

REBEL WORKER

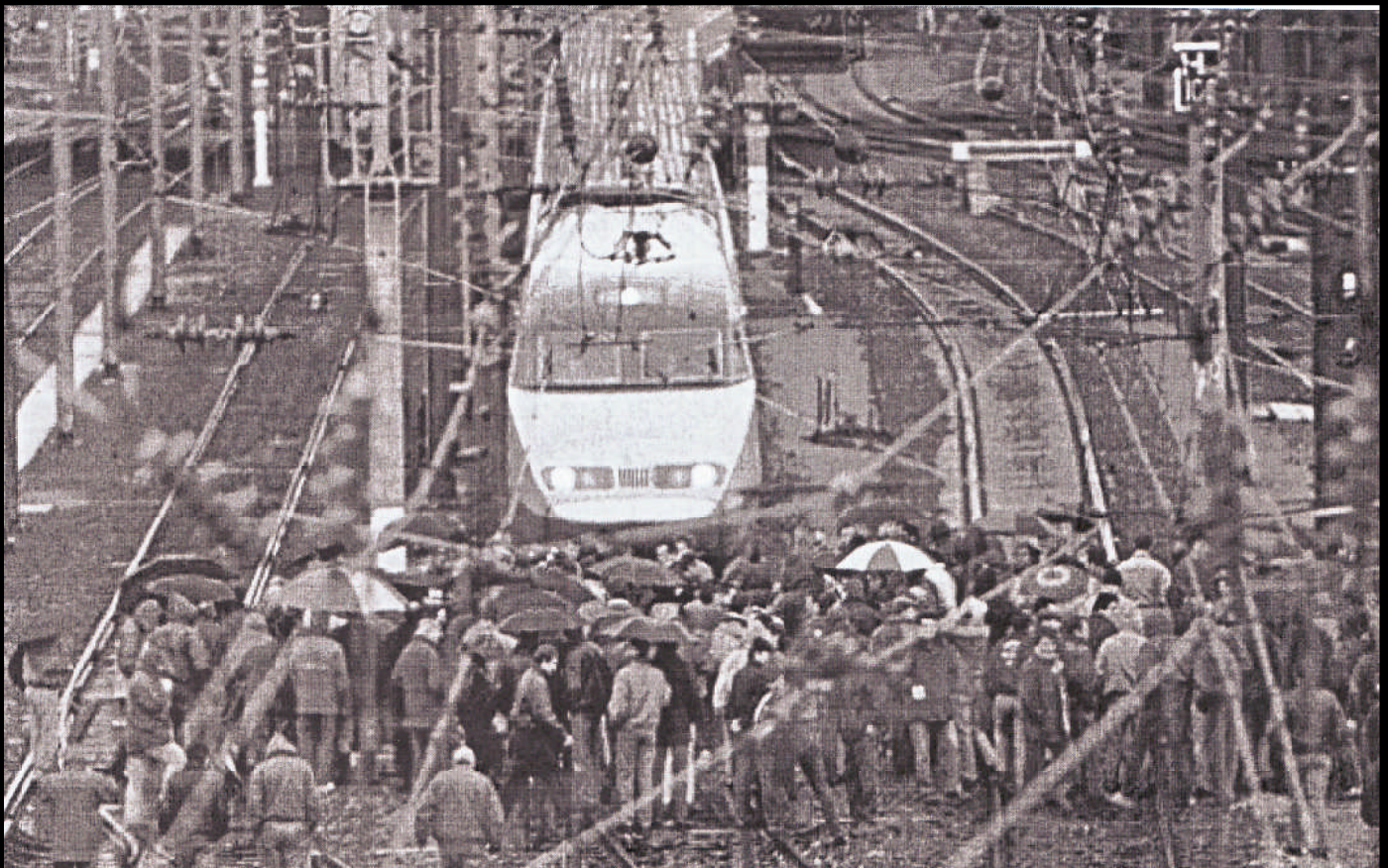
AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia

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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

FRENCH WORKERS SHOW THE WAY FORWARD IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE EMPLOYER OFFENSIVE WITH A STRIKE WAVE AGAINST MACRON AUSTERITY & PRIVATISATION PUSH!



