

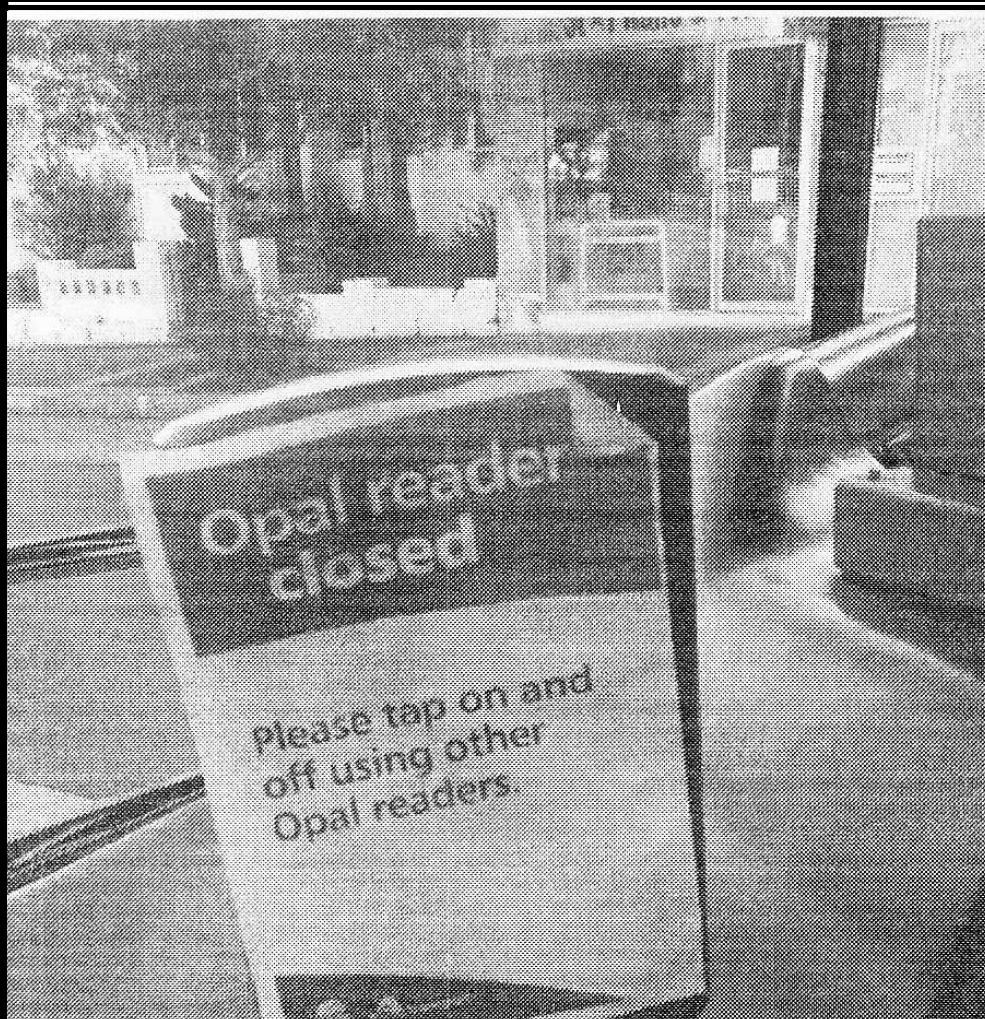
# REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia  
Vol.38 No.1 (225) April -May. 2020

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

**SAFETY FIRST FOR FRONT  
LINE TRANSPORT &  
OTHER WORKERS!  
DANGER MONEY!  
NO SERVICE CUTS!  
NO RETRENCHMENTS!**



**GOVERNMENTS &  
THE COVID-19 CRISIS P.2**

**NSW RAILWAY NEWS P.3**

**FAIR GAME PART 3. THE  
MOMENT OF TRUTH P.4**

**SYDNEY BUSES NEWS P.7**

**VICTORIAN RAILWAY  
NEWS P. 9**

**USA LABOUR NEWS:**

**WAVE OF WILDCAT  
STRIKES P.10**

**GRASS ROOTS SELF  
ORGANISATION DURING  
THE FRENCH PENSION  
STRIKES P.12**

**BOOK REVIEWS: BOOKS  
ON THE SPANISH  
REVOLUTION & CIVIL  
WAR 1936 - 1939 &  
GLOBALISATION AND  
NEO-LIBERALISM P.15**

**GEORGE BARRETT  
1888 -1917 Anarchist  
Organiser & Orator P.18**

**NEWS & NOTES P.19**

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

P.O. BOX 92

BROADWAY 2007 NSW

E-mail:

Via our web site  
www.rebelworker.org

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

AUSTRALIA: \$12 a year

OVERSEAS

\$25 (Aus.) by Air

\$20 (Aus.) by Sea mail

Free to Prisoners

Supporters Subs. \$40 pa

Receives copies of RW & ASN

Pamphlets as published.

Send to the above. Cheques should be made out to Black Cat Media.

## Governments & The Covid-19 Crisis

**Original article by Anarchist Federation (Britain) on 15 March 2020: <http://afed.org.uk/more-of-the-state-youve-got/>**

As various governments leap into action, or not, over the reality of the coronavirus pandemic, it's evident that the different approaches to containment and delay have a heavy ideological component. — The mass surveillance approach of China has seen blocking of criticism of the state on the widespread social media platform WeChat and citizen reporters being taken off the streets, whilst the e-commerce app Alipay (like Paypal in UK) platform has been commandeered to build and track individual movements. It is doing this by assigning a 'Alipay Health Code' status of Red, Yellow or Green which is then being used to control access to work, public facilities and movement in general.

In the UK, the central government's approach is equally ideological, strongly criticised last week for being too 'laissez-faire', seemingly

having more concern for the economic system than its people, especially with the idea that letting the population reach a 'herd immunity' is almost something to encourage, which would be a death sentence for many people who are immuno-compromised or have particular disabilities or long-term conditions. Added to this is the state's health ministry choosing to inform itself by expertise in behavioural economics and public health 'nudging' to try and encourage citizens to do the right thing. As a result, action to stop social contact has been led as much by non-state decision making such as the decision of sporting bodies to cancel games and fixtures into the future.

In Italy, the government has moved to being more controlling, introducing fines and threatening prison time for people who don't adhere to the new travel bans.

For anarchists then, a ray of sunshine must be the evidence of rapid formation of mutual aid groups across the country, especially on Facebook. Freedom has published a list of these which is growing very fast indeed:

<https://freedomnews.org.uk/covid-19-uk-mutual-aid-groups-a-list/>

Mutual aid has been forced on us by the state's neoliberal approach to public services and life in general during the last decade of austerity. The idea from HM government that older people over 70 years old will be asked to begin isolating themselves "within the coming weeks" for "a very long time" is obviously going to create worry and practical difficulty that will require a huge community effort to overcome. But many people are already involved in mutual aid activities such as food banks. Existing tenants', neighbourhood and church groups are likely to be at the forefront of rapid response. Anarchists, with our experience of running local solidarity networks, are already involved in setting up or supporting new

groups. These groups will help ensure people who are vulnerable will be fed and get their medication, and can coordinate things like childcare for healthworkers and others.

Workers are also taking action, pushing their employers to do the right thing more quickly. It was evident in the University strikes last week that strikers on picket lines had used the solidarity and communications on the ground to make bosses act more quickly to close off things like 'open days' that would have seen mass movements of potential students and parents across England. All over Italy, workers in factories, steel works and docks who are not able to do their jobs at home, are striking over their bosses lack of care.

Coronavirus won't be beaten by community mutual aid alone, but groups that are involved in direct communication are surely a vital public health resource that will help counter fear and dampen the noise of bad information more effectively than direct marketing or broadcast media messages. More optimistically, if not too optimistic in this present crisis, these types of groups may well act as a springboard for the better social cohesion that is part of what it will take to achieve social revolution in the future. Hopefully too, mutual aid of the kind envisaged by anarchists will also realise a vaccine in due course, by means of scientific cooperation. On the other hand it will be important to learn from the different ways states are responding to the outbreak because the measures being put in place will no doubt be applied in the near future to control borders and movement, whether for the purpose of internal repression within states or regions or to deal with the climate emergency or other yet unknown crises that capitalism will create.

*Read in Italia. Translation by FAI/Umanita Nova:*

### ASN APPEAL

**The Anarcho-Syndicalist Network requires suitable cost effective permanent premises. A \$750, 000 is urgently sought to buy premises for the proposed Rebel Worker Anarcho-Syndicalist Network Media Centre.**

**Please make out Cheques to Black Cat Media & Send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW.**

# N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

## Checking The DOO Push

Some of the most important news in the NSW Railways was the defeat of a push by the rail bosses to introduce DOO (Driver Only Operation) on new interurban trains as of 16/12/19. The push was assisted by RTBU NSW Secretary Alex Claassens with his okaying of a fake so called trial, which is code for permanent. Following the publication of the last edition of Sparks, exposing the ploy on the front cover, the bosses and Claassens backed off. As was subsequently revealed by the union officials, DOO would also mean a cut in guards wages, transfer to customer service, undermining their industrial muscle and becoming 'dead meat'. Awaiting culling by the bosses further down the track. Whilst drivers would be bribed with thirty pieces of silver for compliance. Courtesy of the 'Facilitation Clause' in EBA 2018 slipped in by Claassens and the bosses, DOO would be facilitated to the Millennials, Waratahs and Tangaras, and open the doors for the NSW Railways privatisation carve-up as private operator's costs would then be cut. The likely new strategy of the bosses and Claassens is to wait until mid Dec. 2020 and then make a renewed push with DOO on the new trains. Taking advantage of the holiday period to minimise the impact of any industrial 'blue' if required, to let off some steam and easier to cover up any accidents with the aid of the corporate media and the union officials.

## Union Bosses Look to Okay Stand downs for those Over 60!

Looks like the bosses want to stand down employees over 60. Instead of the union pushing for further protections and safety measures they are pointing to the door and siding with the employers by trying to get them covered by the new "job keeper" wage subsidy. The union is saying that they agree that the over 60's should be stood down. The subsidy goes to the employer who is the real beneficiary off this scheme. Employees would be left out in the cold and might find it hard to get reinstated.

[http://www.rtbu.org.au/leave\\_no\\_worker\\_behind](http://www.rtbu.org.au/leave_no_worker_behind)

## Pandemic and the Struggle for Dignity

**The union movement in Australia's response to the Corona Virus is failing working people.**

The A.C.T.U. pushed for a wage subsidy by sitting down with Employers and the Government for a cash top-up for the bosses in order to be able to operate and to pay wages. The \$1500 subsidy will go directly to employers. It is nowhere near enough to keep families going, especially if they have a mortgage or are paying rent. Most rents these days are over \$500 per week.

Nothing was negotiated to protect essential service workers such as those in public transport or those in health related jobs from the hazards of the COVID-19 virus. Proper protective equipment for transport workers has been scarce, yet people have been face to face with the public during their shifts putting them at considerable risk of getting the infection. Many public transport workers have been proudly going to work each day to transport other

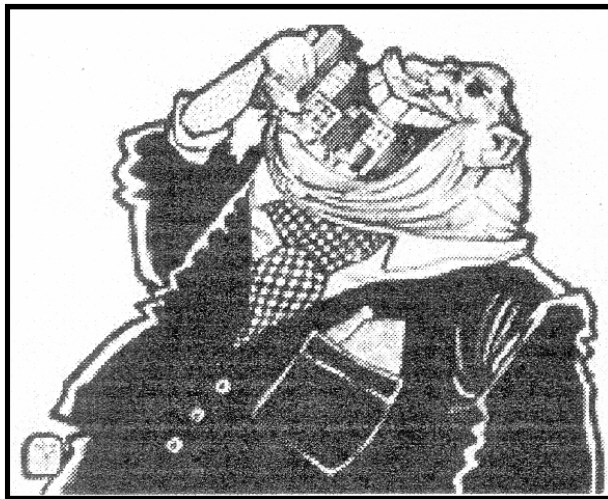
for up to 72 hrs. An increased cleaning frequency reduces the risk but never totally. That's also an added risk to employees. (Singapore buses cleaned at end of each trip ABC-TV.)

Recently baggage handlers working for airlines in several states became infected on the job. This emphasises the real danger to public transport workers who do similar tasks.

During the corona virus crisis sick leave should have been open ended or special leave conditions needed to be applied that are open ended. You don't get over a serious infection like this in 2 weeks. The R.T.B.U. is saying that 20 days Special Leave is being made available to Government employees. This is only available once you have used up your sick leave.

However Special Leave is not guaranteed in the private transport sector. Although Special Leave has been agreed to on a case by case basis according to the R.T.B.U.

The problem comes once "Special Leave" runs out. According to the R.T.B.U. "You can approach your employer for consideration but once paid leave has run out, unpaid leave must be taken."



Sydney Trains is asking employees over 70 years of age to stand down for the duration of the Coronavirus Crisis. They will be paid their base rate for the 20 weeks of Special Leave, no penalties or overtime. What happens if this goes for more than 20 weeks is anyone's guess?

If ever there was a time when a union had the upper hand it is now. At a time when our politicians are obsessed about keeping the economy functioning we have an inordinate amount of leverage to get the best deal from the employer that we can.

That should be possible even if we are classed as an "essential service".

