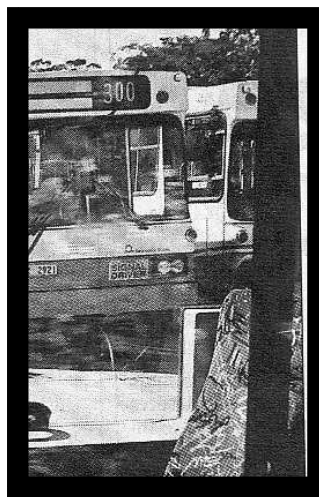
PBD: The decision has to be made, either bus travel is free for everyone - which I myself think is an idea worth serious consideration, or else there is a fare structure that is reasonably enforced in all areas. Leave aside for the time being that the existing fare structure is ridiculously complex and cumbersome, which Blind Freddy knows and which doomed the T-card system to failure in advance. If you have fares, you have to enforce them. What you can't have is self-selected people just opting out and getting away with it day after day, while paying passengers look on and despair. Now the next point is, fare enforcement is not the bus drivers job. Driving is plenty responsibility by itself, and we also operate the trip by taking the fares that are given and keeping an eye on passenger safety. That is why there is that mini army of ticket inspectors on the payroll – to let people see that fare evasion doesn't pay. Those guys have impressive uniforms with leather jackets, the full kit and regalia. You will see whole teams and squads of these ticket inspectors at certain

bus stops, usually on Sundays for some reason. But what you never, never ever see is a handy little squad of ticket inspectors at any bus stop anywhere in those territories which we all know, have known for years, as being Sydney suburban fare evasion headquarters. Until that happens the 'free ride culture' endemic in those areas will just keep proliferating, the message to residents there from the bus company is "this is a lawless area and we just don't care what you do".

RW: How is the violence situation?

PBD: It seems that provision of security guards has increased along one of the troublesome corridors, with a guard riding on buses after dark and stationed along the way in cars at certain spots. Still I'm not aware of drivers ever getting any briefings on exactly what these security persons' duties are, what is their job and how are they meant to do it. For example, the driver will pull up at a bus stop, security person gets on, puts a special card in the driver's console, takes it out and hops off the bus again – what is that all about? Also I have seen guards in some confusion about which is the bus they are supposed to be riding on. Reminds me of an illustrative incident happened on one trip I was doing a while back, there was loud arguing going on down the back, and it turned into a sloppy fistfight then temporarily quietened down as we were pulling into Maroubra Junction where there is a bus security guard waiting. At the bus stop I told the security guy about the problem down the back of the bus, and he said "Sorry mate, I've got to wait for some other bus and ride on that one."

Ha ha, the downfall of the system. Down the road the fighting started again up the back, in the end I just pulled the bus over and opened the back door, they all rolled out of the bus, yelling and hitting each other, and I was on my way again. Nice quiet night for that security guard I guess. Maybe it's amusing, but you can see a situation like that might easily have turned very nasty indeed, and that was with security on hand but just not willing to do the job. So there you go.



WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: What are your thoughts on the Iemma Govt's foreshadowed privatisation rampage whose major target is the electricity industry?

Waverley Busie: Major figures in the capitalist world are likely to be behind this push. Such as the robber barons from Fortune 500 which held a conference in Sydney two and a half years ago. At this conference which was attended by politicians from state and federal Govt's and all major parties, it's likely these figures put pressure on key members of the NSW ALP Govt. to get cracking on the privatisation agenda. Hedge Funds heavily involved in the money markets are also likely to be heavily involved in the push. Here we have a situation of the economy being dictated to by a few robber barons who get richer while most suffer.

RW: What do you think are the ramifications for the buses in regard to the Iemma Govt's plans to privatise the Ferries?

WB: Recently, on the ABC TV current affairs program State Line after the 7.30 pm News which explores state news, there was a program focusing on Cab Charge, a very cashed up concern. It has a very aggressive outlook and is a major business lobby group particularly in NSW, but also throughout Australia. Whilst it takes a very hard line attitude toward cabbies who are obliged to process Cab Charge vouchers without any remuneration. It's a major contender to purchase a juicy slice of the Ferries after its carve-up. After its gobbles up much of the Ferries, will its bosses have their eyes on State Transit? We need to urgently organise on the job to meet this challenge.

One serious effect of privatisation would be a major cut in our pay. In the case of South Australia, when the Govt. buses were sold off, and private companies took over, drivers lost between \$10,000 and \$15,000 p a in pay. As a number of full time permanent drivers were replaced by more casuals and part timers. In this way, the private bus companies in Adelaide can provide cheaper bus fares than exist in Sydney.

The STA's carve-up by private companies will also affect our job security, with the likely move against permanent jobs. These moves will not just affect the 3,500 drivers employed in the STA but the entire workforce of 4,000 to 6,000, and if you take account of flow on effects in regard to our families and other sectors, overall 100,000 people could be affected.

RW: What are your views on the traineeship system for new drivers in the STA?

WB: The new drivers are effectively put on 2 year trials and they are not guaranteed a job at the end. They are so vulnerable. If you don't fit the bosses' pro-corporate outlook you can get the flick. Chris Mansergh from Port Botany was one such trainee who was sacked due to his good work as union rep at the depot. Urgent action needs to be taken to return to the 6 month trial period for new drivers.

RW: What are your thoughts on the Green House Gas Crisis?

WB: The current move of the NSW Govt. to selloff public transport in the case of the ferries and parts of the railways, just goes to show their short sightedness in regard to the environmental crisis. Under private ownership of public transport, there will be much less accountability to the public. Whilst, the robber barons are likely to cut services due to greed for profits. The Govt. doesn't want to take on such critical environmental issues and the likelihood that we have only 10-15 years to tackle global warming, before we face dire straits.

Associated with this outlook, is the Govt's lack of seriousness in cutting the number of motor vehicles. Together with Paris, Rome and Los Angeles, Sydney is one of 4 largest car using cities in the world. If all motorists had a taxi meter attached to their cars, I'm certain they would be discouraged in their car usage. Whilst if more parking areas were provided near stations, I'm sure motorists would take up this option and avoid driving into the city. Behind the Govt's lack of action on the issue is the pressure of the robber barons such as Shell which last year made well over \$34 billion on profits and virtually congratulated the Australian public for assisting this profit making.

One measure to tackle the traffic gridlock in Sydney is to have one car free day a year, like the Columbian Govt. has initiated. A great day. A clear quite day. Peaceful and tranquil. However, it appears the Govt. doesn't want it to happen, due to its corporate connections and hasn't the motivation to pursue the extensive planning such an initiative would require. A car free day would be a big step toward curbing the existing dependence of many on their cars. Just as many have felt they can't do without their plastic bags at supermarkets.

RW: What are your impressions of STA management?

WB: The STA executives give the impression of viewing us as a type of machinery. They disregard the enormous resource which exists in the case of the collective experience of drivers. They could take advantage of our ideas for transforming the public transport system and improve bus services, without cuts to the STA budget. Some of them behave as megalomaniacs and squander vast sums on consultants'

contracts. These senior STA bosses on \$200,000 p a salaries make crappy decisions based on the advice of consultants who have little understanding of bus operations. I feel sad for the STA in its failure to listen to people and take up good ideas.

RW: How have the Govt's neo liberal policies affected bus operations?

WB: I was recently speaking to a Pt. Botany driver who mentioned that inspectors are severely restricted in their ability to affect the supply of buses to cater for increased demand. In contrast to the old days when inspectors had the authority to order in more buses to cope with trouble spots, now they have lost this power. Due to service obligations associated with the contract system imposed on the STA by the Department of Transport, the frequency and number of buses on runs can't be altered at all.

RW: What's the latest with the mobile phones?

WB: This issue has heated up lately with the sacking of several drivers who have been caught just grabbing their phones whilst operating their buses. The union hierarchy has of course been beautifully useless in regard to defending these drivers. It's very unclear where we stand with mobiles. Can you be sacked when the camera catches you taking your mobile out of your pocket and putting it in your bag? The bosses are jumping over the deep end on this issue to further terrorise us. The media has also been leaping on the issue to harass us. There seems to be a double standard on the issue. While we are being targeted, there is no general crack down by the Govt. and police on motorists who are caught using their mobiles. If you approached motorists generally on the issue of mobile usage whilst driving, I'm sure 80% to 90% would agree they are at fault on occasion. Recently I came across a graphic example of the problem in the case of a female motorist whose car was wobbling along near Anzac Parade, whilst she was busily texting on her mobile.

An important explanation for this lenient attitude of the Govt. toward this misbehaviour by motorists is the major influence of such robber barons as the Telcos on their policies. If the Govt. is serious and genuine about the issue, why doesn't it spend say \$3-4 million on an advertising campaign to educate motorists that usage of their mobiles while driving their vehicles is illegal. It should make clear that if they are caught, they would face losing their licences.

RW: What's happening with the bendibuses?

WB: Passengers are continuing to congregate in the dangerous concertina area in the bendies. The passive approach of the STA bosses on the issue involving putting

up "no standing signs" in the area, is completely inadequate. They are just dragging the chain. The STA's failure to develop a policy on the issue of passengers standing in this dangerous area in the bendies also allows the bosses to evade legal responsibility in the event of an accident and passengers are injured. This issue is a foggy area full of legal minefields. What recourse will the driver have?

RW: What are your thoughts on health and safety issues?