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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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Sydney Cabbies' News

My thoughts on the \$1.00 levy on taxis to facilitate so called ride sharing:

To ask a cabbie to ponder on the \$1.00 levy, introduced in NSW by the Min Andrew Constance run transport Authority- aside from the obviously unenforceable nature of it- the bloody thing is hated by almost everyone and few taxi cabs if any are equipped to render the figure unprompted on the fare display thus the potential for driver assault and that's just the tip of the iceberg- however it is as well to ponder these points-

The owners of taxi licenses (plates) had their opportunity to enact their voting rights at Co-op level when all taxi industry companies were taxi co-ops- that was before the vast majority of cab owners elected to take the king's shilling and sell out their co-ops to the corporatized entities that swallowed up those very co-ops and- with the filthy lucre these guys

got from doing that, they lost with their voting rights, the same voting rights that determined the way their co-ops interfaced with the NSW government, that is to say their ability to lobby for things that directly affected their businesses and livelihoods- thus, the interests of e.g. the shareholders of Cabcharge were/are now the focus of the board of Cabcharge- not the owner - drivers of the former co- op Red and Yellow Deluxe/ then Taxis Combined/ now 13Cabs- the once co-op bought out by the entity that eventually became a public company, the corporatized Cabcharge Limited.

This analysis does not of course apply to the owners of plates belonging to members of the surviving very small co-ops.

Taxi plate investors obviously think that they deserve to be compensated for relinquishing the value of their cake and the ability to eat it too! Andrew Constance the Minister for Transport has pathetically bowed to these babies and given them a theoretical lolly scramble to pursue, a scramble that doesn't come anywhere near making up for the economic loss experienced by the plate owners anyway- but a lolly hugely onerous on the travelling public as the \$1.00 levy is added to every fare.

Had the co-ops been still in existence the mess would have been mitigated by two things- a taxi industry that had become run down- ripe for rideshare to step in- by way of the owners of plates exercising their powers through voting rights at former co-op level to protect the value of their assets and- the power of the co-ops to interface those concerns with the government administration of the industry. The owners of licenses could have been able to, for instance ensure that the Green Slip insurance premiums on taxi cabs be kept low by way

of remunerating the drivers of those cabs adequately and not have them working for less than \$10.00/ hour- thus racking up accident rates that stem from driver fatigue. Come to think of it, even when they had the chance - back in 1984 when everything was at co-op level- and the co-op representative, the Taxi Industry Assoc. back then entered into, with the Transport Workers Union, one of Australia's most deceitful industrial sell outs of workers in Australian industrial law- the still current taxi industry Contract Determination 1984- a document that became the Rosetta Stone for much that has turned the industry into a sweat -shop - on- wheels fanging down the decades.

The TIA is joined at the hip with Cabcharge- they share the same building in Riley St Darlinghurst and for much of its existence- the same CEO the now deceased Reg Kermode. Kermode oversaw the massive change from a predominantly owner - driver industry to an absentee landlord plate leasing industry and thus the advent of the massively exploitive of bailee - non owner driver labour: the managed taxi phenomenon - inevitably feeding into the bottom lines of his business interests and the cobbles of the man.

No to compensation- the plate owner needs to suck it up.

'Street Talk' (RADIO SKID ROW) airs every Thursday between 12.00 noon and 1.00pm. There is a big taxi driver component to it as the host - a guy named Demos also a bailee driver, runs the issues of the industry and typically throws the lines open to other cabbies nearly every week. It is very current affairs oriented in other areas too.

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 Media Centre.

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

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

RETROSPECT TO AN "AGREEMENT"

For many employees across the New South Wales rail network the Easter Bunny came early. The latest Rail Enterprise Agreements have been accepted by a narrow margin. There are 49% of union members who either never voted or who did not accept the agreement. The pre-Easter egg delivered is inadequate and hollow.

The 3% pay rise deal over 3 years is just .5% over the NSW Government's salary cap, which we should never accept as a first premise. The premier Gladys Berejiklian says that there will be job losses to pay for the pay rises.

According to SBS news,

"Ms Berejiklian insisted the deal still fell in line with the government's fair wages policy which caps public sector wage increases at 2.5 per cent."

"If any class of employees want more than that they have to give things up - and that's

In our opinion wishing and hoping does not cut it, there were many failures that led this agreement to be despised by a large section of the workforce.

According to News.com

"Mr Claassens said workers will now be given the opportunity to hear the details of the new offer at depot meetings over the coming weeks, before determining whether the offer "provides them with the better conditions and a fair wage offer that they deserve".

"A previous offer was overwhelmingly rejected by a mass meeting of workers' representatives last week," he said.