Failing to organise and put forward a credible protection for the members that you represent is not only reprehensible but criminal. In the interests of keeping the economy ticking over employees in public transport, education, and health have been thrown to the wolves.

In Victoria passenger numbers have dwindled by an estimated 90%. There it is a mostly privatised public transport service. Operators such as Metro are claiming that they are losing up to \$12 million a week. Other private operators also have their

people essential to keep the system functioning. For that they should be commended. But for all the risks they are not paid an extra cent for the hazards they face each day. There is no doubting that one of the passengers they are transporting each day is the SARS-2 Cov virus itself.

Trains and buses are cleaned and disinfected only once per day, although there are few passengers. The risk of virus droplets from hands and mouth remaining live on surfaces such as seats and railings is real. In scientific tests done on virus droplets it has been found to remain infectious

hands out, although the lockdowns have only just started. Within this background the Rail Tram and Bus Union and T.W.U. have called on the Victorian Government to keep public transport operating.

The danger of such a position of the unions is that they could be misinterpreted as putting the safety of workers in jeopardy just as the teachers, building workers and shop assistants have been. The economy and profits have been placed ahead of the well being of workers.

Here was a chance for the transport unions to push forward a more radical agenda of bringing public transport back under public ownership and control. A similar position should have been proffered when private hospitals started standing down staff due to the curtailment of elective surgery. Instead the private transport operators are likely to be handed large amounts of cash to keep operating.

We have a whole lot more to win. The A.C.T.U.'s position of pushing wage subsidies is about returning to the status quo. The market superstructure and the way it operates is the issue that is stopping us dealing with the COVID-19. It certainly is not the cure.

When you have businesses that pay very little tax and have done little to contribute to the national interest this becomes a class issue. Shareholders will still get their dividends paid for by the labour of the labouring class. Workers get less for putting their lives at risk.

Who actually gets the \$1500 "Job Keeper" subsidy that goes to the employer? It's the employer that benefits the most, since his wages bill is paid from taxes on ordinary workers. He/she pockets a massive surplus value. The worker gets his normal wage

which now costs the boss or owner \$1500 less. Once the worker gets the money in his/her pay they will be paying tax on that money anyway.

Sally McManus, Australian Council of Trade Unions boss working out a deal with the L.N.P.'s Christian Porter is symptomatic for working people of just how rotten this whole system has become.

Something the union has never understood is the issue of the class divide.

Saving business to save workers sends the wrong message to workers. Should we always be grateful for what the boss trickles down to us? This goes against Sally's earlier position where she raged about the whole concept of "trickle down" economics.

The A.C.T.U.'s total disregard of a dialogue with workers who will bear the brunt of this crisis is still the main problem within the union movement. Negotiations (cooperation) are taking place at the highest levels between Capital and Labour yet the opinions and aspirations of workers have been neglected as they have been for a very long time.

Instead of advancing the interests of workers, getting them to believe that we don't need the bosses and owners of capital to secure what we want, the A.C.T.U. pushes workers back into the arms of parasitic owners of capital.

The alternative of organising workers on the ground to demand what they rightfully produce and the usurping of the national wealth they produced to change the relationships in production forever has never been contemplated by the A.C.T.U.

The Coronavirus crisis is a crisis primarily of the market. The crisis came about because of the needs of the voracious self serving neoliberal beast that puts profits before people. We forget that workers

have been forced to their knees because of what this system has been doing to them. This is a life and death struggle not just against the virus but a system that is also killing us. Simply put, we are struggling not because the bosses and owners are struggling, but because they have taken away our lifelines, our medical services, our public infrastructure, our natural environment, our dignity and our lives.

This is a life and death struggle from here on in. We cannot return to the status quo that the A.C.T.U. so desires.

The urgent need for a rank and file union movement to deal with the struggles that lie ahead has to be built. The traditional union movement structures have shown that the survival of their own bureaucracy is more important than the needs of their own members.

After the virus passes (we don't know how long that will be) the Government and Bosses will be trying to "balance the books" again. The shareholders will be asking workers to tighten their belts so that they can increase their profits again. Put bluntly, workers will be under attack to give concessions to the bosses amid cut-backs to social programs and wages. The money always comes from us, not them.

It's then we must be prepared to fight as hard as we can to hold on to what we have and what we hope to achieve. The failure of traditional establishment unions to consult with workers that are directly in the firing line means we cannot trust their compromising attitude when it comes to our lives and livelihoods. We have to build trust amongst our work colleagues, our workplaces and our communities. Start the dialogue and organisation now, while we still can.

### **Fair Game part 3, the moment of truth! And what a moment it is!**

**Here we are in 2020, right at the beginning (or is it the middle no one really knows) of a physiological bio-weapon war. Yes, it's a bio war and the corona virus or COVID-19 is a bio-weapon, designed in a US university lab (a front of course for a bio-weapons facility) then sold to the Chinese by Obama and Co back in 2015, when he was still the president. The bio-weapons facility in Wuhan "tweaked" it a little and gave it what these doctors of death call "gain of function" to be able to attack and disable your immune system, which of course is an auto immune disorder. Yes, HIV and the "news" isn't telling you that and the government cer-**

tainly isn't. It gets worse, this bio-weapon is a virus that can reactivate. And worse still, it sterilises men. Beginning to get the picture? This virus and others like it are bio-weapons designed to depopulate the planet. Oh yes there are others. How do you think they got to 19, there was/is an 18, 17 and 16, etc, which should make Greta Thunberg and Co happy at least? But let's not get distracted with deluded little puppets. It's also a psychological war, designed to create fear on a global scale and in the process destroy economies and with them your job, standard of living and your freedom. All designed to create a global dictatorship based on communist ideology for the masses and fascism for the elite and it's been in the making for a

long time. And don't worry the elite shorted the markets months ago and are making billions if not trillions, while your super is getting shredded!

Welcome to the future, you're in it now scrambling around for toilet paper, afraid to sneeze or cough for fear that you might need to go and get yourself tested and worse self-isolate or be forced to isolate. But secretly in your mind you don't know if it's all real or just hype? First there was the footage of Chinese in Wuhan just dropping dead or flailing around uncontrollably and then dropping dead, apparently. Then there was footage of Chinese driving around in trucks, vans and even motor-bikes spraying or fogging some type of chemical around deserted streets. Some had white coats, some didn't, some had face masks, some didn't. It all looked a little fake, staged even. The Chinese would-

n't fake or stage something would they? You know the answer to that is yes, of course they would. Remember, they just lost the trade war with Trump and there was all that unrest in Hong Kong and elsewhere they've been trying to suppress. Of course, they'd fake anything, do anything to save face and how convenient all the protesters are off the streets in Hong Kong now and no "mean and nasty" talk of a lost trade war to embarrass Xi, emperor for life. Oh, that's right they supposedly had a communist revolution to get rid of emperors, so that would mean that Xi is dictator for life. Doesn't sound very democratic does it? Funny how these communist so-called leaders always end up dictators for life and their children and close relatives end up owning most of the property and recourses of the "people", the proletariat. But I digress.

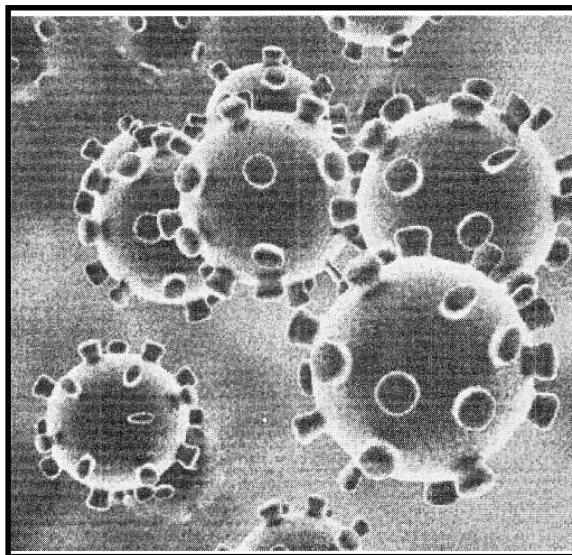
Then they put out that fake bat soup story and the so-called western media, "the news", just regurgitates it as if it was fact. Then the big show of spraying and fogging empty streets. But wait, what were they spraying around anyway? They allegedly don't have a cure yet. But if it was all staged wouldn't those sharp "investigative" reporters and current affairs programs with all their resources and technology be able to see through the fakery? Wouldn't Waleed or Karl or Lisa or any number of those overpaid, condescending talking heads be able to spot the fakery. If you thought that, you'd be wrong. Sorry to bust your bubble but the answer is no. Waleed and Karl and Lisa and all the rest are just overpaid, photogenic teleprompter readers and the media doesn't bring you "the news", it's just a scripted show just like any other theatre. The so-called mainstream media is just a giant propaganda machine and the "beautiful" and "insightful" "reporters" and "commentators" are nothing more than overpaid actors reading a script. The media was designed to feed you propaganda and at the same time make you pay for it through advertising and selling you overpriced products you generally don't need. It was all theatre coordinated and then released to the "media", "the news", to hype it up and set the scene for panic. And that's exactly what we've got a panic, no one really knows exactly why, but the media, "the new" keeps hyping it. All sound a bit farfetched, a little bit out there? Tin foil hat stuff? Let's see.

What is a bio-weapon?

"A biological agent (also called bio-agent, biological threat agent, biological warfare agent, biological weapon, or bio-weapon) is a bacterium, virus, protozoan, parasite, or fungus that can be used purposefully as a weapon in bioterrorism or biological warfare. In addition to these living or repli-

cating pathogens, toxins and bio-toxins are also included among the bio-agents. More than 1,200 different kinds of potentially weaponizable bio-agents have been described and studied to date.

Biological agents can adversely affect human health in a variety of ways, ranging from relatively mild allergic reactions to serious medical conditions, including serious injury, as well as serious or permanent disability or even death. Many of these organisms are ubiquitous in the natural environment where they are found in water, soil, plants, or animals. Bio-agents may be amenable to "weaponization" to render them easier to deploy or disseminate. Genetic modification may enhance their incapacitating or lethal properties or render them impervious to conventional treatments or preventives. Since many bio-agents reproduce rapidly and require minimal resources for propagation, they are also a potential danger in a wide variety of occupational settings." Source Wikipedia.



Defiantly sounds like we've got a bio-weapon here and bio-weapons are used in bio-warfare. But how deadly is it really? Does it kill more people than the flu or pneumonia? The numbers keep changing because the people that get counted as having or not having it keep changing and it all sounds like someone is being creative with the numbers. And why is that? What are they hiding? Is it that this is a targeted bio-weapon that only kills a certain age group or a certain DNA type or maybe only those who have a predisposition to a certain disease or an existing condition? No one really knows and those that do know aren't allowed to tell the rest of us. But what we do know is that the media, "the news" have wiped up a lot of fear, when at all other times it's played down. And that smells like psychological warfare! Are we at war? Is that what they're really trying to hide from us?

What is Psychological Warfare?

Psychological warfare is a broad term, but in all documented cases, the concept uses actions intended to reduce an opponent's morale or mental wellbeing. The aim is to use manipulative tactics to intimidate or persuade a person or people. This process is usually employed through propaganda. Propaganda is ideas or statements that are false or exaggerated and is deliberately spread to influence the masses. The goal of psychological warfare is to intentionally use propaganda to manipulate another and break down their will without using physical force.

To get a clearer picture, let's look at some techniques that have been used throughout history:

Psychological warfare uses fear to break down the psychological wellbeing of an opponent. Look at the list below for techniques that can be used to spread psychological uncertainty, fear, and terror.

**News Outlets:** The news is a large information source that all can tap into. Government run or independently owned, the "news" can spread whichever information it chooses. By infiltrating a news source, a population could be tainted by volatile information.

**Threats:** Threats of violence, restrictions of freedom, and control can be made to instil fear in the people. These could be empty threats or threats with true intention. Whatever the case, threatening a group or groups of people can psychologically damage the recipients over time, putting them in a state of constant fear, anxiety, and terror.

**Leaflets:** Leaflets are pieces of paper with manipulative messages/pictures that are dropped from the air over areas of war or political unrest. The goal is to persuade the recipients to either support or oppose the political event taking place. (Could the contrived and irrational hoarding of toilet paper be a sophisticated form of manipulative message that supports and reinforces the fear being whipped up by the media, "the news")

**Objects:** Using objects such as t-shirts, posters, hats, pins, and more is an effective way to get a message across. The objects can become symbols for larger messages regarding politics, radical beliefs, religious philosophies, etc. These objects can become tools for promotion and even worship.

**False flag:** A false flag is when a group releases false information or carries out a fake terror attack to instil fear in people. However, the blame is put on another group or organization to gain control over the masses and shift opinion.

**Media:** While it may not seem like it, films, music, and books can act as tools for



psychological warfare. The messages in media can rewrite history from a new perspective and/or put new ideas in the minds of the populous. Source Wikipedia.

Let's take a closer look at Propaganda. What is propaganda:

Propaganda is information that is used primarily to influence an audience and further an agenda, which may not be objective and may be presenting facts selectively to encourage a particular synthesis or perception, or using loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response to the information that is presented. Propaganda is often associated with material prepared by governments, but activist groups, companies, religious organizations, the media, and individuals can also produce propaganda.