WB: Many are unaware of the effects of the considerable amounts of stress we experience in doing our jobs, and on other parts of our lives. Whilst many on the job through daily conflicts with passengers and angry motorists, develop a negative outlook. This outlook which is very destructive for our lives and relationships, needs to be urgently tackled, so we can see the positive aspects of our jobs and enjoy our job. From my experience of over 20 years on the job I've often seen how you come home tired from the job and are unable to contribute 100% to family life. The STA is largely oblivious to this whole issue. Every two years they provide for you to go to a seminar, but that's grossly inadequate.

RW: What's the latest on the road?

WB: A dangerous new issue has emerged in the case of gangs of young kids particularly in the Maroubra Beach and Randwick areas, who often wear white caps and are engaging in bizarre and dangerous antics on buses. They also try to intimidate drivers and take free rides. Will the STA back up drivers who stand their ground against this intimidation? There is an urgent need for the STA to liaison with the police to tackle this serious issue. Latest news is that the STA has advised that it has been investigating the situation and will be using cameras on the buses to these trouble spots, to monitor these gangs and only has a few more buses on these routes to have the cameras installed. These cameras are of course a double edged sword and are being used against us by the STA in the case of disciplinary action and are likely to pose a serious threat to civil liberties in the future. The disks of digital film produced from these cameras are easier to be accessed than the footage from the previous video cameras and can be rapidly issued to the police to assist their investigations into these mischief makers. Will the STA show some integrity on this issue and take effective action to make our jobs easier?

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

Rebel Worker: What's been the most important news lately in RailCorp?

Station Assistant: Lately, management has been provided with some astronomical pay rises lacking any connection to the CPI of between 8% to 27% per annum and in the case of members of parliament a 6 1/2% p.a. pay rise. Whilst we are only being offered a 2.5% per annum pay rise as part of our enterprise agreement. The CEO and senior executives which are helping themselves to all this cream are political appointees and secured their cushy jobs from their ties with the ALP Govt. and were never promoted from the lower grades. Consequently, their role is as a buffer for the Govt. when facing public criticism of the railways operations. They lack the on the job experience to contribute to improved rail operations to merit such outlandish pay rises.

The insulting meagre rise offered to us doesn't even match the CPI of 3 1/2% p. a. Consequently there is much hatred of management amongst the grass roots for this double standard. The bosses are also demanding major cut backs to our conditions in exchange for the pay rise. This stance of the bosses in regard to the wages issue strikes me as the old school management approach. It fails to take into account the need to compensate us for the increased responsibilities associated with our jobs and our difficulties in keeping the rail system functioning. Currently throughout RailCorp there is short staffing and we have been obliged in many cases to work multiple rosters to cope with the situation. The union has made clear its opposition to any of these cut backs in conditions.

RW: What's happening with rail infrastructure?

SA: Some important news is that the Railways will again be manufacturing trains. The new Eveleigh is to be located near Clyde. It's unclear as yet who will be operating the facility. However its likely to involve a PPP (Private Public Partnership) concept.

RW: What's happening on the stations?

SA: According to latest information, the senior rail bosses aren't very impressed with Australian station managers and are intending to recruit a dozen or so British general managers, no doubt on high sala-



ries to check up on station masters throughout the network. It will create a new layer of bureaucracy in the railways and will result in more rules and regulations being imposed on us to justify the jobs of these fat cats and more squandering of the RailCorp budget.

RW: What's your outlook for the railways?

SA: The railways needs a big shake up. In particular an improved ticketing system needs to be introduced, improved ways of

dealing with the public, more destinations and more information provided to the public. To facilitate these improvements more positions need to be created. The senior rail bosses who fancy themselves as business men are opposing any such improvements. Whilst, the Govt. has a very short sighted approach involving just pursuing policies to help them secure further terms in office and so secure their meal ticket.

RW: What's been the response on the job to the campaign to oppose the privatisation of the electricity industry?

SA: A contingent from Central attended the Rally outside the NSW Parliament on Tues. 26th Feb. There have been leaflets distributed on the issue and also a poster has been put up in the station on the issue. There is a great concern regarding the negative impacts of electricity privatisation for workers. Most significantly being likely higher power charges and massive blackouts as occurred in New Zealand several years ago following the privatisation of its electricity industry associated corner cutting on maintenance.

RW: What's happening with the senior executives?

SA: Latest news is that Vince Graham our current CEO is leaving the job to become the CEO of the Intergral Energy. It's rumoured he will be replaced in the position by a former railways CEO Simon Lane, who has been on a jaunt in the Singapore Railways in recent years. He left his position in the NSW Railways several years short of the end of his contract and received a massive golden handshake.

CENTRAL WORKERS FINALLY GRANTED UNION REPRESENTATION

There had always been a union sub-branch at Central Station. That was up until a few years ago when the RTBU no longer saw it as "convenient" to hold elections anymore. The previously elected militants were seen by union officials as disruptive and proved a thorn in the side of the union sell out merchants.

Recently a petition campaign was started to have the union positions reinstated. The resulting signatures have been presented to the union who has agreed to the holding of elections for four positions. Although the election process is flawed, since no election date has been fixed and voting eligibility is unclear, nominations have been keenly submitted to the union.

So who should Central Sparks readers vote for? They should NOT vote for self interested apolitical management cronies or union hacks that have traditionally only looked after themselves. Votes should be for representatives that strictly have the interests of all of the workers at Central at heart. They must be prepared to listen and to consult with members on the job and take their concerns to the union and management.

In this regard, two candidates stand out as being worthy of your vote.

Saade Abdallah is well respected on the job and has a very good understanding of the contemporary Australian political con-

text and issues as well as having a keen interest in overseas political developments. He always always sought to democratically progress the conditions of workers and has not been afraid to voice their concerns to management.

John Coleman is a Booking Clerk at Central with vast political experience in the Australian and International context. John was a union secretary of the Eveleigh workshops until the 1980's who fought hard against the Labor government of the day to prevent its closure. Those who worked at the now defunct Eveleigh workshops still talk of John with some admiration. He has always sought to broaden the horizons of workers and is committed to a wider project of workers international and local solidarity and therefore participates on many independent trade union committees. John has recently returned from a tour of Vietnam and Cuba.

Good luck to all candidates!

EBA Update

Although RailCorp EBA 2008 is set to be finalised by the middle of April much of it has yet to be agreed to. The EBA document is a rewording of previous conditions of employment to fit with current Federal industrial legislation plus it adds compliance for the NSW Public Sector Wages Policy which contributes further Draconian workplace reforms.

There has been little participation of grassroots workers in the negotiation process. In an earlier Sparks Mag we stated that a rank and file log of claims was not up for discussion and no alterations to the unions log of claims were allowed. Despite unions claims of rank and file consultation there is a distinct lack of information and exchange in the workplace. I know of only one informal meeting where a few rail workers attended.

Draft copies of the EBA which were supplied on the RailCorp website show no inclusions of any of the rank and file claims. This EBA is purely a management instrument for workplace reform and cost saving.

However paid maternity leave has been doubled to 14 weeks, something which we whole heartedly applaud. There is little else to be happy about in the EBA documents.

So far 2.5% pa is the only pay offer on the table but this is contingent on the EBA being agreed to unconditionally. This is not surprising since the rail unions ambit claim only amounted to a paltry 5% pa.

Many of the measures such as the ending of indefinite salary maintenance will not

get full support from employees who have been displaced from other areas. Likewise the reductions in casual sick pay from 6 to 3 days pa will be unwelcome.

The sneaky inclusion of a family leave provision extension in the EBA is despicable. It will be paid now primarily from paid leave such as long service leave, granted public holidays, holiday pay or sick leave if no paid leave is available. This legitimises an already practiced breach of the current award which had been ignored by the unions.

In the proposed agreement there are other really mean clauses, such as not paying the Bank Holiday or granting a day in lieu if an employee is on leave or absent for any reason on this day.

Workers need to be completely informed about their EBA and be prepared to voice their opposition to some of its worst aspects. If all else fails they should forego the pitiful wage rise of 2.5%, by rejecting EBA 2008, then start a separate campaign for a wage rise that trades nothing yet grants a realistic cost of living pay deal.



NSW Public Sector Wages Policy Worse Than WorkChoices

The framework for our EBA negotiations is firmly rooted within the bounds of the NSW State Governments Public Sector Wages Policy 2007. This is a strange arrangement. For although RailCorp is bound by NSW Government policies their workers are not. Workers are covered by a Federal Government registered award.

The Wages Policy is an imposed policy that is not written into law (commonly called Costanomics after State Treasurer and ex union boss Michael Costa).

How would a challenge to the policy stand up in a Federal Industrial Court?

The RTBU and other rail unions have no fight in them at all and have gone a long

way to appeasing their State Government masters by agreeing to most of the tenets of the Wages Policy which are included in EBA 2008.

Worst aspects of the NSW Public Sector Wages Policy include:

Holding wages to a 2.5% p a increase unless there is some trade off in working conditions or further worker productivity. This is despite inflation currently running at greater than 5% and workers experiencing greater financial stress than at any time in the last 10 yrs.

Setting the parameters in which negotiation takes place including limiting matters up for negotiation.

The wages policy is tilted towards reform and uses a carrot and stick approach to get workers to comply by limiting rises unless they are prepared to give something away. According to the policy papers "The wages policy is predominantly about driving cultural change..."

Like the Accord days it Co-opts the Union movement "in a cooperative and problem solving manner."

Back pay is not allowed even if a previous agreement has expired before a new one has been negotiated. Back pay will only be considered "in exceptional circumstances and only where approved by the Cabinet Standing Committee"

"Clear no extra claims clauses".