"We're talking about people's livelihoods and working conditions here. It is important workers are given every opportunity to discuss the offer on the table and decide for themselves whether this latest offer is good enough."

Therein is one of the failures of process. If the rail union representatives were holding out for a better deal including a 4% pay rise and rejected the offer on the table why were they not balloted a second time when the latest deal was presented? From what

deal once the 6 weeks imposed ban had been lifted. It is not likely that the Commission was ever going to relent and let strike action go ahead legally. However, what a chance went begging to prove that we can "change the laws" by defying the laws. With the density that the rail unions have here was a chance to change destiny. The other thing is that dozens of other unions were offering their support for a decent agreement. The rail unions were not out on a limb by any means. Without a fully thought out and democratic campaign, involving the members, it automatically meant that capitulation became the preferred option. The power that workers united had to bring the NSW Government and NSW Businesses to their knees was not going to be on show in this State.

Now the Union and their members are in a much weaker position on future bargaining. The Fair Work Commission will have a set precedent from this period to once again impose Industrial Bans based on public transport workers being declared an essential services and an action that "endangers the public". It will surely be used against other public sector workers.

For members to move forward they must elect members to the union who are prepared to defy the unjust laws. More importantly they must bring the whole membership into the struggle for dignity and justice. The rank and file need to organise themselves because that is where the real strength is.

This latest EBA campaign was a struggle divided. Negotiation took place mostly between elected and unelected union career bureaucrats and Government bureaucrats.

The rank and file knew little about the process let alone what negotiations were about. This EBA process was probably the most secretive and closely held undisclosed affair in the union's history. Why were members treated like dummies? Why were the draft proposals of the EBA never given to the membership to help decide for themselves?

Even after the vote decision, few people have had access to the EBA documents. Is there something that the unions and management don't want the general membership to see?

From the presentation given to union members before the vote took place:



what's happened in this case," she told reporters in Sydney on Thursday. Asked if efficiencies the union might have agreed to included potential job cuts, the premier replied: "I understand there are some. I understand there are issues around that."

"The Rail Tram and Bus Union accepted there would be job cuts when new technology was introduced but believes the latest offer requires proper consultation."

"I don't want to see any job cuts. I would love it if they got their numbers all wrong and we didn't lose anybody," RTBU NSW secretary Alex Claassens told reporters.

we can gather there was no further substantial progress, as far as the workforce was concerned, in the offer from the NSW Government after the first rejection from the elected delegates. Why were there no second ballot of elected delegates who still had no further reason to ratify the new offer?

It seems that the decision had been made at executive level to put the ballot for and against accepting the EBA to the general membership despite widespread opposition from the rank and file. Why was there a rush all of a sudden just inside the expiry of the 6 week ban on industrial action imposed by the Industrial Commission?

There were some signs that the membership was prepared to battle on for a better

“Agreement will come into operation 7 days after approval by the Fair Work Commission”

“Once approved a signed copy will be available to staff at workplaces and published on the intranet”

We say that to be fair, that after ratification it is too late to view the EBA documents. All members should have been given a copy of the final proposal before the vote took place. Trust us, listen to us!

One of the biggest criticisms from members was that Trains Crews and Customer Service Staff were all bundled into one agreement. There was however a separate agreement for Sydney Trains and NSW Trains. Train crews believe that they have been disadvantaged by the agreement as they have skills above and beyond those in other areas. This will always be debated but we tend to believe that solidarity always wins, division does not. The whole process was just lazy and many people were left out of the decision making process.

In regards to the \$1000 one off cash incentive. This figure cannot be used to inflate the rate of the pay rise over 3 years. Early on, the Union was saying that the pay rise on offer was somewhere over 4%. This is a convoluted figure that takes no account of the time frame missed by not having the agreement finalised by the expiry date of the old agreement in October 2017. A further 6 months will have transpired from this date before the new payment rates apply. The \$1000 sweetener would only be just compensation for the delay.

Traditionally union elections have taken place just after an EBA pay rise has been

granted. This was normally in November just after an October EBA finalisation. There are plans on notice to change the rules around elections in NSW (section 71). Call me a cynic, but watch this space for a propitious date for the election. Will it coincide with the \$1000 bonus payment and 3% pay rise sweetener? Maybe it won't eventuate, but that was the purpose of the dates in the past.