A wide range of materials and media are used for conveying propaganda messages, which changed as new technologies were invented, including paintings, cartoons, posters, pamphlets, films, radio shows, TV shows, and websites. More recently, the digital age has given rise to new ways of disseminating propaganda, for example, using bots and algorithms to create computational propaganda and spread fake or biased news using social media. Source Wikipedia.

Clearly, we're in a 21st century psychological, bio-weapon propaganda war. But who is at war with whom, you may ask? There are no clear protagonists, only fear gripping the whole world and shutting down economies globally. Perhaps the answer lies in more questions. Who has the resources and capacity to develop bio-weapons? Who has used propaganda in the past, perfected it and is most likely using it now? Who is most likely to engage in psychological warfare? The answer seems obvious, the government. But which government, since seemingly opposing governments are being similarly affected and are using similar draconian kneejerk reactive tactics against their own people? Who has the capacity to orchestrate and coordinate a global campaign of fear and disinformation using bio-weapons, psychological and propaganda warfare? The answer of course is the global financial and technical elite, through their network of secret societies that formed the foundations and continue to be the controlling elements of government agencies, both covert and overt. These same elite through their various secret societies and its members are able to manipulate government organisations and political parties to serve their goals. This of course includes the development and manipulation of various political ideologies to control the masses.

Bringing it back closer to home, in Australia, one such secretive organisation is the

Fabian socialists. Fabian socialists are a front organisation for various secret societies "The Australian Fabians have historically had close ties with the Australian Labor Party (ALP). This is evidenced by the number of past ALP prime ministers, federal ministers and state premiers who were active members of the Australian Fabians while in office. The Australian Fabians have had a significant influence on public policy development in Australia since the Second World War, with many of its members having held influential political offices in Australian governments."

Here's a list of some members of the Fabian Socialists that you may have heard of:

Prime Ministers: Julia Gillard (2010—2013), Bob Hawke (1983—1991), Paul Keating (1991—1996). Gough Whitlam (1972—75)

Premiers: John Cain (Victoria 1982—1990), Don Dunstan (South Australia 1970—1979), Geoff Gallop (Western Australia 2001—2006), Neville Wran (New South Wales 1976—1986)

Politicians: Chris Bowen (Shadow Treasurer 2013—2019), Jim Cairns (Deputy Prime Minister 1974—1975), Arthur Calwell (Opposition Leader 1960—1967), Julie Collins (MP 2011—2013), Frank Crean (Deputy Prime Minister 1975, Treasurer 1972—1974), John Faulkner (Senator 1989—2015, ALP National President 2006—2008), Luke Foley (Leader of the Opposition, New South Wales 2015—2018), Bill Hayden (Opposition Leader 1977—1983), Stephen Jones (MP 2010—), Andrew Leigh (MP 2010—), John Lenders (Treasurer, Victoria 2007—2010), Clarrie Martin (Attorney General, New South Wales 1941—1953), Race Mathews (MP 1972—1975, MP, Victoria 1979—1992), Jenny McAllister (Senator 2015—, ALP National President 2011—2015), Claire Moore (Senator 2002—) Queensland Patron, Tanya Plibersek (ALP Deputy Leader 2013—2019), Bill Shorten (Opposition Leader 2013—2019), Wayne Swan (Deputy Prime Minister 2010—2013), Susan Templeman (MP 2016—), Tim Watts (MP 2013—)

Other members: Phillip Adams (broadcaster), Van Badham (writer and columnist), David Charleston (trade unionist), Eva Cox (writer and academic) National Patron, Henry Hyde Champion (journalist), Charles Marson (clergy), Bernard O'Dowd (writer), Nettie Palmer (writer), Charles Strong (clergy).

The Australian union movement has more than a small connection with the ALP and according to the ACTU, in 1891 unions in New South Wales and Queensland created a new political party to represent the

movement. It was the birth of the Australian Labor Party. Interestingly, the emblem of the Fabian socialists is a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' and represented its preferred methodology for achieving its goal. This was later changed to a turtle for obvious reasons. And so, the question is who do these secret societies and their members really represent and what is their end game. It is through secret societies that government agencies picked up the ideas of compartmentalisation, a technique employed on lower level members, both in government, political parties, unions and the secret societies themselves, to get individuals to perform tasks that are often counterproductive both to their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the people the government represents. Of course they also use other techniques like sex with minors and blackmail as run by Epstein and Maxwell. This is how a global psychological, bio-weapon propaganda war can be launched against all global governments and peoples by the governments themselves.

John F Kennedy said: "The very word 'secrecy' is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, to secret oaths and to secret proceedings". "We are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy that relies primarily on covert means for expanding its sphere of influence — on infiltration instead of invasion, on subversion instead of elections, on intimidation instead of free choice, on guerrillas by night instead of armies by day". "It is a system which has conscripted vast human and material resources into the building of a tightly knit, highly efficient machine that combines military, diplomatic, intelligence, economic, scientific and political operations"

JFK tried to warn us so many decades ago about this "monolithic and ruthless conspiracy", that the game is not fair and we must be very careful in whom we put our trust in. Unfortunately, he got assassinated for it and the monolithic and ruthless conspiracy continued to grow and become so emboldened that it now threatens the whole world with a psychological, bio-weapon propaganda war, unless we submit to its demands, albeit subtle, to enslave us all. The game is not fair! Look out for the next addition where your editor expands a little deeper on the Fabian socialists, the ALP and the union movement.

## SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

### LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

#### RW: What are your impressions of the latest developments at the depot?

Leichhardt Busie: Things are continuing to go downhill for us. There is a constant push by the bosses to displace the older experienced drivers from their rosters. In particular they are being taken off the bendi rosters. These rosters are being given to the new drivers on TWU style conditions so the bosses can avoid paying the experienced drivers the \$25 per day bendi allowance. Experienced drivers are also being put on the 'G' rosters – standby rosters, so they don't get paid DOC's. A likely next step by the bosses is the displacement of the experienced older drivers from the bendi broken shifts. Whilst there is high turnover of new drivers who can't cope with the rigours of the job.

Other news is that there continues to be a poor level of maintenance of the depot fleet and a high level of bus accidents i.e. an estimated 30 bus accidents a week. In a nutshell the Transit Systems bosses don't care about staff or commuters just money!

In regards to the unions. We now have the situation where we have both the RTBU and TWU having members amongst drivers. The TWU basically does nothing for its members, explained by the TWU officials being in the pockets of the private bus companies. A possible future step of the bosses is to force all the older experienced drivers to sign on to TWU membership, so as to further cut our wages and conditions.

#### RW: What is the latest with the routes?

LB: The names of some routes have been changed. The M30 has become the 430 and the M20 has become the 320. The bosses say that the change in name is to avoid commuters' confusion with the Metros. The 320 has been shortened, so instead of going to Botany, it now just goes to Mascot. With the Govt's proposed culling of many routes to force commuters onto the Light Rail in the Eastern Suburbs revealed in a recent SMH article, we will be affected with the culling of the M10 and M50.

#### RW: What's the latest at the depot?

Leichhardt Driver1: We continue to be hard hit with tight running times. I have particularly noticed this problem on Satur-

days with runs on routes into the city. There is no provision for layover breaks. As a result of this factor and others, many drivers can't cope with the job. So there continues to be a constant churning out of new drivers from the job. Whilst we still have not heard the outcome of the new court case over the squabble between the TWU and RTBU over 'representing us' industrially. **STOP PRESS: With the lock down phases, there has been a major reduction in commuters and traffic congestion.**

#### RW: What are your impressions of the 9/2/20 timetable/roster changes?

Leichhardt Driver2: I've not noticed any major changes. However, there has been more cutting out of lines of work from shifts. We have had this problem since the old days with the STA. Whilst the bosses are trying to encourage paranoia on the job with the very new buses, in contrast to the older buses.



### BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

#### RW: What is the situation at the depot lately?

Burwood Driver: An issue of great concern to us has been the introduction by the Transit Systems bosses of two rosters for the early AM's and late PM's. One for TS drivers and the other for State Transit drivers. As a result the union has made many complaints causing reversing of these rosters. There is talk on the job of major changes coming up in March-April which we have been kept completely in the dark concerning. In the case of ex-STA drivers, the bosses are treating them better than under the STA in that they are not setting out to harass them. However, in the case of ex-STA Bendi Shift drivers such as at

Leichhardt, they are having bendi shifts pulled from them as they have to pay the extra allowance and giving the shifts to the new drivers paid on the TWU style conditions and don't get paid the allowance. Transport for NSW seems to be allowing the TS bosses to get away with a lot of stuff which is outside their legal responsibility such as route changes. It seems the attitude of the Govt. is that if things seem to be running okay, they don't mind too much. Whilst the Govt's basic strategy as occurred with their plan to privatise the rest of the STA over 2 years is to privatise everything so as to cut costs. **STOP PRESS:** We have been hardly affected by the 9/2/20 timetable changes. However we are still being kept in the dark on forth coming major changes by the bosses and the union. We are in a waiting game.

#### RW: What is the latest with the union?

BD: The union has been gradually via the legalistic channel of the Fair Work Court, defending some of the conditions of ex-STA drivers attacked by the new company. In the case of the issue of Easter Saturday being paid as a Holiday for those not working that day and have worked 'X'

number of Saturdays. The union has been successful in winning the case. However, Transit Systems is still refusing to pay the holiday. Other talk on the job is that there is a new Fair Work Court decision which regards the situation of two unions - the RTBU and TWU in the same sector - Transit Systems/STA as 'illegal'. The tactic of the bosses of course has been to play one union off against the other.

#### RW: What are your impressions of Transit Systems new 'Green Roads' scheme?

BD: It seems to me quite unfair. Under the scheme we get black marks for errors in operating the bus. If say I have to put on the brakes to avoid a collision with someone walking out in front of my bus, I get a black mark. When I should get a good mark for avoiding an accident and injury to someone.

#### RW: What is other news?

BD: We have all seen notices in the depot about the takeover of Transit Systems by Sea Link. The bosses are presenting the development as a 'merger' rather than a takeover. Whilst a group of our drivers

have left the job and have been re-employed as Light Rail drivers on the new extensions in the CBD and Eastern Suburbs.

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

#### RW: What's the latest at the depot?

Waverley Busie: There has been big changes in the STA. We've got a new CEO, we call him 'The Pink Panther' as he seems to be playing an 'Inspector Clouseau' role. He is replacing Stefan Faurby who suddenly disappeared and he was transferred over from the Railways, where he held a high up management job. He recently held a staff meeting at the depot. He claimed that he was on our side, wanted to keep the STA in public hands and fight for our rights. However he didn't seem very reassuring. He spoke about how he is going to fight privatisation, but he wasn't sure he could win. God help him! Why open his big mouth on the subject anyway? He claims to have all the answers, so why not ring him about how our wages will be in the new franchises? Why are we getting a new boss just before the STA is privatised? According to latest talk on the job we won't be privatised for one year, perhaps connected with the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

Whilst in regard to the RTBU officials and Unions NSW, they say the campaign against privatisation has entered a new stage. They got over 22,000 signatures for the petition to be presented to Parliament against STA privatisation and are now lobbying various politicians and high up people to oppose the STA carve-up. Latest news is that on 26th February, they organised a rally as part of the campaign outside Berejiklian's electoral office in Willoughby. Various progressive politicians from the ALP and Greens have also come to the depot to address us on the privatisation issue.

#### RW: What's the situation with the bosses?

WB: Since Constance's announcement regarding the STA privatisation, the bosses seem to be in 'caretaker mode'. Just counting the hours before the selloff. The bosses are also disregarding any community service role for the STA. If you notice an accident on the road involving other vehicles, they say we should just ignore it. Selina isn't doing her job. She is just letting things drag down. In particular there have been complaints made about a decline in bus cleanliness and a running down of bus maintenance at the depot. As a result drivers are losing interest in the job.

**RW: According to an article in the SMH 2/3/20 there will be many routes cut to provide business for the Light Rail extensions in the Eastern Suburbs. What are your thoughts about it?**

WB: With the proposed culling of the bus routes into the city, commuters will be coerced into sitting on Gladys 'white elephant'. Bizarrely even feeder services for the Light Rail will also be cut. One agenda of the extensions seems to be about creating a so called 'glamorous' French Boulevard style effect in the CBD streets. Another is about helping the transport needs of the gambling and clubs fraternity such as Randwick Racecourse and South Sydney Juniors Leagues Club. Whilst the 'white elephant' has been hard hit by cost blow outs from \$1.4 Billion originally to now \$3 Billion. This money would now be very handy helping workers who are sacked or face wage cuts due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak. The buses do a far better and efficient job of transporting people into and out of the City. I've had a ride on the Light Rail. There were few commuters aboard and I found it quite slow as it stops at every one of the 12-15 stops. Whilst causing commuters to change from Light Rail to buses to get to destinations. It's quite inconvenient for them. Most people don't want to go on them. Given its design flaw, the Light Rail has been heavily affected by break downs and accidents so far. In a recent incident, one broken down Light Rail Vehicle blocking the rail line caused one third of the fleet to be stopped for a considerable time. I give it two and a half stars. Another incident reported in the news media recently, involved a high level safety expert pressing the emergency button on a Light Rail Vehicle and to his surprise getting no response.

#### RW: How is the STA handling the COVID-19 outbreak?

WB: Despite their motto of 'safety first' and drivers being isolated in the bus and being in the virtual front line, the bosses seem to be doing the bare minimum. The initiatives implemented include: only allowing use of the inner Opal readers and shutting off the area near the driver.