Every step of the EBA negotiations is stage managed by Government Committee such as Cabinet Standing Committee on the Budget, Wages Policy Taskforce and the Public Sector Workforce Office. So much for democratic unionism and adherence to democratic international labor standards. Basically the

whole package is a abrogation of workers' rights over which the State Government is prepared to ride roughshod. Not even a quasi independent umpire such as the Fair Pay Commission here.

Potential areas of reform according to the NSW Wages Policy paper include, but are not limited to:

"A flexible, mobile and highly performing workforce".

Reductions in sick leave and overtime. Reducing leave liabilities. (RailCorp employees will no longer be able to accumulate leave to a later date and will be limited to 4 or 5 weeks annual leave only, depending on work classification. All other leave will be "cashed out".)

Using less qualified staff "that are easier to attract" into "redesigned" jobs. Obviously they will also be paid less.

Flex time not to be “excessively accumulated and used as a substitute for recreation leave”.

The wages policy should have been resisted by all of the union movement in NSW, its more than a shame how easily they have rolled over. I believe they (the unions) have legal grounds for resisting, but they lack the will.

A few unions such as the NSW Nurses Association have advised their members to reject the “simplistic” 2.5% policy. The Fire Brigade Employees Union on the other hand has already won wage rises above the State imposed 2.5% just by threatening to flex a little muscle. As far as I know the Teachers Federation has not committed itself at this stage.

The way that most unions have dealt with this issue dishonours their own members

and is a huge blow to the workers that they supposedly represent. Workers have an obligation to let their unions know, in the strongest possible manner, that they (the workers) must place ahead of any crazy economic agenda imposed by Macquarie Street. Union leaders can and will be replaced just like their political masters when the time comes, if needs be.

NSW Labor prepares to privatise Sydney Ferries

By Shane Bentley

Twelve months ago transport and electricity sector unions campaigned for a Labor Party victory in the NSW state elections. Workers were told to support the “worker-friendly” Labor Party against the NSW Liberals who fully backed John Howard’s WorkChoices laws.

The re-elected Iemma government is now repaying this support with plans to privatise the Sydney Ferries service, the rail network and the electricity grid. Iemma and Co. are on a privatisation binge that will result in job losses, the undermining of current wages, conditions and safety standards, higher prices and fewer services.

Many would be excused for thinking that NSW Labor has only recently floated the idea of privatising Sydney Ferries. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The NSW Labor government took the first step towards privatising the ferries back in 2003 when it pushed the Transport Administration Amendment (Sydney Ferries) Bill through state parliament.

This Bill corporatised the ferry service in 2004 by restructuring the State Transit Authority and setting up the Sydney Ferries Corporation as a separate entity.

After this initial step, Labor’s privatisation plans had been lying dormant for the last few years - until two tragic accidents put the Sydney Ferries service back under the spotlight.

In January 2007 a RiverCat and a fishing dinghy collided under the Harbour Bridge, killing a 72-year-old man. The Ferry Master was charged with culpable navigation and currently faces trial.

Two months later - and again under the Harbour Bridge - four people were killed when a HarbourCat ferry collided with a 10m wooden cruiser.

These tragic events provided the cover for the Iemma government to establish the Special Commission of Inquiry into Sydney Ferries. With Bret Walker SC at the helm, the Commission began its work in April 2007 just weeks after Labor’s re-election.

Many believed that the Walker Commission inquiry was nothing more than a pub-

Not surprisingly, the report calls for the ferry service to be opened up to increased involvement of the private sector. Various privatisation options were outlined, including a “public private partnership (PPP)” that would keep the ferries and wharves public but privatise the operation of the ferries.

Despite the disasters with current PPP infrastructure schemes like Sydney’s cross-city tunnel and airport rail link, this appears to be NSW Labor’s preferred option. It is also how privatisation works in the public transport systems in Melbourne, Brisbane and London.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) submission to the Walker inquiry used the example of the British rail system to show just how wrong privatisation can go.

PPP has led to the ludicrous situation where government spending on the British rail network has sharply risen after privatisation. Spending on British Railways has more than tripled from £563 million in 1990 to £1.8 billion after privatisation. On the London Underground it has gone up 20-fold, from £44.1 million in 1997 to £1.48 billion in 2005.

The overall profits of the British rail companies grew by 20 percent in 2004 to just under £300 million.

It is no wonder that the corporate sharks have already begun to circle around Sydney Ferries.

One company that is keen is the French-Australian partnership Transdev-TSL, who already operate Melbourne’s Yarra Trams, the privatised Brisbane Ferries, Sydney’s ShoreLink buses and other public transport in Europe.



lic relations stunt to enable the NSW Government to privatise Sydney Ferries. They were right.

The 430 page report was handed down on November 1, 2007. It suggested the cut back or winding up of unprofitable services such as the Parramatta RiverCats and the high-speed Manly JetCat. It noted the failure to integrate ferry times with the bus and train networks and recommended the replacement of the aging ferry fleet.

Another is Veolia Transport who currently run Melbourne's trains, Sydney's monorail, light rail, 250 buses as well as ferry operations in Europe are keen. Macquarie Bank is also hovering.

The different unions that cover Sydney Ferries workers have come out against the privatisation of the service. Unions including the MUA, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (who cover the maintenance workers at the Balmain shipyard) and the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers have released joint anti-privatisation media statements.

In July last year morning peak hour commuters were given leaflets issued jointly by the various unions and copies of the 10,000 anti-privatisation postcards that were mailed and sent to Premier Morris Iemma.

MUA members also leafleted the thousands of people that watched the traditional Australia Day ferry races at Circular Quay in an effort to raise community awareness about the privatisation threat.

There has been no definite announcement from the NSW Labor government about the future of Sydney Ferries. That is only because Iemma has put the privatisation of Sydney Ferries on the backburner while he concentrates on selling off the state's electricity grid.

The unions at Sydney Ferries could have sent Iemma a powerful signal on the day of the February 26 rally against electricity privatisation.

On that day thousands of blue and white collar electricity workers took part in a 24-hour strike across the state. The rally outside parliament house has anywhere between 4,000 to 10,000 people (depending on estimates).

Solidarity action by workers at Sydney Ferries would have demonstrated to Iemma and NSW Labor that all workers and unions that are threatened by future privatisation are willing to unite and act in the defence of those who are currently fighting privatisation.

Unions such as the MUA and the AMWU did send contingents to the rally (which fell on the same day as the MUA's monthly stop-work meeting).

But a concrete act of solidarity action - ranging from a fare free day to a snap strike to coincide with the start of the rally - would not only send a warning shot across Iemma's bow.

It would also point to the need for joint industrial action by all those threatened with privatisation as the way to victory for the electricity workers who are under fire today.

[Shane Bentley is a member of the Maritime Union of Australia and publishes a regular Sydney maritime industry job bulletin. Visit .]

SWEDEN - ATTACK ON WORKERS' RIGHTS

Call for solidarity action for fired 63-year old against union busting company
From: tyreso.ls@sac.se

Comrades in Poland and the United States and worldwide!

Arta Plast spits on workers' rights - workers are worn out and thrown out.

The Swedish company Arta Plast (AP), has fired more than 30 employees, among them a member of the Swedish anarcosyndicalist union SAC, Jorge Perez Salvo, originally from Chile. Jorge will have to leave his job in August 2008, not a day more than the law demands, and without any economic compensation. By then he has worked for AP for 11 years, and has only 2 years left before retirement. He is the only one over the age of 60 who has lost his job and many of those who will stay have worked much shorter periods than him. The MD of AP, Helge Steg, said himself at an informal information meeting that Jorge has had poor health and heart-problems the lately, as answer on a question about Jorge's chances to keep his job.

Arta Holding owns AP, manufacturer of plastic products with about 80 employees. Until October 2007 they also owned the company Haemedic, without its own pro-

duction but owner of the patents of a medical product (and the production process) called blood lancets. Those were made by AP. Due to hard competition all of Haemedic was sold for 23,000,000 Euros to Polish competitor HTL Strefa, which will take over both patents and production of the lancets. HTL Strefa's new factory is situated in Lodz Special Economic Zone Industrial Park with special privileges until 2017.

Jorge's union, the Local Federation of Tyresö (neighbouring Stockholm) of SAC (Central Organization of Sweden's Workers) has demanded that Jorge keep his job or that AP pay him severance pay corresponding to two years wages, which would be only a small part per thousand of the amount that Arta Holding got for Haemedic.

In negotiations the company AP has refused to give anything at all. That is why we now are taking offensive action against the company.

This is not only about one single comrade being treated badly, the company has a known history of union busting, and most of the workers are afraid to do or say anything against their bosses. AP is also well known at the local health service with many workers suffering from physical pain related to wear damage due to the hard work, as well as stress related syndromes.

Now is about time to fight back! On tuesday 25 of March at 7 o'clock in the morn-

ing when day shifts workers come and nightshift workers leave, we will have our first action at the AP facility in Tyresö, Sweden.

The companies involved also have facilities in Poland and the United States, which is why we now ask for international support. You can help us by sending protest letters to Arta Plast, Haemedic and HTL Strefa. You can spread this information and ask others to protest as well. Or, best of all of course, if any of you have the possibility to organize protest actions of any kind at the facilities of Haemedic and HTL Strefa, you can use the text above to put on leaflets. Also, any information that you might have or find about those companies that can be used against them will be useful and appreciated.

If you feel this is a case worth supporting we will be deeply grateful for any action of solidarity.

Revolutionary greetings

Peter Forsberg

Tyresö LS

SAC

Companies in Poland:

HTL-STREFA S.A.