The RTBU website and Facebook page is now allowing for comments after having been closed during negotiation up to the vote. Judging by comments the troops at ground zero are not happy.

It bugs me why full online debate amongst members was discontinued during the negotiation period. Seeing that there was no outlet for the frustrations of punters at the shop floor it seems ludicrous to close, instead of facilitate, debate no matter how much we all disagree. Was it that the negotiators were worried about the effect of public opinion on the outcome of the vote? Criticism of the Commission is par for the course these days and Commissioners are not above the law. Anyway judging by the comments, when they appeared, the slanderous claims weren't aimed at the Commission but targeted elsewhere. I think it is unforgivable in the

circumstances to gag debate on general members of the union for having their say on matters close to their hearts. The leadership of the rail unions must be held accountable for such autocratic behaviour, even it seems a trivial matter. Members need an explanation on why this was done. There is no such limit on criticising the Commission and the Government now that the vote is over. So what has changed?

The whole EBA process was a failure as far as many workers are concerned, this is partly due to the Industrial Rules being “broken” and partly from the lack of a transparent and democratic process for dealing with union issues. Either our leaders are incompetent or they have an agenda which is not aligned with what the general membership aspires to. The poorly thought out hare-brained telephone poll on whether the EBA should be put to the vote is symptomatic of the leadership bumbling in the rail unions. Members must learn from this that there is no Easter Bunny bearing

gifts and that this mythical creature does not exist at all.

In the long term a union has to be built that includes all members, one that is prepared to accept the decision of the general membership and one that is made up of a disparate group of ideas that come together in the interests of all. Only an organised rank and file can supply the strength needed so this farce never ever happens again.



RAIL EBA 2017 & UPCOMING UNION ELECTIONS

Some of the most important news in the NSW Railways has been the brazen railroading of Rail EBA 2017. As predicted in a previous edition of RW no EBA document was supplied to the grass roots prior to the ballot.

The ballot was open to rigging and the lack of the provision of the EBA document was obviously aimed at preventing militants issuing critical flyers to expose the nasties. Whilst the Union Facebook Page was censored. Only a management “Road Show” to sell the dirty deal was held. While an “imaginary” pay rise and bonus was supplied to assist the ALP Union Officials electoral fortunes. There was an ominous silence by the Union Officials, Management and the Media concerning some dangerous “trap door”

clauses in the likely EBA document. Such as the “Transmission of Business” which



gives the Green Light to privatisation and the “Facilitation Clause” exposed in a pre-

vious RW edition, which allows management to change anything with the “Consultation” of their Union Official stooges.

Due to hearsay concerns about the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) conduct of ballots in the 2014 union elections, (see article “NSW Railway News” in RW Vol.34 No.1(222) Mar.-April 2015 on our website www.rebelorker.org), we propose a system of voting for the upcoming union elections which would ensure trust in the system. It would involve the holding of individual secret workplace ballots with declarations that day of voting for candidates, the issuing of postal ballots for those on leave and those at work that day not voting counted as informal. Candidates can have scrutineers with AEC officers in attendance. Should there be an inability to gain trust in the system, we propose a formal rank and file structure based on workplace roles in the industry for e.g. different grades have a caucus to discuss different grade's problems, based on democratic union principles.

State Transit Newsflash

Burwood Depot News

RW: What are the latest developments with the NSW Govt announcing the awarding of the Region 6 tender to Transit Systems?

Burwood Driver: Latest news is that the union has put in a claim for a 52 weeks redundancy payment for Region 6 drivers who are being taken over by Transit Systems. As two STA managers who have "transferred" to the company have received this payment. Another part of the claim is the continuation of our 2 weeks per annum sick leave entitlement in the new company. We have recently received a curious circular from the STA in regard to the continuity of various entitlements such as sick leave, annual leave and long service leave with the new private owner. Whilst stating with the new owner, there will be no change to the entitlements, it also mentions the company can make any changes after 3 months. So we are unclear where we stand. There seems to be double talk here. Another potentially quite nasty twist in the saga is the possibility new drivers in Region 6 will have to be TWU members. Presumably they will be on the worse TWU EBA conditions. So maybe the plan is to pressure drivers to swop to the TWU over time. It seems the whole affair involving the Region 6 selloff was planned by the Govt., the company and the union hierarchy well before the Newcastle buses privatisation.