#### RW: What are your impressions of the state of heavy vehicle regulations over the years in NSW?

WB: I believe in the last 2 to 3 to 4 years accident rates involving heavy vehicles have increased. The increased rate must be seen in the context of the Liberal Govt. watering down regulations affecting heavy vehicle safety and relaxing the stiff monitoring of accidents. The Govt. presents the process as removing unnecessary 'red tape' which stands in the way of companies cutting their costs and making larger profits. In this context, rogue companies are particularly seizing the opportunity to further bend the rules resulting in more accidents. A particularly catastrophic accident occurred recently involving a truck hitting two cars on a bridge. Whilst the overall cost of these accidents can be be-

tween \$2 million to \$3 million. The deregulation push under the Liberals in NSW extends into many other sectors with disastrous results. In the case of the building industry, the watering down of regulations has led to the recent major scandal involving shoddy building work highlighted by the Opal tower fiasco. The estimated cost to repair this shoddy work affecting unit owners is \$5 Billion. In the case of the forestry and parks sector, under the Liberals there has been a 20% to 30% cut back in the number of park rangers. Contributing significantly to the recent exceptional bush fires.

This whole deregulatory process has affected the buses, particularly in regard to driver training. 10 to 15 years ago an important focus of training was safety as paramount on the job. It was about preventing accidents before they happened. Now this focus has gone by the way side. There is less emphasis on driver training which I had many years ago. Whilst there is a high turnover of driver instructors. This is a bit worrying as there is no rapport built up between them and new drivers. There is now no pre driver education and after training. Consequently new drivers are not as skilled as they were 15 to 20 years ago. Whilst in Region 6 Transit Systems is increasing casualisation to cut the shifts of old timer ex-STA drivers to save money. Another factor is the reduction in the number of mechanics at depots from 5 to 10 years ago affecting bus defects and safety.

In recent months there was the accident involving a Kingsgrove driver which killed two people on a motor bike. Whilst, just recently I noticed a driver at a layup area, not sitting sideways when using his mobile. This could be detrimental to your job if a journo from a media outlet were to take a snap.

Confusion over Federal and State regulations has likely contributed to the XPT derailment in Victoria in late February of this year. The different regulations allowed for different speed limits on parts of the Sydney to Melbourne rail line.

#### RW: What is the latest with bus privatisation in Adelaide?

WB: I recently met in Sydney, a 40 year veteran of the buses in Adelaide. He said don't privatise! It doesn't work! It's been a huge failure. It doesn't save money. However it has led to a major casual positions influx, reduced bus stops and more split up times.

Other news has been the Liberal Govt. getting up to its old tricks privatising the extensions to the tramways in Adelaide from King William Street to Nth Terrace to much fan fare. A current operator of the buses in the city has been given the 8 year contract for the extensions.



# Victorian Railway News

*In the last 12 months there have been a number of changes at V/Line, some of which are not for the benefit of employees. In this issue Drivers, Conductors and Station Staff will discuss these issues. As in previous editions names have been changed.*

**RW: I hear job share has been changed.**

Rastus and Roscoe: Drivers and Customer Service Staff have had a job share for a number of years. Drivers since 2012 and Station Staff for the last four years.

**RW: Then why is that Conductors were not in job share?**

Midge and Moose: Management said it was hard to implement for Conductors.

Ichabod: Management was lazy and placed it in the too hard basket. It was finally introduced twelve months ago.

**RW: Job share is supposed to be a transition to retirement but with the Conductors this is not happening.**

Moose: With job share you work four weeks on and four weeks off and with overtime a Conductor in job share is only asked to work overtime if no one is unavailable.

Midge: In other words only as a last resort.

Ichabod: The Staff Clerks are not following the instructions.

Moose: One of the Conductors who is on job share makes himself unavailable on his time he is off due to job share. In one instance he was brought in on job share to do an available shift.

Moose: Conductors are taking note of the sign on sheet and if they see this person doing overtime, they take photos of a particular page on the sign on sheet.

**RW: You don't blame Conductors.**

Ichabod: No, you don't but some of the staff clerks ignored the matter as it was easy to ring this person than ring another employee.

Midge: As long as this Conductor is asked to do overtime alone other conductors will raise the matter.

**RW: What is happening with the EBA negotiations?**

Rastus and Roscoe: In a ballot for industrial action 98% of employees voted for industrial action.

**RW: What is the EBA?**

Rastus and Roscoe: V/Line has rehashed the modified EBA they tried to introduce in early 2018. This was rejected by the membership by a large majority.

Midge: The EBA is for a 2% wage rise but to obtain this rise you have to give up a large amount of benefits.

Moose: Speaking to other Conductors they have said if it is only a 2% rise. NO TRADE OFFS.

Clarence: V/Line has brought in the Big Guns to achieve their aims.

Jethro: One of the persons V/Line employed is a former manager who left V/Line 16 years ago. He has been employed on a fixed contract.

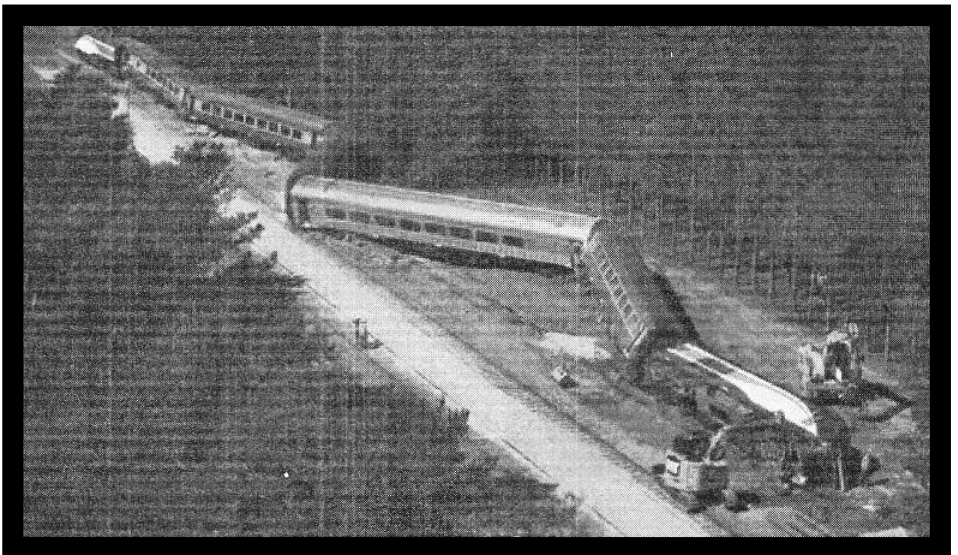
Rastus: When this person was a manager he caused a fair amount of trouble with the drivers during EBA negotiations in 2000. The Drivers won that EBA.

Roscoe: The other blow-in in V/Line has employed has come from Metro Trains. He was their industrial officer.

Rastus: He caused a fair amount of trouble at Metro Trains.

**RW: He was a former union official.**

Rastus: You are correct. He was an organiser with the Printing Division of the AMWU. He left the AMWU and in 2012 he joined Metro Trains.



Roscoe: We Drivers haven't forgotten these rats. Other members of the former AFULE remember the Victorian Secretary of the early 1980's who retired because of ill health. He later worked in the State Industrial Affairs and helped towards the deregulation of the BLF.

**RW: What has been the industrial action at V/Line?**

Rastus: Drivers are taking protected industrial action.

**RW: What action?**

Roscoe: Overtime bans and instead of widespread industrial action, drivers have stopped work on a line by line basis. Bendigo one day, Ballarat the next day. Trevelyan the next.

Archie: V/Line a few days before industrial action, texted all employees a message about the evils of industrial action. Many employees ignored the message. Trains on lines where industrial action occurred were replaced by buses.

Rastus: In early 2020 industrial action will increase.

Forsyth: It would not surprise us if V/Line goes to the Federal Court to prevent further industrial action.

Roscoe: If prevented from taking industrial action, there are other ways.

**RW: What about the manager at Southern Cross station who was stood down for making inappropriate comments to female employees.**

Archie: This individual was never appointed as manager. He was seconded to the position on a fixed term contract.

Clarence: When he came to Southern Cross he was bragging that he would climb the ladder of promotion.

Forsyth: Most of the Customer Service staff particularly females hate his guts particularly after he terminated a number of employees just before their periods of probation expired. Even the station masters

hate him.

Archie: As the matter is still subject to an inquiry we will have to wait to hear what happens. Five months have passed since he was stood down and the place now is a happy environment. It was his tongue that got him into trouble.

**RW: Has V/Line given its employees a Christmas Party this year?**

Rastus: Straight answer. No!

Archie: They gave some money for a local party but some locations have been knocked back.

Forsyth: The amount they gave was peanuts. Metro Trains maybe a pack of bastards to work for but they hired one of the Racecourses for a party.

**RW: Once again we have run out of space. Yet there is supposed to be a transition for employees toward retirement. Not a cash cow for certain employees.**

Archie and Forsyth: Human Resources should note that the employees at Southern Cross both daily paid and salaried hate this manager who is stood down. Place him in another section of V/Line as an ordinary employee.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, in the ten years we have written in this paper, V/Line has changed from being a happy family to a pack of bastards. If V/Line obtains a court injunction to prevent industrial action the employees must resort to guerrilla tactics.

## EBA INDUSTRIAL ACTION

**By Special Correspondent**

Yarra Trams: Stoppages every couple of days since August last year for four hours. There was to be four stoppages over four days of Grand Prix. The dispute has gone to mediation but if this fails the Govt. is going to Fair Work to have the industrial action declared illegal.

V/Line: There has been stoppages since December. One day Bendigo is out for 24 hours. Next day Ballarat goes out. The following day Trevelyan is out. Outcome will be reported in a future issue of Sparks.

Metro Trains: Metro Trains have gone to Fair Work and industrial action was declared illegal. The union went to the Federal Court who upheld the decision. The matter is being appealed to the High Court.

## NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE XPT CRASH

**RW: What are your thoughts on the XPT derailment at Wallan on 20th Feb. this year?**

V-Line Conductor: Currently there is a Govt. Inquiry into the matter. Amongst us it's a foregone conclusion that the Driver and Pilot who died in the accident will be blamed for it. In the past two years there have been three major incidents on the Albury Line. A goods train clipped the tail of a passenger train, a roll of steel fell off a goods train into the path of a passenger train causing a derailment and the injury of three passengers and a train had to be brought to a sudden stop as it was only 100 metres from where the tracks on the line had been removed due to maintenance work. Factors which have contributed to accidents on the line have been its takeover by the Federal Govt. several years ago and the recent destruction of a signal box for the line. Whilst drivers have been instructed by management to run their trains at 90 KMPH on the line. A driver who refused to comply with this directive for safety concerns was stood down in recent months. Whilst drivers will only run their trains up to 25 KMPH on the loop for safety reasons.

**RW: What are your impressions of the Victorian RTBU officials?**

V-Line Conductor: They are part of the Left ALP Faction and are very 'thick' with the Victorian ALP Govt. In the case of Luba Grigorovitch who became State Secretary, there is some union rule that you

have to have a background in the industry to stand for election for the position. So she suddenly got a job as a rail consultant for just two weeks to fill the requirements! This is a common practice for the Left ALP machine to find union jobs for their hacks with such practices. Needless to say with the help of the bosses. Left ALP faction is heavily funded for elections in the union by the CFMMEU officials who are also in this Left faction. There is a 'Rank & File' faction associated with two guys from the Loco Division which contests union elections. However they won't have conductors on their election tickets so they have restricted electoral support. (Ed. Comment: Given the likely role of the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) and RTBU officials in rigging NSW 2014 and 2018 union elections, seems AEC and Union officials in Victoria doing likewise if needed. See back issues of Sparks.)

## STOP PRESS:

### RAIL BOSS GRILLED OVER TRACK WORK AFTER FATAL WALLAN DERAILMENT

As authorities piece together what caused the deadly train derailment at Wallan, it's been revealed a long-awaited upgrade to a troubled section of track between Melbourne and Albury had been delayed by a year.

**Herald Sun**

# U.S.A. LABOUR NEWS: WAVE OF WILDCAT STRIKES

**March 25 Workers Launch Wave of Wildcat Strikes As Trump Pushes for 'Return to Work' Amidst Exploding Coronavirus**

**A report on the spread of wildcat strikes in response to the coronavirus in the US. This article was first published by It's Going Down.**

## Agricultural Workers

In Georgia, several dozen Perdue workers at a poultry plant of about 600, walked off the job on March 23rd over growing anger at low pay and concerns surrounding the spread of the coronavirus at a time of increased production and workload. In media interviews, those involved in the wildcat strike explained how the company sees them as expendable. According to one report:

Approximately 50 employees at the Perdue Farm plant near Perry, Georgia,

walked out March 23 saying they didn't feel safe in the plant because of the coronavirus, according to WMAZ in Georgia.

Workers say they don't feel safe working around others who could have potentially been exposed to COVID-19, according to WMAZ. They add that they feel Perdue isn't doing enough to keep employees safe and isn't sanitizing their workspaces.