Headquarters

ul. Adamówek 7

95-035 Ozorków

T: +48 42 270 00 10

F: +48 42 270 00 20

POLISH LABOUR NEWS

Illegal firing of a union member in Lionbridge Poland - case update

In December 2007, a trade union was formed in a multinational corporation called Lionbridge Poland*. Lionbridge is a translation company that translates the content of web sites, technical manuals and software applications. It has offices on several continents, notably in Europe, USA, India and China.

The union was inspired by the ideas of ZSP (Związek Syndykalistów Polski), that is direct-democracy, recallable delegates, lack of head of the union (only delegates limited to executing specific mandates and with no decision making power). All financial information have to be strictly accountable to union members. The idea to create a union came from some of the workers in the company, who were getting tired of more "cost cutting" and fewer and fewer benefits from the company, longer overtime, late payments for some of the workers, wage discrimination and no perspective of getting raises.

The employers were trying for a long time to pretend that something is being done for the workers by creating a "representative of the crew" (they are actually obliged by law to do it). Of course, the representative could not obtain any benefits for the workers and was treated only as a puppet.

The creation of the union came as a shock to the management, because this was something that they did not control. The first reaction of the bosses was: "it's such a shame for the workers" "now the workplaces will move to India and Polish workers will be worse off because of the union". The management was actively looking for an excuse to do something about the emerging organizing in the workplace.

They found a pretext in the form of an article published on different web sites, called "Lionbridge: globalizing low wages" in which some generally known and publicly available information about Lionbridge was presented (about how wage levels of interpreters in Ireland have fallen since Lionbridge took over a big contract with the courts, about how Lionbridge made sure that the workers of a company they bought in India were treated as "non-workmen" by Indian law (meaning

they have no labour rights) and about the creation of a trade-union in Lionbridge Poland).

All of this was public information (some of it must be made public by a corporation traded on the stock exchange like Lionbridge). However, it seems that some public information can at the same time be secret!

One of the founders of the trade-union in Lionbridge, Jakub Gawlikowski, was accused of "leaking secret information" in an article published on the web, despite the fact that the authorship of the article could not be proved and that the article contained only a number of facts that were published before and readily available on the net for



anyone looking for "Lionbridge". It seems that unconnected pieces of information available on the internet are not "secrets", but once someone puts the pieces together and shows the logic of greed and cynicism behind the actions of a corporation, then these pieces of information become "secrets".

Polish law protects trade-union members against being fired. Still, many companies, such as Auchan, Nestle, and now Lionbridge have decided to break the law and fire trade-union organizers in the hope

of breaking the back of the trade-unions. In most cases, such attempts have backfired, the bosses lost in the labour courts and were forced to reinstate the fired union members. In the case of Lionbridge, the trade union quickly gathered many new members, and now 50 out of 300 workers in the Polish subsidiary of Lionbridge are unionised. The tactic of scare-mongering did not really work. What the bosses tried to do at the same time, was to give the workers some concessions that the official "representative of the crew" was trying to obtain for a long time: free coupons worth about 100\$ per person, additional vacation benefits, etc... All those small concessions which seemed impossible to obtain before the union was formed - suddenly were "generously" given by management.

The union has expressed solidarity with the fired union co-founder and has sent an internal letter stating that the company did not provide any proof of Jakub's guilt (he is being accused of such ridiculous things as "influencing the stock exchange to the detriment of Lionbridge" because - according to the bosses, and this is a direct quote from the firing notice, "financial markets all over the world are looking very carefully on anarchist and antiglobalist sites and any article that is published on those sites can have a deep influence on the stock market" - this is not a joke!). The management replied to the letter by saying that all this should be better kept secret for the good of all involved parties (it just shows how scared they are of publicity and revealing the truth).

The current situation is such that the court case against the illegal actions of Lionbridge will cost about 2000 USD and some additional money will be needed as deposit in the court (about 1600 USD). The court case will almost certainly be won, but it might take over a year.

All donations would be very welcome, as Jakub's financial situation is quite difficult at the moment, as he has lost the job at the company and needs to cover high legal expenses.

Jakub Gawlikowski
In Solidarity,
ZSP

* An antiauthoritarian anticapitalist

STOP PRESS

Dear comrades,

The members of ZSP owe a great thanks today to our comrades in Slovakia (and IWA sec) for what we understand was a successful action in Zilina at the Slovak office of Lionbridge Technologies (which is under the same boss as the Warsaw office). That company sacked our comrade from the Warsaw office shortly after form-

ing a union, but even more people joined up after that. We understand that the comrades in Slovakia encouraged the local tech workers to organize themselves and also protested against this dismissal by going to the office and not just picketing outside, but actually going inside the office and talking to the workers and management. We are sure this made a good impression on everybody and hope that the workers will start to contact each other with the goal to organizing internationally

because that's how the struggle has got to look in such international firms where every worker is used to compete against the other in the race towards the bottom.

Our best wishes to the Slovakian comrades of Priama Akcia!

Laure (on behalf of ZSP Warsaw group)
warsaw@zsp.net.pl

EGYPTIAN LABOUR NEWSFLASH

Railway, agricultural workers protest and walk out

March 13th, 2008

by Joseph K.

Recent weeks have seen a continuation of the workers' unrest in Egypt, with over 2,000 agricultural workers going on all-out strike at the end of February and 100 railway workers protesting their pay and conditions at the start of March.

Agricultural workers strike & sit-in 2,200 workers and employees at the Ramsis Company for Agricultural Projects and the South Valley Company for agricultural development in Toshka went on open strike Feb 27 and staged a sit-in at the companies' management. They protested against the decision by the Construction and Development Holding Company to reduce variable wages by 20% after the Investment Minister's decision to shut down the Trade Holding Company (THC) and make the two previous companies affiliated to the Construction and Development Holding Company.

The strikers affirmed they would not go back to work even if this led to the loss of crops, unless the management backed down on its new decision and improved their situation. According to them, the current management had already decreased their wages by 20% last year. The workers mentioned that the management had sent a note to Cairo calling for the dismissal of some of the workers' leaders who were only demanding their rights.

On top of their requests was to ensure the workers (80% of the total manpower is not ensured), give them annual raises like public sector workers, and provide medical insurance for them and their families or adequate health care. They pointed out that the government had reduced the

wages for highly qualified workers from LE 700 to LE 550 and paid extra-labour effort (LE 150) only to workers who had made 100% efforts.

This percentage, though, is subject to the department chief's mood, as they said, and the chief often runs the company based on



the workers' clan of origin.

There is an ongoing conflict between workers from the north, who take on leading posts at the company, and workers from the south, who work in agriculture. Yet, most of these workers are highly qualified or are average. Moreover, 100% effort is recognized only to those having a 100% attendance rate, with no exception for ordinary leaves and absence due to illness. A year ago basic wages were reduced by 20%.

Railway workers protest

One hundred employees of the Egyptian Railway Authority from El-Wosta, Beni Suef, protested against pay and conditions March 1. The five-hour protest, which began at 10 am in El-Wosta,

was intended to draw attention to a number of demands. Railway drivers are calling for the payment of withheld housing allowances and other benefits, increased pay and health insurance, which they say are received by employees based in other areas of Egypt, but not by them.

They are also calling for better maintenance of rolling stock whose neglect poses a safety risk, according to train drivers, and demand that they be based in central Cairo, rather than the Upper Egypt governorate of Assiut. El-Wosta is 90 km from Cairo and yet we report to Assiut, which is 300 km away it's illogical, a train driver Ahmed Ramadan explained. Ramadan told Daily News Egypt that further action is planned.

We will hold another protest on March 10 if management does not respond to our demands, he said.

Thanks to:
Libcom

More strikes expected as Greece passes pension reforms

March 23rd, 2008

by Ed

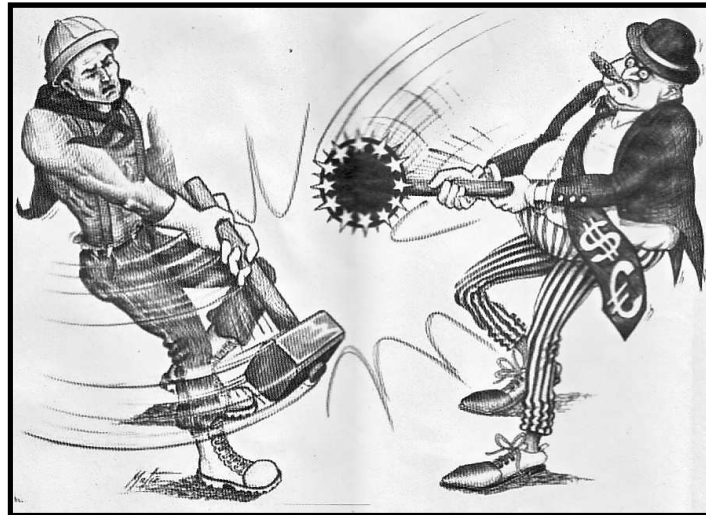
Greek unions promise to continue protests against the government's pension reforms, passed on Thursday.

The pension reform raises the retirement age for women to 65 and workers in hazardous industries will have to work an extra two years. Many accuse the conservative government of going back on pre-election promises not to cut pension rights.

Wednesday saw 2.5 million workers walk off the job, grounding flights, closing schools, ports and tourist sites as well as bringing public transportation to a standstill. Power was cut, rubbish piled up in the streets and ATMs also ran out of money as electrical, refuse and bank workers all stopped work.

Students in Thessaloniki occupied their university's administration building in the morning, forcing strike breaking employees to walk-out. Electricity in the building was also shut off by the students in solidarity with workers from the public electricity

company. Protesters also threw rubbish bags into large shops or banks which had remained open and threw red paint over



the Bank of Greece.