There has been an important new development. Transit Systems management people have come to the depot. They are wanting us to sign "open ended" contracts with them, using the pretext that they want an idea who will be remaining on the job in the context of the takeover. It's likely one clause will state we who have worked for the STA and are now working for Transit Systems. Effectively it would be a letter of resignation from the STA. Drivers will be referring the contracts to solicitors to determine their legal employment situation. Questions arise with these contracts. If we don't sign them will we remain as STA employees from 1/7/18 or will we be made redundant? The Transit Systems people have held meetings at the depot about the takeover. However, they provide no clear answers to our questions. BOT's and Yard Supervisors are concerned about their situation. They have the impression that in the context of the takeover, they will just transfer over to the company as bus drivers. However, will they be on our wage or a higher rate, given the higher positions which they have held?

The company is recruiting for new drivers for Region 6 in Western Australia, South Australia and even New Zealand. However, they are receiving a poor response.

RW: How are drivers coping with the situation?

BD: There are many resignations from the STA and drivers rejoining the union. A certain layer of people are taking a wait and see approach. If there are major changes within 3 months or so of the company taking over, they will leave the job. According to the Govt. the region 6 tender to Transit Systems will be for a 3 years trial and supposedly there are to be no major changes for 18 months.

RW: What's the situation with EBA 2017?

BD: Other news was that the union officials and management have secured the so called approval for the EBA, providing a 2.5% pa pay rise. The negotiations occurred behind our backs. Despite many of

things up for the arrival of the old team of Jim Narkos and some deviants. These people are not welcome at our depot. They have an unacceptable attitude toward workers. In the case of Randwick depot, it's becoming rundown. As the land is next to a retirement home, there is a limit on any proposed development to 3-4 storeys in the area. It's likely the land will be sold off to some well known wealthy individual. A rumour circulating is that the remaining drivers will be transferred to Port Botany. With the completion of the Light Rail Extensions, the Light Rail will be sold off together with the remaining Eastern Suburbs depots as a package like which occurred in Newcastle.

Additionally I have noticed an enormous turnover of drivers. With driver instructors constantly training up new people. A major contribution for people leaving the job seems to be a general lack of trust with the Govt. In particular, the feeling Transport



us voting against it in the internet ballot, the EBA got up. There is a lot of anger amongst us over the whole affair. Whilst the provisions of the new EBA won't be implemented until 3 months time. Latest news is that the RTBU officials are now taking about negotiating a 5 years EBA with the company.

Waverley Depot News

RW: What's the latest at the depot?

Waverley Busie: There are major changes in management. With Selina from Randwick at the depot for a short while. She apparently has arrived on the scene to soften

Minister Constance can't be trusted. Whilst the looming threat of privatisation of the depot in 6 to 9 months time, creates a sense of uncertainty about future job security and conditions. Given a major goal of a private operator would be casualisation. When becoming a casual you would face all manner of problems such as difficulties with getting loans and maintaining financial commitments.

RW: What were your impressions of the Fix NSW Transport rally on Saturday afternoon 17/2/18 at Martin Place CBD?

WB: The speakers listed a constant stream of bad decisions by the NSW Liberal Govt. Such as the closing of a perfectly good rail line in the case of the Newcastle. Whilst on the new Metro line there will be a tunnel where there is no station for 7 km. Totally disregarding passenger and workers' safety issues. Despite being less than a kilometre from Redfern station, a new metro station is being constructed in Waterloo on Botany Rd. The area is currently just a big hole in the ground. In the case of the Chatswood to Epping line, the NSW Govt. wants to close it for 7 months late in 2018 also to cope with Metro trains. Causing much unnecessary inconvenience for commuters. With the West-Connex, an obvious bad design is the M6 outlet at St. Peters, funnelling more traffic into the Princess Hwy and Gardeners Rd. In the case of the town of Windsor, the Govt. is wanting to construct a 3-6 lane highway through its historic town centre. It is the oldest town square in Australia. Whilst 3 months ago a viaduct under the town con-

structed by convicts has been discovered. Local people have been protesting the construction with the blockade of a bridge leading into the town for the last 5 years. The whole transport changes under the Liberals are all geared to tollways and not proper train services. However, the points raised by the speakers were only the tip of the iceberg. There is an endless list of other bad decisions. However, with these bad decisions Big Business is making huge profits.

Leichhardt Depot News

RW: What's the latest with the Region 6 privatisation?