## Amazon

On March 18th, Amazon warehouse workers in Queens staged a wildcat strike after management attempted to push them back to work following a one day shutdown of a facility after someone at the plant tested positive for coronavirus. According to one report:

Amazon warehouse workers at a processing facility in Queens, New York City, received a text from management: "We're

writing to let you know that a positive case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) was found at our facility today." Amazon temporarily closed the facility the same day but quickly reopened on Thursday.

This news, and the decision by Amazon to reopen the facility, sparked outrage among the warehouse workers, who refused to work and ultimately caused the facility to shut down on Thursday night. In a video posted on social media by "Amazonians United NYC," a worker voiced his anger.

"We know what you're doing. We can see that there's an absolute disregard for our lives. We don't buy it anymore." Another worker joined, saying: "It's not possible that in four hours you've disinfected every package after you got a positive diagnosis."

### Bar Workers

Workers at Crush Bar in Portland took action, launching a sit-in after being laid off in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the group's report:

We did it! 48hrs after staging our sit-in, management provided us with our accrued sick time checks. Thank you for the community support that helped us draw attention to this injustice. We couldn't have done it without you.

With that said, we the workers are still waiting to hear back on our second and third demands: half pay for cancelled sick hours and the guarantee that every laid off employee be rehired upon the bars reopen.

PDX Eater wrote of the action:

Last night, all 27 of Crush's employees were laid off, in preparation for today's forced closure of all dine-in food and drink businesses. At around 3:30 p.m. today, 12 employees arrived at the bar and then refused to leave, protesting owner John Clarke's decision to lay off all employees without any financial aid, with the claim that he broke the law by denying their use of accrued sick hours to cover lost wages. The protest, which was set to last for up to 24 hours, was dispersed by Portland police after an hour.

### Bus Drivers

On March 17th, bus drivers in Detroit launched a wildcat strike, in response to dirty buses and lack of access to areas where drivers can wash their hands. As one report wrote:

Detroit has shut down the city's public bus system because a vast majority of the drivers refused to work over concerns about the coronavirus.

The city is negotiating with Detroit Department of Transportation drivers to alleviate their concerns in hopes of restoring bus service Wednesday.

"Due to the driver shortage, there will be no DDOT bus service today," the city said in a statement. "We are asking passengers to seek other forms of transportation while we work to address our drivers concerns. We apologize for the inconvenience."

Drivers have been expressing concerns that they aren't adequately protected from the coronavirus. Among the concerns: The buses aren't cleaned frequently enough, and drivers have been unable to wash their hands because of the statewide shutdown on many businesses.

The wildcat strike also resulted in free fares for riders:

The drivers' union backed them up and their brief work stoppage, less than 24 hours, won all their demands. Fares will not be collected for the duration of the coronavirus crisis.

In Birmingham, Alabama, bus drivers on March 23rd also protested and went on wildcat strike, refusing "to work scheduled routes due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) concerns."

### Call Center

Call-center workers and members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), in Portland, Oregon, launched a one day strike on March 4th, leading to workers receiving paid leave in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin on March 18th, other members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), also known as Wobblies, engaged in a sick-out strike to demand better pay and working conditions, especially in the face of COVID-19, which has brought with it an increased work-load.

The union reported on social media:

Days after our sickout, an expression of collective discontent and a protest of our

Up to 35 Cuyahoga County sewer maintenance employees walked off the job or called in sick Friday morning, citing coronavirus safety concerns, according to Public Works Director Michael Dever.

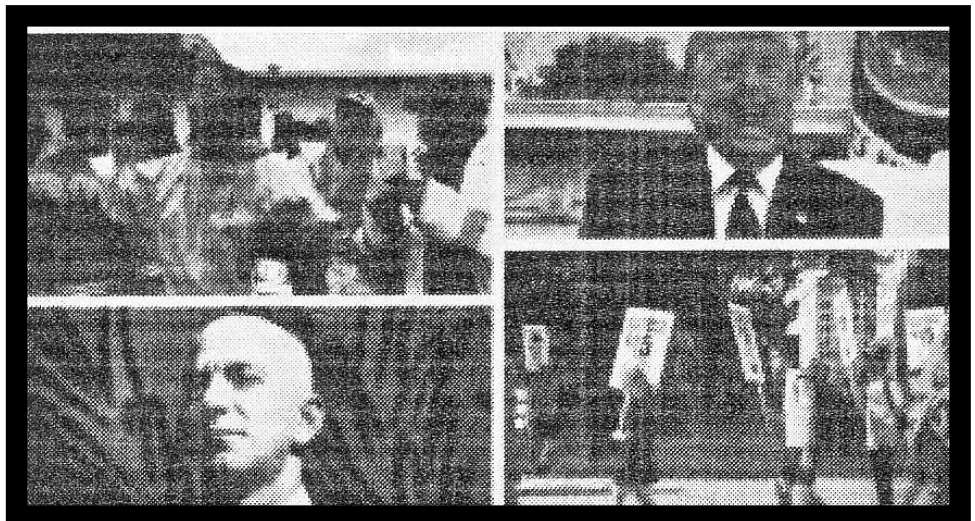
The sanitary engineers, who maintain regional sewer systems for 39 Cuyahoga County communities, did not want to continue working because they were concerned about going into people's homes and being in close proximity to one another, among other possible reasons, Dever said.

### Construction

In Las Vegas, construction workers are pushing for a wildcat strike. According to one report:

Construction workers at the Las Vegas Convention Center site said they are considering walking off the job this week because they said they don't feel their health is being taken seriously.

"Things are getting scary at work," one



working conditions, CapTel admin have announced that we will be given 15 extra minutes of aux time per shift. For an 8-hour shift this means that ~91% adherence is needed to avoid discipline. CapTel Workers Union has had a stated demand for a 90%-adherence requirement in our five-point platform from day one.

Let's keep pushing forward for \$15/hour, our other demands, and workplace democracy. Let's remember that this break from the normal austerity that governs our workdays can be ended by the whim of admin at any time. The boss's promises are just words; a union contract is set in stone.

### City Maintenance

On March 20th, several dozen city workers walked off the job in Cleveland, Ohio. According to one report:

worker said. "A large group of us are ready to walk off the job."

Construction workers on site of the Las Vegas Convention Center expansion say conditions were unsanitary before coronavirus was an issue. They say they haven't gotten any better.

"As far as trying to prevent the spread, they're telling us to wash our hands, enact social distancing but as far as actually protecting us, they haven't done much," said one worker.

### Electricians

According to Organizing Work:

Electricians working on a long-term renovation project at Kaiser Hospital in Sacramento decided to walk off the job due to unsafe working conditions, related to potential exposure to COVID-19.

In an interview with one of the workers, they stated:

What happened yesterday was the result of a lot of talking amongst the rank-and-file

over the preceding couple of days – everyone is aware of the severity of the outbreak and the risk it poses to our health and to the health of our loved ones. We saw a lot of abrupt changes around the hospital, for example bringing in large tents to set up testing sites for COVID-19, and we would be walking down a corridor to get materials for our job site a few feet from where these were being set up, and at least a couple of our guys were going through a different part of the hospital, and saw a patient being escorted by hospital staff wearing gowns and masks, and they would yell at our guy to get out of the hallway.

So I showed up in the parking lot in the morning, and there was already a large meeting of union electricians, kind of a spontaneous thing, and at least one of the other crews was going to do the same thing that day... We all agreed to get our shit and go.

### **Fast Food**

Fast food workers at McDonald's in San Jose and Los Angeles, California walked off the job on March 20th. According to one report:

The workers said they were angry over their hours being cut, and the restaurant chain allegedly failing to provide soap, gloves and any training on how to protect themselves from COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

Not to be outdone, Wobblies in Portland, part of the Burgerville Workers Union, walked out of one store over coronavirus related working conditions:

Yesterday, every employee at the SE 92nd Avenue Burgerville location went on a one-day strike to protest what they claim

are unsafe working conditions related to the coronavirus outbreak. The shop re-opened today, and almost 40 of Burgerville's other locations remain open, but the Burgerville Workers Union (BVWU) has issued a list of requirements during this pandemic.

The strike was largely in protest of a reduced staff making it difficult to maintain sanitation standards and protect workers. While Burgerville locations are open for drive-through customers, all of its dining rooms have been closed, and a press release from the company states that nearly 70-percent of workers have been furloughed or partially furloughed. "How can we keep people safe with a skeleton crew?" Mark Medina, an employee at the 92nd Avenue location, says. "Maintaining sanitation standards takes a lot of work. Burgerville corporate claims to care about the community, but, by cutting costs like this, they're putting us all at risk. People could die."

### **Garbage Collectors**

Garbage collectors in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania launched a wildcat strike to demand hazard pay and access to protective gear. As one article wrote:

Today, a group of several hundred, mostly African-American sanitation workers in Pittsburgh, members of Teamsters Local 249, went out on an illegal, wildcat strikes to protest unsafe working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strike comes as momentum for strikes goes with #GeneralStrike becoming the top trending topic on twitter in the United States with even popstar Britney Spears calling for a General Strike. Many are

wondering if strikes like Pittsburgh's sanitation workers strike could be the beginning of a growing strike wave as Trump demands that workers risk their lives to return to work quickly.

Workers in Pittsburgh and elsewhere are resisting calls to work in unsafe conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We want better equipment, protective gear. We have no masks," one African-American sanitation worker told WPXI. "We want hazard pay. Hazard pay is very important," the worker told WPXI. "Why? Because we have high co-payments on insurance on any type of bill. We risk our lives every time we grab a garbage bag".

"Here we are at my job. Ain't picking up no rub," African-American sanitation worker Fitzroy Moss said in a Facebook live video. "The rubbish is sitting there. That's all they care about is picking up the garbage. They don't even care about our health."

### **Port Workers**

In Oakland, California in the bay area, port workers are threatening to walk off the job in response to unsafe and unsanitary working conditions. According to one report:

Some dockworkers at the Port of Oakland are threatening to refuse work at a terminal that they say isn't properly sanitizing equipment and facilities for employees. The move could halt logistics operations and further strain the global supply chain amid the coronavirus outbreak.

## **FRENCH PENSION STRIKES**

### ***Self Organization: How French Rank-and-File Workers Have Circumvented Bureaucratic Leaders to Continue the Strikes***

**Post on: February 17, 2020**

**Daniela Cobet**

**After more than 50 days of strikes in France against the Macron government, workers from the state train company SNCF and the Paris public transport company RATP formed their own Coordinating Committee. This is an example of self-organization and workers' democracy that is relevant for the entire working class.**

January 17, a new player burst into the media spotlight — the RATP-SNCF Coordinating Committee. It was immediately accused by Laurent Berger, secretary-general of the CFDT, of being re-

sponsible for the action that targeted the headquarters of his trade union.<sup>1</sup> But what is the origin and nature of this organization that has become the expression in the Paris region Ile-de-France of the radicalized base of the state passenger railroad company SNCF and, above all, the Paris public transit company RATP?

Although the group did not have a name before then, its actions garnered lots of publicity, especially during the end-of-the-year holiday period when strikers were left to their own devices by their union leaders: a rally at RATP headquarters on December 23, followed by a surprise action at the Gare de Lyon [train station in Paris] that ended up paralyzing traffic on one of the metro's two automated lines; a march of than 3,000 people from the Gare de l'Est to the Gare Saint-Lazare [Paris train stations], called

and organized from start to finish by the strikers themselves on December 26; an action at the main office of La République En Marche (LREM)<sup>2</sup> on January 2; a protest on January 15 at the headquarters of Derichebourg Group in solidarity with Adama Cissé, who had been unfairly fired<sup>3</sup>; and an action at the CFDT headquarters on January 17.

But the scope of this Coordinating Committee goes far beyond organizing "lightning actions." It is one of the strikers' most important experiences of self-organization and workers' democracy, independent of their trade union organizations. It is the most far-reaching since the experience of coordinating committees among railway workers and nurses in the latter half of the 1980s.

At its best moments, this Coordinating Committee has succeeded in bringing together representatives (and often some of the leaders) from about 15 bus depots, two RER lines [a hybrid commuter rail-subway line] and five metro lines, in



addition to several stations and important sectors of the SNCF in the Paris region, which makes it a key player in the mobilization in the area.

### And It All Began on September 13 ...

The starting point of this story and of the entire sequence we are still going through is undoubtedly September 13, 2019, a day of mobilization confined to the RATP but that “set the record straight” — to use the expression of some of the strikers. Everyone expected a confrontation to come much later, after the public release of the pension reform bill. But that didn’t account for a return to the method of the strike — regardless of the objective difficulties that might have arisen due to lack of support by union leaders — which had been discredited by a series of defeats and poorly led battles and that had, among other things, led the Yellow Vests to reject it in part. Nevertheless, at the RATP in September, a walkout of more than 90% of the workers demonstrated the effectiveness of a mass strike — directly contradicting the claim of former President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2008 that “when there is a strike, nobody notices it.”

And they didn’t stop there. That very day, at a rally at the RATP headquarters, their battle plan was synthesized in the slogan they shouted into the ears of their union leaders: : “Unlimited strike in December! Unlimited strike in December!” The December 5 date then set by the unions thus reflected, in part, the pressure of the rank and file (after a moment of hesitation on the part of the CGT trade union federation’s RATP leaders<sup>4</sup>). From that moment on, the December 5 date gradually became set in stone.