In Athens, picket lines formed outside large shops to stop them from opening and there was also a blockade of the Protoporia

bookshop by 60 people in support of a courier who had been sacked for participating in the strike. Skirmishes broke out throughout the day between strikers and police who used teargas and rubber bullets against protesters. Over 100,000 people also took part in a rally organised by the GSEE (private sector) and ADEDY (public sector) unions.

Several hundred protesters remained outside parliament throughout much of the evening vote on Thursday, some clashing with police.

Bank workers, teachers and lawyers remained on strike on Friday, while electrical workers at state power company PPC, on strike for more than two weeks, said they will meet later to decide how to continue their action. Bin staff have gone back to work and have started clearing up the mounds of refuse piling up in the streets, though it is esti-

imated that it will take over a week for rubbish levels to return to normal. However, the bin workers' union, POE-OTA, promised it would soon resume strike action.

BRITAIN TODAY

Edinburgh rail workers in wildcat strike

February 6th, 2008

by Ed Rail

Signallers in Edinburgh went on wildcat strike, bringing the station to a standstill for an hour on Monday. The action at Edinburgh's Waverly station was taken in a dispute over the provision of cover for breaks. David Simpson, of Network Rail in Scotland, said the "deliberately disruptive, unprovoked action" was "completely unacceptable". Ian MacIntyre, the RMT's (rail union) regional organiser for Scotland, was reported as saying: "Our members took the action in the interests of safety." They felt they had been working intensively, looking at screens to ensure the safe movement of trains, working in the same way as air traf-

fic controllers. After four hours, they felt they had to have their personal needs break." Mr Simpson said the workers left their posts at about 1225 GMT, returning to work at 1335 GMT. Their action resulted in all services being brought to a controlled and safe stop, with no services



running through the station for an hour. He added: "We understand that this action was taken due to a disagreement within the signalling centre over arrangements for cover during breaks. Failed discussion Mr Macintyre, the RMT's regional organiser for Scotland, told the media: "Our mem-

bers took the action in the interests of safety. "They felt they had been working intensively, looking at screens to ensure the safe movement of trains, working in the same way as air traffic controllers." After four hours they felt they had to have their personal needs' break." He added that the signallers had been trying to reach agreement with management over cover for breaks but this had failed to happen.

Quit Buggin' Me!

5th Mar.

There has been uproar this past month because Sadiq Khan, a Labour MP, had his conversation recorded by the police when talking to one of his constituents, an inmate at Woodhill prison. The whole thing comes from something called "the Wilson doctrine", a 40 years old policy that bans the secret services or the police from tapping MPs conversations. Obviously, this doctrine has been breached in this case. But should we worry? MPs are exempt from the level of surveillance that the rest

of us are subjected to because their conversations with constituents are considered confidential. Does that mean that communications between us “commoners” is not private? Apparently so. Make no mistake about it. Up to 600 agencies can bug you, follow you undercover, intercept your letters, and more. These can include your lo-

On the frontline

Postal workers in Oakham, Leicestershire, walked out in defence of a sacked colleague in February. The 57 workers were angry that a postal worker had been summarily dismissed. After two days on wildcat strike in February, refuse workers at

(single status pay) would lead to pay cuts for around 4,000 members of staff, with some seeing their pay slashed by as much as 18,000 pounds a year.

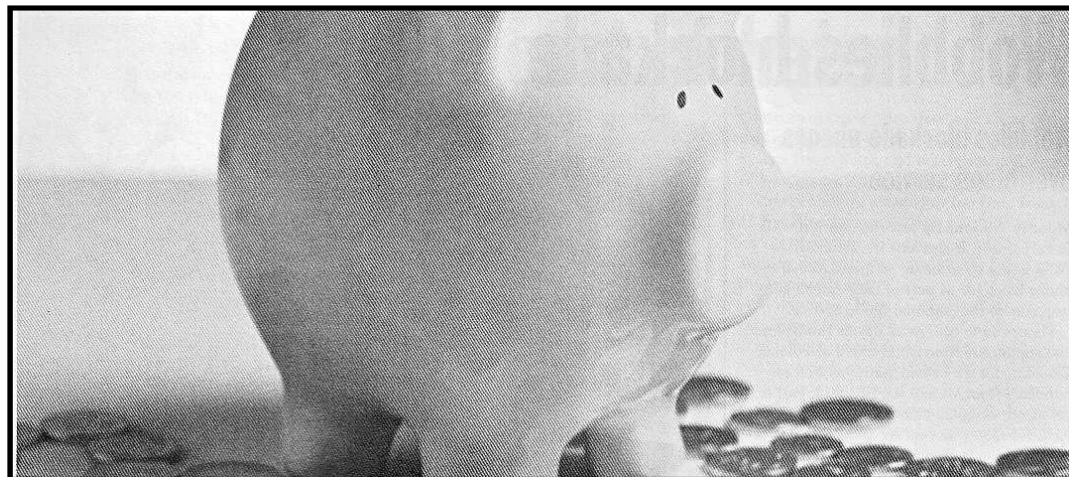
National science museum staff have voted overwhelmingly to strike over pay and plans to close the civil service pension scheme to new members. Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) are furious that a below inflation pay offer has been imposed on them at a successful time for the museum.

Pensions rip-off

The government has refused to accept responsibility for 125,000 pensioners ruined when their company pension schemes collapsed. When an appeal confirmed the High Court’s judgement against the government, James Purnell, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, appealed in his turn to the House of Lords.

During the 1990s, ministers made false statements about protection for pension funds introduced by new legislation. The Parliamentary Ombudsman took two years to investigate and in a report in March 2006 said the government had misled workers about the safety of occupational pension schemes and called for full compensation. The government refused to pay. Under pressure it created a ‘Financial Assistance Scheme’, which so far has paid out tiny amounts and which provides a far lower level of compensation than today’s workers have. After a High Court ruling last year, the government reluctantly raised the level of FAS compensation, but not by much. The pensioners have suffered, not just in terms of pensions, but with the stress of the situation affecting their lives and health, with some losing their homes. There is no compensation for this in the FAS. That is why the pensioners have fought on. The Government knows that it will probably lose its appeal. They are deliberately obstructing any payouts in a deeply cynical move, banking on more pensioners dying before they have to make compensations.

*Thanks to
Resistance Bulletin*



cal council, the royal mail and even the fire brigade (let alone the secret services or the police). Every year a quarter of a million applications are made to bug or follow people. Think of the “no ifs, no buts” adverts that local councils have put up. They are saying it very loud and clear: if you receive benefits of any kind, chances are your local council are going to investigate you and most likely put you under surveillance. There are even new plans to fit chips in wheelie bins to keep track of how much rubbish you put in. Where’s the limit? Cameras in your kitchen to fight obesity? After all, it kills more people every year than terrorism. Will MPs be exempt from this snooping as well? Probably.

Brighton’s Hollingdean Depot won their fight against management bullying. The striking bin staff had been complaining about management bullying after staff refused to double their workload due to lack of vehicles and under-staffing. As part of what workers called management’s “bully tactics”, four refuse workers had been moved onto different crews sparking anger amongst the depot and leading to the wildcat action. The four workers have been allowed back onto their old crews and management have started negotiations over staffing levels and vehicle numbers. Around 20,000 council workers walked out in Birmingham. A new pay structure



U.K. ANTI-ID CARD CAMPAIGN

This is the text of a leaflet produced by Nottingham Defy-ID in February 2007, group in which Anarchist Federation members are involved. It was also reproduced in the 'No Borders reader' distributed at the No Borders camp at Gatwick in September where a workshop was held on ID and Border control. The leaflet examines the link between the introduction of identity cards and databases resulting from the ID Cards Act of March 2007, and the British state's intention to introduce much stricter border controls through a new UK Borders Bill ...

Defy-ID

Groups and individuals in the Defy-ID network have for the last few years been campaigning against the introduction of a national ID scheme, biometric upgrading of passports, and the surveillance society in general.

At the same time, No Borders have been tirelessly protesting against maltreatment and incarceration of asylum seekers in detention centres and against repression by government (and privately run) immigration 'services'.

It's becoming clearer than ever that these campaigns should be working closely together ...

Because ID has already been tested on asylum seekers and will also be used first on other 'foreigners'.

The Home Office is now much more open about its intended use of a biometric ID database scheme to control Britain's borders. This is not completely new — we know that ID technologies have always been tried out first on asylum seekers.

For example, the ARC 'smart card' that is carried by asylum seekers is used for their regular reporting and to obtain NASS payments from the post office. It is an ID card which goes hand-in-hand with their digital photos and fingerprints being stored by the Home Office. Asylum seekers are fingerprinted when they report to their reporting centre or police station. Non-European Union visitors will soon be made to have biometric visas, including those already in Britain. Plus, the European Commission has already put in place a plan to require children to be fingerprinted and photographed for passports from at least the age of 12 years old (EU member states can decide to make this even younger). What is

perhaps less well known is this was trialled on asylum seekers in Britain. Children as young as five are known to have been fingerprinted at asylum centres in Croydon and Liverpool, for example. Plus we are starting to hear about police mobile fingerprinting units being used to further harass people in cars and on demonstrations.

The plan for a new National Identity Register has also been dropped in favour of combining three existing databases to create a 'meta-database': The Home Office asylum-seeker database; The Identity and Passport Service database, and; The Department of Work and Pensions 'National Insurance' database. Although the eventual plan is to extend ID cards and a meta-database to everyone in Britain, this change of policy makes it clear that asylum seekers and other 'foreigners' are first in line for more repression.