Leichhardt Busie: Currently Transit Systems people are working behind the scenes at the depot. They are walking around, but won't introduce themselves. Given certain of the STA bosses have gone over to Transit Systems. Its increasingly looking Region 6 has been sold off as a franchise. It seems as a result of this management transfer, the company was promised the

tender and will also get the rest of the pie in the event of the other STA depots privatisation. Spare parts for the buses are being transferred to those STA depots outside Region 6. Whilst our buses aren't being fixed. There is a continuing shortage of drivers which will be greatly worsened from 1/7/18 when many of us are transferring to non Region 6 depots. It's likely the new owner will have to introduce more realistic running times. At the moment it's impossible to meet them. The Govt. can then say only with a private operator have running times been improved. The company is also trying to entice us into signing contracts with them. We have been advised by the union not to sign them.

STOP PRESS: *In recent weeks Transport Minister Constance was talking about ripping up the existing timetable due to expected driver shortages with the private takeover of Region 6. Latest news is that now the new timetable has been put up in the depot.*

NEWCASTLE P.T. CRISIS

The Government Bus Service in Newcastle has been privatised and many changes have been implemented recently that are unfair and disadvantage many people.

Newcastle Transport introduced new bus routes and timetables that came into effect on 14th January. These changes significantly disadvantage anybody travelling from anywhere south of Belmont especially.

New route 29 replaces the 350

The new bus route 29 from Swansea Heads to Glendale via Cardiff Railway Station replaced route 350 that provided a direct route to the major centres of Belmont, Charlestown, Adamstown, Broadmeadow, Hamilton and Newcastle West however these centres are more than 9km east of Cardiff and Glendale.

The new 29 route travels the current route to Belmont then turns left towards Cardiff and Glendale via a "scenic" route through the streets of Elleebana - way across the western side of Lake Macquarie, nowhere near the major centres the 350 route took passengers.

To get to Charlestown, Adamstown and Newcastle East/CBD passengers now need to change at Belmont to the 14 bus,

Then if they want to go to Broadmeadow, Hamilton or Newcastle West they need change again at Charlestown for the 28 bus to Adamstown, Broadmeadow Station, Hamilton, Newcastle West and the new Transport interchange at Wickham, To go

further towards the new Newcastle Harbour restaurant and entertainment precinct, CBD and beaches they need to change again to another bus and in 12 months the tram/light rail.

New route 45 replaced the 349

The new bus route 45 from Swansea South replaced route 349 that was a direct route to Belmont, Charlestown, Newcastle West and the Newcastle CBD. The new 45 route terminates at Belmont where passengers need to change to the 14 bus and change



again to the 28 bus similar to the scenario discussed above.

The 352 is cancelled – replaced by the new 29 route to Cardiff to give us the benefit (tongue in cheek) of accessing all of the

Newcastle – Sydney trains, however this route extends the round trip to Sydney by 1 hour at least. Besides who wants to travel to Sydney in the middle of the day?

Some of the impacts:

To go to Charlestown passengers need to take 2 buses, To go to the medical specialists at Broadmeadow and Hamilton passengers need to take 3 buses, Passengers need to take 3 buses to go to the: Newcastle Entertainment Centre, Newcastle Stadium, - Honeysuckle Entertainment Restaurant Precinct, Newcastle Transport Interchange at Wickham.

Children, the aged and disabled will experience difficulty negotiating the multiple bus changes and the multiple options offered by the trip planner app, that'll own the alternative 5 timetables people will need to carry.

Trip times increase between 30 minutes and 2 hours each way, Total time waiting for bus connections can be up to 60 minutes. Some of the timetabled connections are zero minutes this allows no margin for any delay what so ever, there have been a number of cases reported that the passengers have seen their connection driving off into the distance as they arrive at the connection stop.

Some people who have had a few too many drinks will run the RBT gauntlet rather than having to negotiate 3 bus trips or bus/tram/bus or train/bus from the entertainment venues in town.

Bus services from locations south of Belmont have been reduced by 24 despite the advertisements stating that there will be more services and better connections.

Consultation

It is reported that there was a consultation forum set up to workshop the proposed changes and discuss what people wanted as part of the "Voice of Newcastle Programme. However, it is reported that participants had to sign a confidentiality agreement, it is hard to fathom why that would have been necessary if there was nothing to hide.