The RATP strike on September 13 also had a strong impact at the SNCF, where the bitter taste of defeat in the strike against the 2018 Railway Pact lingered. For very concrete reasons, employees of these two companies feel bound together, often because they are basically working in the same profession, but sometimes because they even work together (such as on the sections of the RER lines they co-maintain). The feeling for what the Yellow Vests had gone through was palpable, and this very quickly found an echo at the SNCF in the deep tremors reflected in the national right of withdrawal for drivers/conductors following the accident in Champagne-Ardenne<sup>5</sup> or the “wildcat” strike in the Technicentre in Châtillon.<sup>6</sup>

### Origins of the Coordinating Committee: A Facebook Group and the RATP-SNCF Meetings

It is in this context that contacts were established very quickly between RATP and

SNCF employees in the Paris region, in anticipation of the unlimited strike that would begin on December 5. This first took place on Facebook, with the creation of a group called RATP-SNCF agents, l’union fait la force (“RATP-SNCF agents: unity is strength”), which was the venue for the initial exchanges, before a first meeting was held in Saint-Denis on October 16. It had been proposed by the railway workers grouped around the Intergares [Inter-station] collective, which had been formed after the 2018 strike against the Railway Pact.

There were three of these “RATP-SNCF meetings” in October and November. They constituted a sort of embryo of coordination, enabling links to be forged and joint work to be commenced in prepara-



tion for the December strike.

This work was constituted on the basis of extremely clear positions on the need to fight for the complete withdrawal of Macron’s pension reform and the fact that the rank and file should continue to impose its agenda on the union leaders, but above all by patient work to educate their colleagues, through joint tours by RATP and SNCF employees, who from the third meeting onward were joined by teachers. These meetings continued to take place once the strike began, with the first one on December 6 and others in the weeks that followed. Up until that point, they brought together a relatively limited number of sectors, particularly those in which part of the extreme Left had militants and contacts.

### The December 20 Turning Point

It was only at the end of December that these meetings took a leap forward and a framework emerged that began to resemble a real coordinating group of strikers. On December 19, after a negotiating session with the government, the union confederations decided to call a holiday truce in the strike. This position was made explicit by the CFDT and UNSA<sup>7</sup> and was implicit with respect to the CGT. Without mentioning the word “truce,” CGT Secre-

tary General Philippe Martinez declared that day, in front of Matignon, the official residence of the French prime minister, that unions would “meet on January 9 for a new day of inter-branch action.”

The news was like a cold shower for the SNCF and RATP strikers, who had already logged two weeks of open-ended strike and who very quickly understood that a truce would concretely mean the end of their movement.

Anasse Kazib, a railway worker at Le Bourget who had been a figure in the movement against the 2018 Railway Pact, had become an example for many strikers, thanks in part to some notable media coverage in which he dissected all the attacks contained in the Delevoye report that would serve as the basis for the reform

project.<sup>8</sup> That same evening, Kazib announced that he would be doing a live stream broadcast on the Facebook page of Révolution Permanente<sup>9</sup> to discuss the ongoing betrayal by the union leaders and the aftermath of the movement, and that he would be making a direct appeal to strikers from several sectors.

The live stream was a huge success, with more than 4,000 people logging in. Tens of thousands watched on replay in the days that followed. The opinion of the rank and file

was clear: no one wanted the unions to call a truce! Anasse Kazib proposed on the live stream that a physical meeting be held the next day to discuss a battle plan for holding on through the holidays.

All of a sudden, the idea of rank-and-file coordination of the strike, which until then had appeared to most people as “the political activists’ thing,” became an urgent need in the eyes of all, an indispensable tool to impose the will of the strikers and the continuation of the movement despite the position taken by the union leadership.

### The Union Truce and the Emergence of the Rank and File

That subsequent meeting was also a success. More than a hundred strikers met in a basement room provided by comrades from SUD-Rail Paris Saint-Lazare, along with representatives of more than a dozen bus depots, RER A and B trains, a few metro lines, and several sectors of the SNCF. In an atmosphere of open exchange, the strikers worked out their own agenda for the first week of the holidays, with actions to raise public awareness and collect money for the strike funds in shopping centres over the December 21–22 weekend, a rally in front of RATP headquarters on Monday, December 23 to de-



nounce the repression that was raining down on the bus depot pickets, and a self-organized demonstration by the strikers on Thursday, December 26.

The rally on December 23 brought together several thousand people, before turning into a “lightning action” at the Gare de Lyon and for a few hours paralyzing traffic on Metro Line 1, one of the two automated lines operating during the strike.

That day, the press was dumbfounded to discover a force that had been erased from the media for two weeks. It was lurking behind the union confederations’ calls for a truce: the rank and file of the strike. It was a rank and file not only determined to prevent the suspension of the movement, but on the contrary to radicalize it! One expression of this combative spirit: surrounded by police outside the train station, railway workers and RATP agents didn’t flinch and broke through the police lines, cheered on by their colleagues and supporters.

After holidays spent between families and pickets, the fledgling Coordinating Committee returned to the streets on Boxing Day, with a march between the Gare de l’Est and the Gare Saint-Lazare. The idea had come from an RATP agent who, during the Facebook live stream on December 19, asked Anasse Kazib whether it would be possible for the strikers to organize their own demonstration independent of the trade unions. The meeting on December 20 decided to take this on and, with logistical support from the SUD-Rail workers (filing the route with the local authorities; lending a van with a sound system), the march was on.

More than 3,000 people came out in response to the call for this combative demonstration, in which the strikers themselves took on all the tasks, from security to leading the march. The speeches at the end of the march were proof of the pride in that success. As Karim, from the Pavillon-sous-Bois depot, declared: “Today it was the rank and file that spoke. It was the rank and file in the street. And frankly, we showed that we are as mobilized as ever and that we will go all the way!”

The demonstration also significantly bridged the gap with the Yellow Vests, many of whom took part. Yellow Vest leader Jérôme Rodrigues also took the microphone to salute the strikers’ initiative: “Bravo to you. You don’t need your leaders. You don’t need your confederations. Today, you are like the ‘Yellow Vest’ voice that makes itself heard in the streets.” He then called for convergence not only against pension reform but to “overthrow this system.”

Nevertheless, the Coordinating Committee never saw itself as an anti-union framework, which is why it called on the marchers to join the Ile-de-France trade union coalition demonstration scheduled for two days later.

### Strikers Have Their Say

But the Coordinating Committee did not limit itself to organizing “punch” actions, even though they were an important part of boosting striker morale and showing the media — and through them other workers all over the country — that the movement was continuing and that there would be no truce. It also gave a voice to the rank-and-file strikers, to all those who were still holding daily pickets and general meetings.

Anasse became a de facto spokesperson for the Coordinating Committee, not only speaking to the media at actions but also directly confronting government representatives on television, who often found it quite difficult to counter his arguments — which were backed by the determination of the strikers and Anasse’s mastery of the Delevoye report recommendations that often far exceeded the very LREM deputies who were supposed to defend the reform project.

The desire to give the strikers a voice could not be limited to that, however, which is why the Coordinating Committee organized several press conferences. The first one took the form of the strikers’ response to Macron’s New Year’s speech. In a café in the north of Paris and in front of the press, they addressed “first all the users of public transit who, as we know, are affected by the president’s ‘rotting’ strategy” before committing to continue to fight in 2020 “against this reform, which offers nothing but a world of precariousness to the working population and future generations” and calling on “all sectors, private and public, as well as young people, to join us in the fight.”

The Coordinating Committee held other press conferences to denounce the repression during the January 9 demonstration and the disciplinary action taken against striking workers, and then to respond to the attacks by the government and the trade union confederations following the action at the CFDT headquarters.

### A Tool for Organizing the Strike, Extending It, and Combating Repression

The Coordinating Committee also proved to be an effective tool for organizing and coordinating the strike itself, especially during the difficult end-of-the-year-holidays period when the picket lines at bus depots were deprived of much of the support they had enjoyed other mornings. A decision was made to adopt rotating pickets as a tactic: each day, the strikers and their supporters concen-

trated on two bus depots, one each in the north and south Paris region. They often managed to block the buses from leaving, either with the picket itself or because the depot management would call in police repression that non-striking colleagues couldn’t tolerate and who would then exercise their right of withdrawal from work.

The Coordinating Committee didn’t limit itself to organizing strikers at the two companies, but initiated meetings with many sectors, in universities, within the national public school system, and even in the private sector, with delegations organized to go to Total’s refinery in Grandpuits and PSA’s auto plant in Poissy, Yvelines.

The Coordinating Committee has also been important in countering employer and police repression against strikers and their supporters. Each time a striker was taken into custody, the Coordinating Committee organized rallies in front of the police station until their colleague was released. Similarly, it has been involved in defending all the RATP employees subjected to disciplinary proceedings for strike-related offenses.

The case of Hani Labidi is emblematic. A main organizer of the strike at the Belliard depot in the capital’s 18th district and an active member of the Coordinating Committee, Hani faced RATP discipline for events that took place prior to the strike. The two mass rallies organized by the Coordinating Committee in front of the RATP building where its disciplinary board was meeting largely contributed to the penalty the company had asked for — a one-month suspension that could be extended to dismissal — being reduced to just a 15-day suspension. In a gesture of solidarity that testifies to the fraternity created between SNCF and RATP strikers within the Coordinating Committee, railway workers at Le Bourget decided to use €500 from their strike fund to help compensate Hani for the loss of wages from that sanction.

### Not the Strike Managers, but a Counter-Power from the Striking Rank and File

The RATP-SNCF Coordinating Committee was never in charge of the strike. It would have needed a stronger presence, particularly in the Metro, one of the pillars of the strike. It would have needed a more solid base of general meetings and/or strike committees, but these were limited due to the combination of travel difficulties caused by the strike itself and a lack of experience in a sector that had not had a huge strike for more than 10 years. (It would also have required extending more deeply inside the SNCF, where the control of the union leadership was stronger on the ground.)

Nevertheless, the Coordinating Committee exercised a form of genuine counter-power. Imposing its own agenda during the holiday period and throughout the conflict put real pressure on the union leaders against calling a truce and for resuming the strike. If the media are to be believed, moreover, it was that pressure that forced RATP's union leaders to agree only to unofficial meetings with the government in the most improbable places [for fear that strikers would show up to protest]. The Coordinating Committee was the conscious and organized expression of this pressure, which greatly restricted management's room for manoeuvres and negotiation, hindering an easy return to work. It thus played a central role in extending the movement beyond December, creating the conditions for other sectors to take over once the resources of the transport strike began to run out, especially from a financial point of view.

Again, it was Karim, the movement's leader at the Pavillon-sous-Bois depot, who best summed this up in a conversation about the role of the Coordinating Committee: "Without it, the unions would have had a free hand to call for the suspension of the strike at the end of December — and that would have killed the movement."

### **Confidence Building, the Emergence of a Militant Core, and the Experience of Workers' Democracy**

This objective assessment of the role played by the RATP-SNCF Coordinating Committee must not, however, erase one of its main achievements — a subjective one. The rank-and-file strikers, among whom were many non-unionized employees, were used to movements led from start to finish by union leaders and to general assemblies that looked just like meetings of union representatives. But the strikers here gained confidence in their own strength and capabilities, in their collective intelligence, and in their ability to learn from each other's experiences.

Unaccustomed to meetings of this type at the beginning, the strikers on the Coordinating Committee learned to discuss together, argue when they disagreed, and decide according to the majority opinion

so that week after week they could come out with a collective battle plan. Over the course of the meetings, the maturation of both the framework and its actors was palpable, with better put-together interventions and real debates on strategy for the The Coordinating Committee thus contributed to the emergence of a solid militant core, aware of the strength of the workers and the role of the union leadership and whose concerns went far beyond the issue of pensions alone.

The emergence of this layer of conscious strikers — real leaders emanating from the rank and file — will be an asset for continuing the battle against pension reform and more generally in the French class struggle.

### **Knowing How to Organize the Retreat in Order to Be Able to Think About a Return**

Let's not deceive ourselves: today, the transport strike is in a clear ebb, and only a small nucleus continues to strike and to advocate for an extension of the movement to other sectors. Nevertheless, the feeling that reigns among the strikers who participated on the Coordinating Committee is far from one of defeat or demoralization. The strikers understand that while the fight against pension reform is far from over, continuing a strike that has become one of only a minority of the workers and without immediate prospects for victory is not the most effective method of struggle.

Nevertheless, they remain organized to continue to explore possibilities for a massive movement in other sectors (and particularly now among the youth), and to combat the repressive counter-offensive by RATP management, which is expanding its disciplinary procedures. It seeks to generalize the example of the Coordinating Committee to other sectors and regions of the country, with a view to organizing a national meeting to lay out a real battle plan that includes a general strike against the government and its reform. It is a sign that this singular experience of self-organization of our class has not yet had its last word.