Because of the new 'UK Border Bill'

The government seems to have put the powers given to it by last year's Identity Card Act on the back-burner (at least for now), whilst biometric passport and visas are coming very soon. A new UK Border Bill introduced by Home Secretary John Reid on 25 January 2007 now aims to formally bring together border controls and compulsory ID.

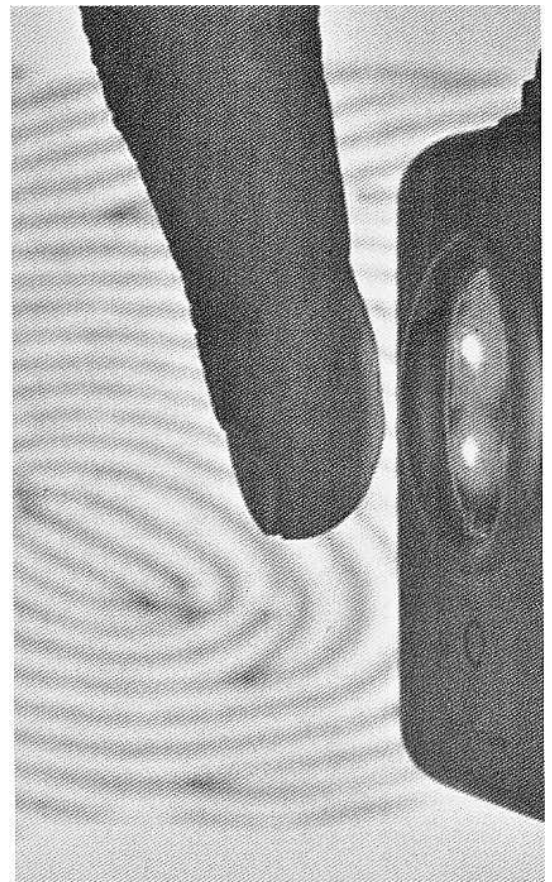
With relation to Biometric registration the Bill (amongst other things): "confers a power to make regulations to require those subject to immigration control to apply for a ... "biometric immigration document"; and to require a biometric immigration document to be used for specified immigration purposes, in connection with specified immigration procedures, and in specified circumstances where a question arises about a person's status in relation to nationality or immigration."

Solidarity

Exposing the government plan to get a national ID scheme accepted

The single issue campaign No2 ID has previously attempted to keep the right-wing on board by telling them they can be against a national ID scheme because it "won't work to stop illegal immigration". Countering this, the Defy-ID network has seen that the government's ID system will work against immigrants. ID cards and databases will be used against 'foreigners' in general as a central part of the government's plan, before they extend the scheme to everyone. The fact that ID cards and fingerprinting technology has been tested on asylum seekers shows that the state is prepared to impose ID on those people with the least voice to oppose it, before rolling it out to the whole population. Together, Defy-ID and No Borders could help get the message across that the government is trying to get its ID plans accepted by cynical scapegoating of immigrants and asylum-seekers. This would hopefully make for a stronger anti-ID campaign that is based on solidarity rather than fear.

Thanks to "Organise"



BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Rebel Alliances: The means and ends of contemporary British anarchisms, by Benjamin Franks, Edinburgh & California, AK & Dark Star 2006

Anarchy In The UK # 2 by Graham Purchase

This is an analysis of the Introduction and first two chapters of Frank's long, complex and scholarly book. A concluding article covering chapters 3-5 is forthcoming.

Introduction: Post Anarchism and Carnivalism

Franks now believes the anti-globalization movement has been a fizzler. He admits in his Introduction that the initial inspiration and long since discarded first draft of his book focused upon the forgotten events surrounding the Carnival Against Capitalism protests of June 1999. (p.11) Like other recently published British academic books inspired by these protests (Kina's and Sheehan's recent work are considered in Anarchy in the UK # 1) Franks regards his analysis of British anarchism as compatible and influenced by postism. (p.17)

I personally found a refuge from postism within anarchism and fervently prayed that some academic bright-spark wouldn't start promoting a silly and bewildering term like post-structuralist-anarchism or post-anarchism. But alas, we now have a small number of UK theorists whom in some sense identify themselves with such unnecessary and intimidating proliferisms.

Postism describes a generalized apostasy; the embracement of no-sign-postism with the corresponding rejection of any notion of essential truth. But a quintessential qualification of a post-whatever-ist is a university post or aspirations to secure one. Postist's conclude that we are now post-everything but can never hope to have any sign-post to anything. According to Postism all goal posts are meaningless because we are in a post-game philosophical situation where no viewpoint won and can never win because, the ball of knowledge has been irretrievably kicked

out of the stadium of ideas by a handful of French academics whose philosophical opponents ridicule and dismiss them on account of foggy thinking and stylistic flatulence.

The answer as to why the anarchist movement concerns itself with trendy French intellectual sophistry must be sought in an examination of the deep malaise of anarchist thinking in particular and contemporary philosophical enquiry in general. I don't believe we exist in either a post-capitalist or post-anarchist environment and the concept of a post-modern society is a purposelessly meaningless phraseology. I'm not too dumb or unfashionable to understand or embrace postism. I simply reject it as a conceptual vacuum; a



philosophically and politically empty post-box. The assertion that there is no truth is a paradox explored by Plato who understood that the holder of this belief must assert the truth of their belief in there being no truth. Extreme relativism of this sort is a contradiction and doesn't lead anywhere. Postism is a postlude or last-post intellectual position from which nothing of philosophical value can be extracted or expected. In practice postism rests not upon relativist sophistry but upon academic vulturism. This involves the post-graduate, post-doctoral and post-mortem dissection and separation of the leading insights of anarchist thinking from the corpse of the workers movement

during an era when the worker has been shackled to the Thatcher-Regan whipping-post and endured a 30 year lashing by Anglo-American style state-capitalist madness. The result is oil and water wars, depressed wages, rising food prices and a global environmental backlash that threatens the very basis of civilization. Meanwhile Franks earnestly tells us that: "class struggle anarchism is consistent with contemporary poststructuralist anarchism, sometimes referred to as 'post-anarchism', 'postanarchim' or postanarchisms that, reject a universal vanguard and assert a prefigurative ethic in agreement with the non-essentialist theories of Foucault." (p. 17)

Chapter 1 British Anarchist History

Chapter 1 of Franks' book provides a brief historical overview of anarchism in the UK. The inordinately dull history of British anarchism is little more than a photocopy of the European movement. The British may be great for many reasons but anarchism hasn't been one of them.

British anarchism has been assured a footnote in the history of the movement only because a number of prominent European anarchist personalities reluctantly resigned themselves to exile in the UK "beginning in the 1880s" (p.31). Kropotkin, Malatesta and Rocker are the most famous members of these immigrant groups of continental anarchists that founded revolutionary organizations whilst settled in the UK and introduced their ideas and tactics to the British people in the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods. By the end of World War I (1914-18) these Russian and Jewish émigré communities had largely evacuated. Anarchy in the UK would undoubtedly have gone extinct, or never have taken root at all, were it not for the arrival of fresh influxes of continental anarchist refugees fleeing from the Fascist victory in the Spanish Civil War (1936-9): "providing a core of activists to revitalize what seemed to be more of a monument than a movement". (p.49-50)

By 1944 Franks suggests the "character of British Anarchism" had, "changed from a working class based revolutionary movement to a more liberal-pacifist, intellectual and artistic centred avant-garde." (p.53)

This is far too rosy an assessment. Kropotkin in 1904 grumbled that British anarchism was “Anarchie de salon—epicurean, a little Nietzschean, very snobbish, very proper, a little too Christian”. The decline of autonomously organized mass British working class activity in my opinion began with the end of the Great Dock Strike of 1899. The Parliamentary Labour Party established in 1893 drew the mass of British workers down a social-democratic path the utter bankruptcy of which was not fully revealed or contested until the arrival of Thatcherism followed by the torpor and phonyism of the New Labour sell-out. Contrary to Franks optimistic account the Bertrand Russel school of British anarchism was fully entrenched by 1920 and its dominance was carefully and expertly nurtured during the 1960’s by Ward’s Anarchy magazine catering to liberal academic and student audiences.

British liberal-academic-anarchism was involuntarily jolted into a copycat repetition of ideas and approaches emerging from the unanticipated student-worker uprisings of Paris 1968. British academic anarchist’s fawning obsession for contemporary French postism is a continuation of the post 1968 copycatism of fashionable continental writers. French postism has nothing to do with Britain or with worker’s struggles and I personally struggle to see that it has any original contribution or insight that might improve or supplement traditional anarchist critiques and their vision of a free society.

Miniscule groups of revolutionary syndicalists or ‘class struggle’ anarchists continued to exist and function in the UK from the 1940’s up until the present day. These groups rather than finding inspiration in fluffy French philosophie focused their attention upon the Spanish Civil War experience. Because Franco’s dictatorship survived well into the 1970’s British activists could usefully busy themselves supporting the numerous imprisoned and impoverished Spanish comrades. Black Flag, the most consistently read anarcho-syndicalist orientated paper of the 1980’s originally grew out of a Spanish prisoner support group founded by “Meltzer and Christie” (p.65).