It is also hard to understand why those consulted would have wanted the bus from Swansea Heads/Caves Beach: to have

Cardiff and Glendale as their preferred destination rather than Charlestown, Broadmeadow, Hamilton, Newcastle; to have to change buses twice to get to Charlestown, to have to change buses three times to get to Broadmeadow, Hamilton and Newcastle, to have to wait for up to 60 minutes for their connections, to increase their travel times by up to 2 hours; Thanks to Change.org

STOP PRESS: On 19/2/18 a rally was organised by the ALP with the support of

the RTBU bosses at Belmont to protest the cutback in bus services in Newcastle following STA Buses privatisation. It was attended by an estimated 1000 angry people.

The Local ALP MP proposed a motion to demand Transport Minister Constance review the cutbacks. However, no call was made to oppose the privatisation of Newcastle buses.

New Insights on the Bus Privatisation Conspiracy

The International Strategy

The privatisation of Newcastle and Region 6 STA Buses is part of a global strategy where the State owns the basic infrastructure – buses and depots – and sets timetables and the fare structure. The private owners are just leased out the operations and have the right to hire and fire staff. The objective of the privatisation is for the private operator to have more flexibility in cutting bus workers wages and conditions. This is the bottom line of the privatisation.

Uber Buses Plan

The 'Uber' strategy is an attempt by the government to see if they can reduce the cost of providing bus services through the replacement of lowly patronised routes that are currently provided to meet the minimum service levels with a demand responsive service. This is likely to result in passengers paying more for the service.

STA Sell Off

The case for the privatisation of Region 6 was based on complaints of late running presented by Transport Minister Con-

stance is well known in the industry to be bogus. As it is matter of comparing apples to oranges. As Region 6 has much more traffic lights, traffic congestion and other factors, in comparison to the private buses operated in outer Sydney areas. In 2013 to 2014 the NSW Govt. (was to) allocated \$10 million to the STA to fix up its bus running times.

Background on Transit Systems

According to its website Transit Systems is one of Australia's largest public transport providers and is Australia's only multi-national public transport business. They operate services in Perth, Adelaide, Darwin, Sydney, London and Singapore. They employ 4,935 people (2,005 in Australia, 2,030 in the United Kingdom and 900 in Singapore).

Transit Systems has recruited Jamie Sinclair, who was the STA General Manager for Region 6. Presumably he has been recruited to run the region for Transit Systems. They have also employed Peter Rowley, the former STA CEO. So, in spite of all Constance complaints about how

poorly STA has performed in Region 6, the new operator is relying on the same management that delivered that performance to keep running it.

Union Hierarchy Fake Bus Anti-Privatisation Campaign

The "Save Our Buses" campaign waged by Unions NSW, the RTBU officials and the ALP was in retrospective appears bogus. It was just a case of kite flying. Looking like they were doing something, but doing nothing effective. Posters, stickers and petitions were condoned but not industrial action or effective public campaigning (eg bus depot blockades). Luke Foley ALP NSW Opposition Leader may make an election promise, in the run up to the State elections in March 2019, of renationalising Region 6 and Newcastle, but its certain he will back off in office. It is on the cards he would follow the Libs and put up for tender the Eastern and Northern Suburbs STA buses. Either once in office in 2019 or after the following State election.

Ten ways in which Andrew Constance is physically destroying Sydney and NSW's rail and bus public transport infrastructure.

(From) An open letter to the Rail Division of the RTBU, from a collective of bus driver members of the same union, calling for a combined industrial action, rail workers AND bus drivers, to demand the sacking of Transport Minister Constance.

As Transport Minister Constance's negotiations with the rail workers of the RTBU have failed to amount to anything that would thwart their postponed right to take protected industrial action in pursuit of conditions & award changes, then bus driver members of the same union should join the rail workers and make it an all-out

transport stoppage on this day, - the logical "up-the-ante" demand of such an action, being nothing less than Constance's immediate resignation.

With the recent announcement by PUBLIC Transport Minister Constance, of yet another PRIVATE transport consortium that has won his heart, (this one to be gifted the Region 6 quarter of our publicly-owned employer), State Transit bus drivers in the remaining three contract regions of Government-run bus services, know too well their awaited fates:

Like a funeral carried out in advance, The Minister and his State Transit Authority genetic implant, - terminal STA CEO

Stefan Furball, find funding for the commemorative recoating of 12 buses of our 2200 fleet with nostalgic heritage paint jobs, supposedly to celebrate the many public transport eras of our organisation's 85 year old history. After the assaults of Newcastle and now Sydney's Inner West, surviving State Transit Government bus drivers read such patronising devotions as the writing on the wall.