**First published on February 2 in French on RP Dimanche.**

### **Translation: Scott Cooper**

#### **Notes**

1. Translator's note: The Confédération française démocratique du travail (French Democratic Confederation of Labor) is one of France's two largest trade union federations, led by one of the most pro-employer bureaucracies. The "action" is a reference to a militant workers' protest at the CFDT headquarters in January.2.?Translator's note: La République En Marche is the political party of French President Emmanuel Macron.3.?Translator's note: Derichebourg is an environmental services company that provides cleaners for public spaces in Paris; Cissé was fired in late 2018 after a photograph of him resting on the job was circulated, and he sued the company in a case heard on January 15.4.?Translator's note: The Confédération générale du travail (General Confederation of Labor) is one of France's two largest trade union federations.5.?Translator's note: In mid-October 2019, a TER strain struck a road convoy stuck on a crossing, causing many injuries — including the driver. Within days, upwards of 17,000 drivers/conductors refused to keep working, citing their "right of withdrawal" under the French Labor Code to cease working in any situation considered to be a serious and imminent danger to their life or health. The company and government called it a "wildcat strike."6.?Translator's note: In late October, hundreds of rail workers at the Châtillon rail yard went on strike in open defiance of restrictions imposed during the unions' negotiations, shutting down about two-thirds of the high-speed trains on France's western Atlantic network (TGV-Atlantique).7.?Translator's note: The Union nationale des syndicats autonomes (USNA, National Union of Autonomous Trade Unions), is a small trade union confederation in France mostly based among white-collar workers.8.?Translator's note: *Jean-Paul Delevoye had been the high commissioner in charge of the French pension system reform before resigning in a scandal over undeclared income on December 16, 2019.*9.?Translator's note: *The French sister newspaper of Left Voice.*

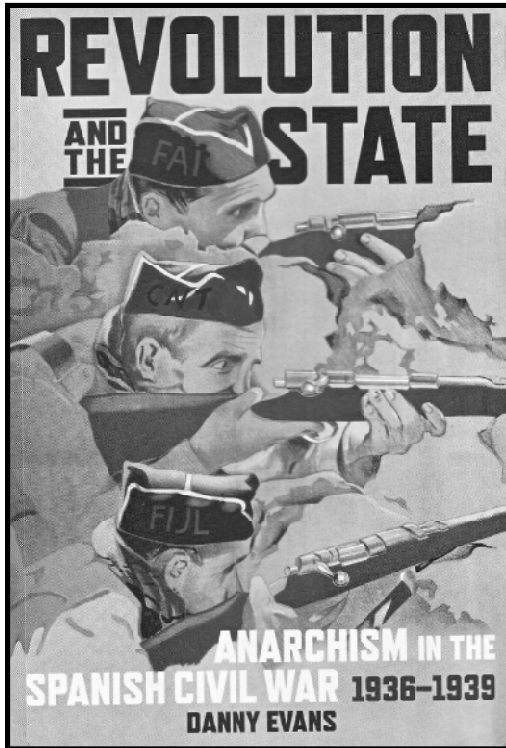
## **BOOK REVIEW CORNER**

**Revolution and the State:  
Anarchism in the Spanish Civil  
War 1936 – 1939 by Danny  
Evans. Published by AK Press**

Today the international syndicalist movement is mainly divided between mostly sects/cults aligned with the IWA (International Workers Association) and workplace based groupings often copying the corporate unions on a micro level associated with ICI-CIT (International Confed-

eration of Labor). Unlike the 1930's with the Spanish case, today there doesn't exist a truly mass syndicalist union movement with many hundreds of thousands or millions of members. Whilst there is little in the way of a revolutionary upsurge in any country. Any resurgence of a mass syndicalist union movement must occur on an international scale based on an approximation of some of the processes of the early days such as strike waves. Whilst the extreme decline of mass Stalinism in

the shape of Communist Parties and other Marxist-Leninist groups since the fall of the Berlin Wall in the Anglo World and elsewhere has removed significant obstacles on the industrial front to establish syndicalist poles of attraction amongst grass roots militants. Stemming from serious long range strategic industrial organising involving on-the-job organisation assisted intensively by outside-the-job organisation. In this way syndicalists can fa-



cilitate internationally coordinated workers direct action to help tackle multinational corporations operations and preclude the isolation of any revolutionary upsurge as occurred in 1930's Spain.

### **The International Isolation of the Spanish Revolution**

The defeat of the Spanish Revolution during the Civil War must particularly be seen in the context of its failure to expand internationally as part of a revolutionary wave and its associated isolation. Contributed by the international syndicalist and anarchist movements being crushed or severely weakened with the rise of Fascism in the 20's and 30's in Italy and Germany, the international panorama of expanding mass Stalinism in the shape of the Moscow funded Communist Parties and a series of military dictatorships in Latin America in these decades. These factors together with the support of international capitalism contributed to the reconstitution of the Republican State and counter revolution in the liberated areas and the military successes of Franco's forces and final defeat of the Republic at the end of the Civil War. This volume sheds much new light on the unsuccessful attempts by revolutionary

forces in the Republican zone particularly focusing on the May Events of 1937 in Barcelona to defeat the counter revolution and the reconstitution of the Republican State. It examines the character of the revolutionary alliance and the reasons for its failure.

The author shows that the 21/7/36 Plenum of the CNT (National Confederation of Labour – anarcho-syndicalist union movement) following the defeat of the military coup in Barcelona which approved participation in the Anti-Fascist Militias Committee – effectively a bourgeois state structure set precedents for undermining ultra democratic procedures in it. Assemblies were hastily called and there was little time for debate and to elect delegates. The Plenum was dominated by notables and higher committees. In emergencies these committees took on executive roles. Now in the constant emergency of the Civil War these committees became permanent executive bodies contributing to the bureaucratisation of the higher levels of the organisation.

### **The Slide toward Counter Revolution**

In explaining this slide down the slippery slope of integration into the Republican State, the author points to earlier collaboration with Republican elements in a conspiracy to overthrow the Primo Rivera Regime, the influence of Spanish nationalism amongst certain CNT/FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) militants and a perceived shared 'Democratic Enlightenment' heritage with Republicanism. However, he doesn't emphasise the impact of factional struggles in the CNT during the early 1930's involving the Barcelona based FAI 'voluntarist' faction ousting of other currents from the CNT on the basis of wild slandering and seizure of important CNT committees and mass circulation newspapers and the associated climate of hysteria. Leading to an insurrectionary cycle promoted by the 'voluntarist' faction which resulted in a wave of massive state repression affecting the CNT. This hysterical and subsequent repressive climate prevented mass CNT assemblies to discuss and adopt a more realistic revolutionary strategy, than simply declaring 'Libertarian Communism' and 'revolution around the corner' insurrectionary adventures. For example a 'Workers' Councils' State model which was gaining traction in prominent international anarcho-syndicalist circles in the 30's. The volume refers to Orobón Fernández's 1931 minimum program for a pact between the CNT and UGT (General Union

of Workers controlled by the Socialist Party) which was based on such a concept and the precedent of the Bavarian Soviet Republic of April 1919.

The author shows that by the end of 1936 the slogans 'Socialisation and the People Armed' were the focus of the revolutionary forces push for defence of the Revolution at the rear and front of the Republican Zone. However, a major obstacle to the socialisation campaign was the growth of the UGT in Catalonia which became controlled by the PSUC (Catalan Sister Party of the Stalinist PCE (Spanish Communist Party) and very hostile toward the revolution, as a result of unionism being made compulsory in the province in Aug. 1936. Consequently many anti-revolutionary workers were drawn to it.

The author proceeds to examine the 12/4/37 Barcelona FAI Affinity Groups plenum. It was heavily influenced by the AAD (Friends of Durruti Group) and endorsed setting up a Revolutionary Anti-Fascist Committee to conduct the war effort against Franco's forces and fight counter revolution in the rear influenced by AAD's 'Revolutionary Junta' proposal. A delegation from DAS (German Anarcho-Syndicalists in Exile) was invited to attend.

On 3/5/37 Assault Guards (Republican Paramilitary police) Squads raided the Barcelona Telephone Exchange. Since the defeat of the military coup on 17/7/36, it had been put under workers control and run by a CNT-UGT committee. There had been three prior attempts by the Assault Guards/Police to seize it.

The author exposes the myth that the armed mobilisation against the raid was purely spontaneous. Showing that it was highly organised/disciplined and conducted by an alliance of different radical groups with much popular support based on eye witness accounts. The author sketches the consolidation of oppositional anarchism in the first four months of 1937 as an identifiable current in the Libertarian movement. He outlines the role of a key figure in the May 1937 mobilisation in Barcelona - Julian Merino. He was Secretary of the CNT Maritime Transport Workers Union, helped set up the Regional Defence Council of Aragon, became Secretary of the Local Federation of Anarchist Affinity Groups in Barcelona and a radical deserter from the militia at the front.

### **The Tapestry of the Revolutionary Alliance**

Some key components of the radical alliance included the AAD formed in March 1937 from radical deserters from anarcho-syndicalist militia columns opposing militarisation and saw itself as an internal opposition in the FAI, DAS, FIJL

(Iberian Libertarian Youth Federation), JJLL (Libertarian Youth), CNT militia Barracks in Barcelona, CNT/FAI Defence Committees and the Control Patrols which replaced the police after the defeat of the Coup in July 1936. Whilst the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification – dissident Marxists) also supported the mobilisation, but were rebuffed in calls for a joint insurrection with the CNT by ‘Comites Superiores’ (highest committees which had become effectively executive bodies). They realised that it had to have major CNT involvement for a successful action. Despite its Youth Section having signed a pact with the FIJL for revolutionary action.

The author examines the 5/5/37 meeting of the coordinating committee of Regional Defence Committees (clandestine CNT military organisation). It failed to endorse the launching of an insurrection to overthrow the Generalitat (Catalan Government) and defeat the counter revolutionary forces. According to the author this inertia stemmed from fears that the CNT ‘Comites Superiores’ would disown such autonomous action and an associated bureaucratic manoeuvre by them involving stacking the meeting with collaborationist CNT/FAI notables to exert pressure on the radicals. This inertia and growing fatigue and hunger amongst the revolutionary forces and lies peddled by the Government that there would be no retaliation against the revolutionaries contributed to the demobilisation with many drifting away from the barricades. The melting away was particularly contributed by the appearance in the city of 5,000 well armed Assault Guards from Valencia on 6/5/37.

### **CNT Bureaucratisation & Counter Revolution**

The author shows that an important factor in the failure to proceed with a full scale insurrection was the revolutionary forces inability to recognise how integrated into the Republican State had the CNT/FAI ‘Comites Superiores’ become with thousands of CNT and anarchist movement militants having full time jobs in various aspects of the State apparatus. Consequently the organisation would not authorise the uprising when the time was most favourable. However, the radical forces failed to grasp the significance of their defeat and made several further renewed pushes to fight the counter revolution which were foiled by the ‘Comites Superiores’. Whilst key components of the alliance had been weakened with State repression during and after the May events such as the dismantling by security forces during summer and autumn 1937 of networks of centres and neighbourhood

Defence Committees which facilitated the uprising. Foreign anarchist groups and key militants were hit hard with assassinations and imprisonment. Whilst a turning inward of militants in the FIJL occurred and the integration of the Control Patrols into the Republican police. A falling out developed between voluntarist and purist factions in the FAI and the Libertarian and POUM Youth, amongst other factors.

The book looks at the renewed attempt to fight back against the counter revolution by FAI radicals at the Regional Plenum of Anarchist Affinity Groups 1-3 July 1937 at Casa CNT-FAI. ‘Comites Superiores’ again mobilised most respected figures and collaborationist stooges in the CNT/FAI such as Frederica Montseny and Garcia Oliver to prevent the strategy ad-

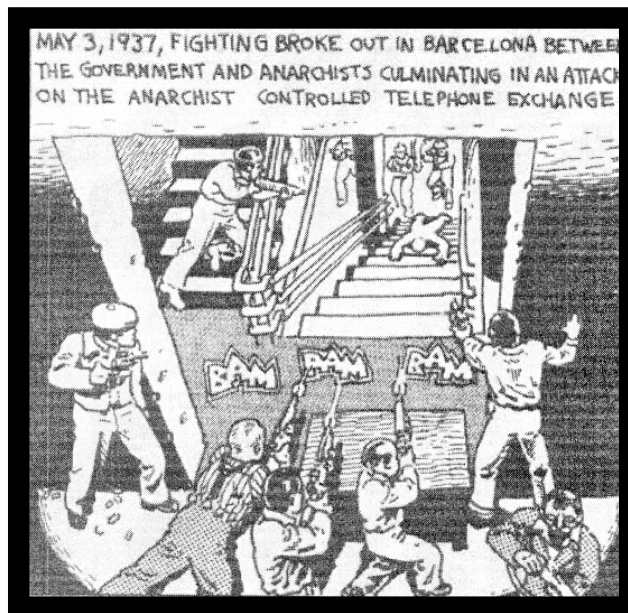
gain much traction with the grass roots. In the case of the Barcelona Anarchist Group which resulted from the restructuring, it soon dissolved. However, the manoeuvre was successful in marginalising the radical dominated Barcelona Local Federation of Anarchist Affinity Groups.

These forces used the 2/4/38 Libertarian Movement Plenum in Barcelona to create the Executive Committee of the Libertarian Movement and so replace federalism with centralisation of the anarchist movement in Catalonia. Thereby facilitating militarisation (Republican Govt. Decree to militarise the Peoples Militias in Oct. 1936) and a crack down on deserters from the front. Its creation followed a proliferation of other committees such as the CAP (Political Advisory Commission) formed

in June 1937 to facilitate collaboration. Shortly following this decision, the CNT was readmitted (it had been ejected from the National Govt. following the fall of the Largo Caballero Govt. 17/5/37) into the National Government with one Ministry. However, in the face of major JJLL resistance the Committee was soon dissolved. Whilst Socialisation/workers control measures continued to be abolished by the Republican State with the acquiescence of ‘Comites Superiores’ and the collaborationist committees. In August 1937 the Regional Defence Council of Aragon and associated collectives in the province were dissolved by Communist controlled military units. In early 1938, the Generalitat took over the Barcelona Public Entertainment industry, in May 1938 the Electricity industry was militarised and at the end of 1938 the Catalan War Industry was nationalised.