In the late 1970s British youth achieved what the French are famed for doing best. Brand UK swept the globe with the novel and imaginative Punk fashion statement. Though only an artful anti-statement it was arguably the first indigenously brewed and original expression of the spirit of Anarchy in the UK. After a century of foreign colonization Punk was a welcome and uniquely British youth movement unrelated to competing groups of émigré origin or focus and the bleating of liberal academia. Though punk rapidly and predictably became chic it clearly had-

n’t originated in middle class fashion institutes, modelling schools and coffee table literature. It emanated from working class music subculture that sought to find self-expression and DIY fun without reliance upon an entertainment industry dominated by the inane or pallid offerings of commercial disco-pop and aging middle class hippies. Though ostensibly a cultural or pop-art phenomena its sources were detached from the clutches of immigrant ideologies, bearded professors and middle class university drop outs sporting long-hair and sandals.

Punk was purely a teenybopper movement absolutely detached from the traditions of the organized working classes that by this time was a graveyard of timid or complacent Laborites and mad supporters of dead Russian dictators (Trots, Leninists and Stalinists). The syndicalists or class struggle anarchists were hardly more attractive



or influential. The remnant UK worker orientated cells exhibit sectarian division to this very day on account of individual adherence or rejection of The Platform—a document on anarchist revolutionary organization composed by Russian exiles fleeing the Bolshevik dictatorship in 1922. (p.19, 83, 219-24)

There is no basis to Franks’ implicit thesis that, UK punk anymore than blues, reggae, jazz, world music, mods, rockers or hippies have had any real political significance or anchorage. Popular music-fashion maybe fascinating, but it is usually youth led and orientated with a generationally unique, unrepeatable and very limited expiry date. Fashion is transient, historically ephemeral and also, often an ethnocentric and geographically defined aspect of cultural change and evolution. There may well be Chinese, Senegalese, Turkish or Indian Punks but Punk certainly didn’t originate or influence anything in these places. American’s generally have no experience of UK punk beyond costume caricatures in goofy US college movies.

Franks plausibly suggests the most significant political or literary product of punk was the satirical news-rag Class War, founded in 1983. Class War brilliantly exploited the bloodthirsty luridness of native British working-class comic staples like The Beano and The Sun in a then fashionable punk-zine style & format conveying aggressive class confrontation and worker’s revolution.

Class War was over ridingly just a bunch of bored and angry people having some fun. Their paper may not have achieved much circulation, readership or influence had its launch not coincided with major historic struggles involving mass self-organized working class opposition to Thatcher’s state-capitalist agenda as recorded by Inner City Riots, The Miners Strike and Poll Tax Rebellion.

The Miners Strike is perhaps the most significant and best-known struggle of this period. At the local village and regional level the Miners were supported by a plentitude of truly inspiring community based and international autonomous initiatives. (I with other anarchists at this time fund-raised for the Dover and UKC miners support groups). But the National Union of Mineworker’s Leaders were acolytes of the soviet empire and their stunted political vision could only have taken Britain down an unattractive economic and social road mirroring the dull, discredited and doomed former East European Soviet-Communist States. These dictatorships were overthrown during the popular destruction of the Berlin wall only a few years after the Strike’s failure.

The destruction of the Typesetters, Miners and Seaman’s Unions by Thatcher’s paramilitary forces and the successful resistance to the imposition of a nationwide Poll-Tax heralded “the decline of the Class War Federation that had thrived during the build up of opposition to the Poll Tax”. (p.80)

I personally thought Class War antics and literature hysterically funny at the time and gleefully sold copies of their rags to 14 year old boys who’d cadge the 20 pence cover price from their harassed and bewildered mothers accompanying them at bookstalls held at colleges, local events or demos. But Class War’s founder Tim Bone’s self-indulgent autobiography is in my opinion informative and useful only to the extent that it gives some insight into the silliness and organizational hopelessness of Class War’s imaginative self-promoting stunts and timely comic news-sheet. This is not a criticism so much as a statement about a group of people who had a lot of fun spreading the word of anarchy in a humorous way.

Franks post doctoral-level study with 100 pages of footnotes is designed to help poli-

tics students better understand the subtle nuances and critical discourses contained within Class War's intellectually undemanding ideology for their social philosophy assignments upon post-whatever-ism. Frankly Class War poster politics and format doesn't require a post-obit and post-paint gloss of Francophile post-fartism (or any knowledge of political theory at all).

Franks history of British anarchism more or less ends with Class War's demise. He correctly regards Class war as having been generally focused upon community at the expense of industrial perspectives and actions. We are then told that SolFed the longest surviving syndicalist cell in the UK: "no longer attempts to create separate anarcho-syndicalist unions but create instead networks of militants within sectors of industry" (p.82). Franks also makes note of the fact that: "class struggle groupings have increasingly involved themselves in environmental actions." (p.87)

Franks historical chapter fizzles out by feebly observing that, the "continual flux of groups appearing and dissolving" in response to local and global issues are finding "new internet forums for sharing information and planning mutually supportive actions". (p.91) Despite the potential of the net many contemporary cyber-ghetto discussion groups obtain no larger contribution, involvement or audience than if they'd conducted their discourse in the real-life ghetto by means of yellow sticky paper Post-it notes on the door of a communal refrigerator. Indignantly blowing off about the virtues, stupidity or elitism of post-fartism within Internet postings to anonymous cyber-post-anarchists is surely merely a postponement of the Day of Reckoning with Capitalism. Franks book is arguably the best of a large but conceptually Pretty Vacant crop of post 2000 post-fartistes on a University Bus to Nowhere with No Future.

Chapter 2 Ethical Anarchism and "Non-Essentialist Prefigurism"

Essentialism:

In the first half of chapter 2 Franks presents a passable and pretty much standard undergraduate introduction to moral theory by considering the ideas of Aristotle, Kant, Mill and Hegel. Then with the usual post modernist arrogance Franks concludes: "classical anarchism" as with all past philosophers was, hopelessly "essentialist" with its "fixed, benign, humanist" ideal of "human nature" (p. 112).

Kropotkin entirely contrary to Franks conclusion believed that, the essential lesson of systems science is that nature has never been constant, fixed or predictable. Kropotkin's scientific investigation of ice ages and recent climate changes led him before becoming a revolutionary to conclude that, there is "nothing permanent in nature" it has "no fixed laws" and our "perception of stability" in nature is but a "provisory" and ever-changing "equilibrium" out of which new orders emerge continually from "everywhere and nowhere" (Anarchism: Its Philosophy & Ideal).

Kropotkin's 'classical anarchism' clearly states that human nature isn't fixed and capable and susceptible to change and evolution like everything else in nature. Kropotkin believed humans are a "result of the environment" in which they "grow up". Kropotkin wrote several pioneering books and some brilliant pamphlets upon Prison issues. He anticipated the superficially original insights of Foucault who first acquired notoriety for his work on prisons. Kropotkin believed that the "artificial environment" of the prison led to a perverse situation where it became difficult to discern whom the real criminals are: The inmates or the keepers? This is the fundamental point that Foucault's prison musings continually seek to underscore and Kropotkin illustrates this idea with his observation of an inmate who "shows disgust in the keeper's trafficking in tobacco as he divides his bread with his neighbour". Appoint saints in a prison officer's uniforms, suggests Kropotkin and, the "institution" will soon make them "petty, mean persecutors" (Prisons and Influence on Prisoners). Kropotkin is arguing that there is no fixed or essential human nature and that it is the constantly changing, infinitely and locally variant natural or artificial environments or contexts where, people are born, raised, live or work that, shapes their ethical outlooks and moral behaviour.

I'm unconvinced that this sort moral relativism helps in our search for collective moral guidelines and practices that might improve society and better inform our actions, but it's certainly at the heart of Kropotkin's classical anarchist thinking and not something that postism uncovered a century or so later.

Prefigurism:

Prefigurism is Franks' very intimidating word for the simple idea that: Our actions should be consistent with or reflect our ideals in terms of organizational methods or lifestyle choices. A vegetarian interest group could not consistently serve meat-

balls at a fundraiser and, would automatically prefigure and promote their collective dream of a vegetarian society with sumptuous culinary offerings of fruit, nuts and vegetables.

Both Franks and anarchists generally are right to focus upon the questions of means and ends in response to the ghastliness of Stalinism or Pol-Pot's Cambodia. In the light of these monstrosities committed in the name of socialism and collectivism it has been vitally necessary to carefully examine the tactical failures and human misery that authoritarian utopian experimentalism has caused in overriding ethical values and considerations in the name of a grand revolutionary Project imposed by intellectuals from above through the agencies of a police state.

In my view there is a certain amount of methodological validity and desirable intellectual objectives in Frank's "prefigurative" analysis/approach/perspective/method of understanding, reconciling or making practical political activity and propaganda consistent with the broad theoretical ideals of the activists and with the goals of their actions. Politicians continually and blatantly act in ways that are in principle contrary to their stated ideals and the desire to better or more consistently conduct the affairs of anarchist propaganda and direct action groups is admirable.

But the misdirected and obsessive application of prefigurative thinking within and between propaganda cells in the anarchist movement over the last 40 years has yielded small, isolated, unhealthy, ineffective, self-centred, insular, cultish cliques connected with particular micro-ideologies, subcultures and lifestyles whose energy is expended by inwardly focused critical (Maoist-like) self-examination of the group's internal processes, members and relationships and, correspondingly exhibiting unrelenting acrimony or intolerance towards different lifestyle groups; all of which shun or fail to engage with the broader society they say they want to change. Their activity is focused upon themselves and their propaganda group to the exclusion of anything much else.

Anarchist propaganda groups try to encourage and educate poor people to autonomously self-organize work without and in resistance to capital and state. Clearly propaganda groups should (but often don't) act in a comradely and co-operative ways. But they can't prefigure or create detailed model examples of their member's social daydreams. Because they are just the dreams of a handful of likeminded people who have yet to convince the rest of the world that their dream is worthy of consideration (let

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LETTER

Dear RW

I would like to make a suggestion. I think in order to connect to more people, we should address to the unemployed as well, especially during recession times like this. Economically welfare states such as Australia has lesser potential towards a militant workers action. Working class in Australia have loose chains tied to their workplaces and mortgage brokers which makes them feel privileged.