In conclusion, the author does a brilliant job discussing the development and character of the revolutionary alliance and its inadequacy in tackling the counter revolution in the Republican zone during the Civil War and Revolution. However the author’s discussion of the reasons for the CNT and FAI being drawn into collaboration with the reconstituting Republican State and Bourgeois Counter Revolution are inadequate. As he omits to discuss important ramifications of the factional struggles in the CNT and insurrectionary cycle promoted by the ‘voluntarist’ tendency in the FAI and the Spanish anarchist movement in the early 30’s. The associated hysterical and subsequent repressive climate affecting the CNT precluding the debate and adoption of a more realistic revolutionary strategy.

*Mark McGuire*



vanced by radicals to become concrete agreements and activity. The manifesto presented by the radicals favouring a renewed struggle against the counter revolution and reconstruction of the Republican State was defeated in a vote. Whilst the radicals were unable to seize upon two further State provocations i.e. the Assault Guards raids on the Barcelona Transport Workers Union HQ in Aug. 1937 and the ‘Escolapios’ Building, the HQ of the CNT Food Supply Union, the Faros anarchist group and the citywide Defence Committee in Sept. to launch a revolutionary insurrection. Whilst state forces closed down the Regional Defence Council of Aragon and the Aragon Collectives with the acquiescence of the ‘Comites Superiores’.

These defeats encouraged collaborationist elements to push for the FAI to become ‘legalised’ and reorganised to drown out the voices of the radicals. This ‘reorganised’ FAI involved dissolving the affinity group as the basic unit of FAI organisation and dropping its ‘Anti-State’ goals/orientation. However this initiative failed to

## **GLOBALISTS: THE END OF EMPIRE AND THE BIRTH OF NEOLIBERALISM** by Quinn Slobodian Harvard University Press – Cambridge, MA and London, 2018.

Globalism, or the more commonly called neoliberalism, are the current terms for the socio-economic principles that now prevail in the system of world capitalism - advanced and put into practice by corporate entities like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, and embedded in structures like the European Union and treaties like the North American Free Trade Agreement. Its fundamental and guiding principal is the absolute necessity of protecting international market forces against the regulations of governments and the demands of popular democracy.

As an articulated ideology, Slobodian notes that neoliberalism and its ideals of an unregulated global capitalism originated among a group of economists of the so-called Vienna Circle. Following the collapse of the multi-national Austro-Hungarian empire in the tumult of the First World War, economic theorists like Ludwig von Mises and Frederich Hayek developed their conceptions of a world-wide system of unrestricted corporate exploitation of resources and peoples, while they watched with approval the suppression of “Red” Vienna and the Austrian socialist movement. They insisted that it was the function of government only to protect and encourage global market forces, to inoculate international capitalism against the claims and desires of ordinary citizens – by force if necessary. Expanding on his theme in the years before WWII, von Mises noted that “fascism and similar movements aiming at the establishment of dictatorships are full of the best intentions and ... their intervention has for the moment saved European civilization. The merit that Fascism has thereby won for itself will live eternally in history” (277). More recently the globalist Wilhelm Ropke opined that “mental capacity tends to be adequate among people and

racers adjusted to cold and temperate climates but inadequate among those adjusted to hot climates” and warned against “power in the hands of nation-states dominated by populations incapable of rational thought” (157). (Another argument against global warming?).

Over the last century globalist and neoliberal theorists have been known under various labels both formal and informal – the Mount Pelerin Society, the Geneva School, the Chicago Boys, the American Enterprise Institute. But the message is always the same – national sovereignty, democratic institutions, labor organizations – all pose dire threats to the international corporate order and must be suppressed. Millions of manufacturing jobs have been exported from North America and Europe to mainly authoritarian states like Communist China where strict limits are placed on wages and where, if unions exist at all, they are phantom organizations controlled by the regime. At the same time the former colonies of the Global South – the “populations incapable of rational thought” – were subordinated to the control of the International Monetary Fund.

In the wake of the social dislocation and misery caused by these globalist policies, publicity of any kind was to be avoided. Hayek especially emphasized that corporate dominance must remain as anonymous and invisible as possible. Otherwise public opposition might be aroused. The masses must be kept unaware of the international market forces that affect their per-

sonal lives, and regard the fluctuations of the economy as something beyond human control – like the weather. For his theoretical speculations Hayek was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1974. Along with fellow neoliberal economist Milton Friedman he visited Chile to congratulate the dictator Pinochet following his bloody coup, and was subsequently honored by Queen Elizabeth and handed the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George H.W. Bush.

Hayek never lived to see his worst fears being realized. In 1999 the World Trade Organization attempted to openly hold a meeting in Seattle that was met by massive

demonstrations of some forty thousand protesters – including Teamster unionists and environment groups – the “Teamster and Turtle” riots. A WTO bureaucrat lamented the fact that “Seattle created a generation and a legion of WTO-haters” (275). The organization responded with a barrage of new rhetoric about justice and equity while continuing its global campaign against public budgets, environmental protections and communal welfare.

More recently the consequences of supranational globalism have finally provoked extreme reactions

across the political spectrum – right, left and center – the election of Donald Trump, the Brexit vote in the UK, the demonstrations of the gilets jaunes in France. The World Trade Organization is headquartered in Geneva. It is quite ironic that just across the street from its offices, in full view of its theorists and technocrats, is a monument dedicated to the International Labour Organization. At its base it reads in French, that “Labour is not a commodity.”

*Martin Comack*

*Boston Labor Solidarity Committee*

## **History of anarchist orator and organiser, George Barrett.**

George Barrett a.k.a George Powell Ballard Born Herefordshire, England 1888. Died Torquay, England 1917 “who flashed like a brilliant meteor over our horizon...the movement lost an inspiring personality when he died.” George Cores

“He knew that nothing short of a complete revolutionary change in the basis of society would be of any social value. He would never compromise with his ideas, and his integrity was always apparent and above suspicion”. Mat Kavanagh, “To know him was to be awed by a revelation of the liberty he lived for-yet rather not that he lived

for, but that he lived, and of which he had become a part..His writings, his life and sayings, all the force he was, and created amongst us and still is, all that made this man we loved, and love, is forever part of the great eternal force in humanity’s forward march”. Edith Ballard Nee Oxley.

George Powell Ballard was born on December 6th 1888 at Ledbury in Herefordshire into a fairly well-to-do family. His family was well known locally - his father being, as quoted in a local

*See Page 20*



## NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news lately has of course been the Covid-19 Crisis and the new Depression. Like the Great Depression of the 1930's we are seeing an intensified attack on workers' wages, conditions and jobs in various industries. Whilst the 30's Great Depression saw a major focus of the attacks as the NSW Railways where the initial 10% wage cuts commenced and flowed on across industries and even affecting Social Welfare. The ACTU, Corporate Unions and the ALP set up are playing a very important role in facilitating this onslaught. In particular the 'Job Keeper' scheme which the ACTU has played a key role in negotiating with the Morrison Government has an important function. Whilst most leftist groups being either student social clubs and likely on the pay roll of the Union Hierarchy/ALP or their fronts and hopeless in the face of this intensified employer offensive, the ASN has been in the thick of the struggle to assist militant workers to fight back and helped score an important victory.

In the NSW Railways the ASN has been 'kicking ass' taking on the rail bosses and corrupt union officials and assisting militants with some brilliant agitation work to defeat a push for Driver Only Operation of new trains in mid December last year. This initiative would result ultimately in the loss of thousands of jobs and open the door to privatisation in this sector with flow on effects to many others. In response to ASN agitation, there was a front page article in the Sun Telegraph 9/2/20 exposing some grisly and outrageous activity of the rail bosses. Lately the ASN has been assisting militants to expose a ploy by the bosses and union officials to take advantage of the Covid-19 Crisis and the Job Keeper scam to sack many older workers. Again as in the 30's depression, the Government and employers are likely using this push in the NSW Railways as the spear head of a cross industries onslaught. (See articles Page 3.)

In this edition we throw new light on the back ground to the XPT derailment at Wallan in February of this year and how the Government Inquiry finding has been an inevitable cover-up. (See article Page 9.)

## A.S.N. DIRECTORY

### ASN Sydney Local

PO Box 92  
Broadway 2007 NSW

### ASN Melbourne:

J.Dixon  
jeremytrewindixon@yahoo.com

### ASN Newcastle

PO Box 106  
Kotara 2289 NSW

### Anarchist Media Institute

PO Box 20  
Parkville Vic. 3052

### SPARKS

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

### MEMBERS' VOICE

Grassroots NSW Public Transport Workers Organisation  
User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice  
Email: Membersvoice2010@yahoo.com

Facebook. [www.facebook.com/pages/Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-Group/5312400435721323?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-Group/5312400435721323?fref=ts)

### STOP

"Sydney Transport-users Opposing Privatisation"

PO Box 703  
Leichhardt 2040 NSW  
Facebook STOP Privatisation  
@STOPPrivatisation

## Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## TO FIND OUT MORE

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

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

**REBEL WORKER  
WEB SITE:  
[www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org)**

If undeliverable, return to  
PO Box 92 Broadway NSW 2007

*Continued From Page 18*

paper: “a master genius in many by-paths of mechanical handicraft.” His uncle, his paternal grandfather and his brother were all artists.

After finishing his education at the Cathedral High School in Hereford he became an engineering draughtsman. He also acquired skills as a journalist, poet, and gifted orator.

He joined the Socialist Society in Bristol. It appears that he was opposed to parliamentarism and this led to his resignation and recognition that he was an anarchist. Freedom reported that he disturbed the “otherwise peaceful routine” of this group by advocating anarchism. He met the daughter of a leading socialist in Bristol called Edith Oxley and they married.

He next moved to London and joined the Walthamstow Anarchist Group in which Ambrose Barker was active. Here he distinguished himself as an anarchist speaker. He spoke under the pseudonym of George Barrett. As the veteran anarchist Mat Kavanagh noted later: “He spoke almost every night in the week, and would often cycle 20 miles each way to address a meeting, and that after a day’s work”.

He next moved to Glasgow by April 1910. He began to speak at open air pitches, sometimes with the help of John McAra from Edinburgh, so successfully that he formed a movement. John Paton, later a Labour MP, writes in his autobiography Proletarian Pilgrimage:

“I saw an unfamiliar figure mounted on a box at one of the speaking pitches....He was engaged in a familiar denunciation of capitalism and a glance at the pamphlets spread on the street told me he was an anarchist. I studied him with a new interest. There had been no anarchist propaganda

in Glasgow for many years, although at one time there had been an active group. The speaker was a tall, good-looking Englishman, extremely eloquent and able, whose speech betrayed his middle-class origin. The passionate conviction with which he spoke was extraordinarily impressive; the crowd about him swelled in numbers...he progressed from the usual attack on capitalism to a scathing indictment of politicians and particularly the leaders of the Labour Party...he spoke for over two hours and ended completely exhausted...his deep sincerity and attractive personality held them and his audience had grown to several hundreds before the



end”.

After the meeting Paton introduced himself to Barrett and a lone supporter, Dominic, a railway clerk. Together they set up the Glasgow Anarchist Group. They started an energetic propaganda campaign. Later in the year they had 20 people at meetings and by May 1st 1911, fifty members. These included Willie Gallagher, later to be one of the founders of the Communist Party and later still a Communist MP. The Group was heavily involved in supporting the seamen’s strike that year. They began to spread activity to Govan and Paisley.

As a result of the Sidney Street Affair in 1911 and the resulting moral panic against

anarchists George lost his job after detectives paid a visit to where he worked. He was blacklisted by the police with other employers. From then on he earned a scant living by writing articles for the engineering press.

May Day 1912 saw the appearance of the first issue of *The Anarchist*, financed by the wealthy anarchist George Davison (see Jim Colton). This lasted for 34 issues. Barrett had toured Britain throughout winter 1911-1912 to solicit financial support but it was above all due to Davison that the paper appeared. George Cores wrote for the first 9 issues and A. J. Cook, later to be Secretary of the Miners’ Federation of Great Britain, wrote for it under a pseudonym.

The collapse of *The Anarchist* in early 1913, despite the gargantuan efforts of Barrett, was a bitter disappointment for him.

By June 1912 the Group was holding meetings at two places in Glasgow, and at Paisley, Clydebank, Maryhill and Parkhead. George made long journeys to speak on his motor-cycle in the worst of weather, and he caught a chill at an open-air meeting in May 1913, which resulted in the contraction of TB.

Despite his illness he carried on propagating anarchism. At the outbreak of the World War he wrote a pamphlet called *The Last War*, published by Bristol Workers’ Freedom Group. 10,000 copies were sold before the authorities banned it. He signed the international manifesto against war in response to the pro-war stance of Kropotkin, Grave, Malato and Dave etc. He began a book on Law and Liberty and essays like *Substance and Shadow* and *The First Person*. When he was too weak to write, he dictated his thoughts to friends.

He died in Torquay on January 7, 1917 at the age of thirty.