As a naturally unemployable working class person, I find it easier to discuss militant action with someone whom doesn't work in a critically important industry. As I said before, the rest feel lucky and privileged. I also would like to point out the example of the Argentine unemployed workers autonomous movement. Although recession in Australia will not be as severe as it was in Argentina, we still should develop tactics to inspire wider community towards a radical action.

In solidarity,

A. Australian IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) member

Reply

The point is that workers in critically important industries can play a very important role in turning the tide against the employer offensive. By means of direct

action at the favourable time they would seriously affect the profit making of the corporate setup and exert major pressure on the state apparatus. The major victories they could win and the large scale of their actions would inspire workers in less important sectors to also take action to achieve their own demands. Some important historical examples of this action is the public sector strike waves in France whose origins were in the railways in late 1986/early 1987 and December 1995.

In NSW in early 2004, we witnessed the spectacular action of the militant "underground" train drivers movement "Drivers For Affirmative Action Group" which won large bonuses via direct action involving a "work to rule" style campaign and inspired less strategic rail sectors such as train guards to consider taking similar action.

In this context of raised morale within the workers' movement, anarcho-syndicalist approaches involving advocacy of direct action, grass roots control of union decision making and mandated and recallable union delegates/officers would make much more sense to militant workers and our agitation would be greatly assisted. In contrast to the current situation today of low morale, where many workers go along

with the various betrayals of the union bosses and their various rorts and high salaries and feel helpless to resist many attacks of the bosses and the State.

Rather than worrying about the bosses' ploys of dividing workers on the basis of petty privileges, the way to go is to assist workers in these strategic sectors in their united self organisation, helping raise their morale. Such activity would have little to do with churning out a bit of militant propaganda or criticism of the capitalist set, but be practical and "strategically focused" work such as helping with the distribution of workplace newspapers in these key sectors and helping acquire interviews and articles from correspondents and contacts on the job. Unemployed militants are well placed to help out in all this activity. Such nitty gritty work is particularly important today given the difficulty workers have in such critical sectors in organising themselves due to long shifts, the intense pace of work and increased surveillance and networks of bosses' stooges on the job. This activity would play a crucial role in short circuiting these obstacles and assist networking of militants, counter management and union boss propaganda and misinformation, etc and help create the basis for militant action and self organisation.

Ed.

Cont From Page 17 alone possible). The effort to spread our dream has been hindered by inwardly misdirected and self-destructive attempts by small groups of dreamers to prefigure their dreams within their own dream factory. The attempt to prefigure anarchism within the processes and identity of the propaganda organization or group is relatively new. Kropotkin was the editor of Freedom because it was his newspaper not that he wasn't perfectly able to secure the cooperation of numerous other likeminded people over several decades. Le Revolte was the French equivalent to Freedom for which Kropotkin contributed articles continuously for 30 years. Le Revolte was a product of Kropotkin's greatest disciple, Jean Grave, the paper's individual founder, owner, editor, publisher and printer. The fact that these historic propaganda outfits were not collectives and didn't aspire to become collectives is because their purpose is to convince people to cre-

ate collective approaches in their everyday working lives in opposition to state-capitalism and, not a daft attempt at figuring out some utopian configuration of collectivized organization out of the propaganda effort. The widespread practice of prefigurism since the 1970's has failed because it puts the cart before the horse. A serious lapse in temporal logic has resulted in ineffective weak anarchist organization and individual demoralization of comrades when their propaganda group hasn't transfigured into the utopian model prefigured or all-figured-out in their anarchist dreams. These preoccupations have predominated because anarchist ranks over this period have been weakened by a very large percentage of disillusioned and psychologically damaged refugees from Leninist party cults.

Despite the centrality of the anarchist bookshop in recent anarchist organizational history in the UK (and Australia) Franks makes no mention of these institutions in his long book. This is a serious

omission because prefigurist navel-gazing and ensuing acrimony has led to the downfall or stagnation (relegated to small museum and hobby or pastime affairs) of all anarchist literary sales establishments. These still often serve as the base-support apparatus for the conception and production for some of the journals upon which Franks bases his study.

I will never forget how a German comrade once bitterly complained how their shop front was destroyed by incoming members whom vehemently objected to the sale of honey on account of exploiting Bees. This is far from an isolated example and perfectly illustrates the self-destructive stupidity of fanatical prefigurist holier than thou approaches to anarchist propaganda ventures conceived as operating according to perfectly figured out utopian collective principles and processes that even include concern and provision for the psychological welfare of insects.

It is also no wonder that people aren't at-

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NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news lately has been the mass protest outside the NSW Parliament on Tues, 26th Feb to protest the Iemma ALP Govt's plans to privatise the electricity industry, organised by Unions NSW. Such protests are purely symbolic and are unlikely to seriously worry Iemma Govt and its corporate masters. However, it certainly provides a means for the union bureaucray to divert grass roots attention from taking the type of hard hitting direct action which would discourage privatisation. The privatisation of the electricity industry will certainly have a domino effect, encouraging the Iemma and other Govts to privatise other Govt owned utilities and industries., and moves by the union bureaucracies to merge and form new more centralised unions.

One sector which has already been targetted is the Sydney Ferries. Whilst the MUA (Maritime Union of Australia) hierarchy has opposed industrial action to fight the attack, and is spreading some lame story that the Govt isn't serious about selling off the Ferries. See article page 8.

An important supporter of the Iemma Govt Privatisation rampage on the Federal level is the newly elected Rudd ALP Govt. Its also spurring on the employer offensive with planned major staff cuts to the Commonwealth Public Service and its Agencies. Particularly focusing on Centrelink with plans for 2000 job losses. Another nefarious Rudd Govt initiative is the likely move to introduce a welfare ID Card.

For an analysis of the campaign in Britain to resist the Labor Govt's plans to introduce an ID Card, see article page 14.

Currently in an important sector in the NSW Railways there is a significant revival of militant activity, the ASN is assisting militants in this work. See article page 6.

Rebel Worker has an internet web site. Its address is www.rebelworker.org Many articles from back issues of RW are available on the site.

Help Build Rebel Worker! Your Help is particularly sought with distribution. So why not order bulk copies to distribute and sell at your local shopping centre on Saturday mornings, leave at the lunch room at work and at your local café or library.

Your assistance on the financial plane is also very welcome.

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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.....

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If undeliverable, return to
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Continued From Page 18 tracted to groups with boy-scout constitutions and impressively pompous but hardly credible claims to be a functioning example of an anarchist 'collective'. In the real world everybody disregards the company's statement of ethical and corporate principles. People want to collectivize something in the real world of work and are put-off by the imaginary Hokum conjured up by a handful of argumentative dreamers with their boy-scout promise to prefigure the best collective business practice in the production and distribution of anarchist propaganda.

Franks usefully explores the idea that anarchist social goals are prefigured by Direct Action. The non-hierarchical and egalitarian principles of anarchism are prefigured in virtuous or courageous "direct actions" of the "oppressed", "subject" or "effected" groups and classes (whether consciously anarchist or not) autonomously self-organizing to resist state-capitalism. There is an obvious

chasm between political and ethical theory or ideals and the actual practice of politics in general. All politicians have filthy hands because they specialize in making unethical compromises with some awful consequences in pursuit of glorious and greater ends. The Direct and unmediated Actions of workers and other oppressed groups in their collective struggle against injustice, Franks argues, unlike the secret police forces and representative hierarchies of the state, employ means that are compatible and prefigure their vision of a free and equal society.

Franks is correct in recognizing that, his "book analyses anarchist tactics through moral categories developed in Aristotle's Ethics" (p. 101). The viewpoint that virtue is learnt and expressed by individuals through their own concrete moral practice and activity is a currently fashionable modern Aristotelian approach to reconciling abstract theoretical principles and actual political practice in the attainment of social happiness. An Aristotelian approach is consistently applied by Franks'

in his lengthy consideration of anarchist prefigurative ethics and the use of violent or non-pacifist tactics by anarchist or oppressed groups in pursuit of social justice or ultimately peaceful ends and goals. In opposition to the pacifist cult that has dominated British academic anarchism for a century Franks argues in a predictable post-modern fashion that violence isn't wrong or right and that, depending upon the context it may be perceived as morally outrageous or supremely courageous. The virtuous, just or courageous use of violence in pursuit of social happiness is relative and depends on participants knowing or having learnt what is tactically responsible, useful, acceptable or appropriate with respect to the situation and community in question.

(To be concluded)

PHILIPPINES

Solidarity of Cavite Workers (SCW)

From: International Labor Rights Forum
<http://www.laborrights.org/>

"Another Labor Leader Murdered in the Philippines"

On Monday March 10, Gerry Cristobal was killed in an alleged "traffic altercation" by the Philippine police. Before this incident, there had been 2 previous attempts on Gerry's life. Gerry was a leader

with the Solidarity of Cavite Workers (SCW), an alliance of labor organizations and unions. Gerry's murder is the latest in a string of murders and violence that labor rights advocates in Cavite have endured for the past few years."

Solidarity of Cavite Workers (SCW) The SCW is an alliance of labor organisations and unions based in Rosario, Cavite. The SCW was then a programme of the Workers' Assistance Center Inc. (WAC) before it became an independent organisation. <http://scw-philippines.blogspot.com/>