The latest May 2017 decreed privatisation of a quarter of our remaining Sydney bus operations, was shoved down our throats in an un-forewarned "Captain's Call" by Constance that was perverse to the merited performances we earned in having won all four bus region contracts we operated in as recently as December 2016!

Members of the Public at odds with that month's sudden venting of anger and in-

dustrial action by State Transit bus drivers, wouldn't know that just five months prior, we had in fact been officially congratulated for our achievement in winning the region now being thrown to a private company, by turncoat Constance's own Ministry! So if there is still a rationale for public sector rail workers to go out on a day in late April or early May this year, public sector bus drivers have every reason to join them.

If Rail and Bus divisions acted together in this way, we would give ourselves the opportunity to beef-up and homogenise our twin campaigns, by elevating our contempt for Constance's treatment of his public-sector transport employees at the same time.

Upping the ambit, by demanding Constance's resignation, puts TV cameras and microphones where they need to be;- in

front of our own appointed representatives, where the catalogue of horrors about Constance's disposal of public transport agenda, (and its destructive progress to date) can be told. We need big rationales in order to justify such public actions, and don't we already have them!

To be continued next edition

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW, Drivers, Conductors and Customer Service Staff will discuss the issue of V/Line employees who do not belong to a union. As in previous issues names have been changed.

RW: What is the situation at V/Line regarding union membership?

Rastus and Roscoe: As regards to drivers at V/Line 99% of drivers belong to the union.

Clarence: The problem in other areas of V/Line is a certain percentage of employees do not belong to a union.

Jethro: Some of these people are not in the union are persons who have a grudge against the union so they become un-financial. Some of the new starters refuse to join the union as they think that by not joining a union, it will enhance their career paths.

Abner: Until recently with induction classes for new employees, they would not let the union speak to the new starters. This has changed and in the last two induction classes, the union has been involved. Metro trains have always invited the union to induction classes.

Rastus: May we introduce you to two conductors who will discuss the issue.

Olwyn and Oswald: We are conductors and we are fed up with workers who refuse to join the union.

Rastus: We drivers know of one station in the network where nine employees work and only two are in the union.

Olwyn: Membership forms have been given to these employees a number of times but are never returned.

Oswald: In fact one of these non-unionists said to one of the new employees. "Why should you join a union as they will obtain the benefits for you in Enterprise Bargaining negotiations."

Abner: When EBA negotiations commence V/Line sends a letter to these non-unionists, explaining to them that the union will be handling the negotiations and they have an opportunity to obtain the service of a solicitor to represent them at negotiations. That explains why this non-unionist was telling people not to join the union.

Oswald: That is not all, at one station a non-unionist obtained the position of station officer.

Olwyn: In fact a number of long serving employees who were union members were not successful in obtaining an interview for the position.

Jethro: No wonder morale is low around the place. This is a problem at V/Line. They do not want any long serving em-



ployees obtaining these positions. They are out to change the culture.

Clarence: Look at what happened at Southern Cross with an appointment. The person who obtained the position was a non-unionist.

RW: To read about this appointment refer to the last edition of RW.

Oswald: V/Line brags about being an equal opportunity employer, but is does not encourage long serving employees for a career path.

Abner: Some people have given up applying for positions.

Rastus: Referring back to EBA negotiations. In

future negotiations what is stopping V-Line from obtaining a collective agreement which has less conditions in the EBA than now?

Roscoe: V/Line could get some of these non-unionists to sign a collective agreement. Look at what happened at Carlton United Breweries, CUB was able to find some non-unionists to sign a collective agreement.

Rastus: They certainly did and this resulted in a lockout at CUB which lasted a number of months. The unions at CUB won the dispute with no loss of conditions. **(Editorial Comment: Following the return to work of the CUB workers and approval of the union EBA, the media mentioned it would entail worker "flexibility" in regard to various conditions and efficiency and productivity improvements according to the union's media release. Whilst, there is secrecy about the exact details of the EBA, as the FWC(Fair Work Commission) wants a Freedom of Information request to potentially access details of the EBA. Given these aspects, it seems unlikely there has been no loss of conditions by the CUB workers.)**

RW: Unions at V/Line will have to be on their guard for future EBA negotiations.

Abner: If we say to these people they should join a union, some of them run bleating to Human Resources that they are being harassed.

Roscoe: They are not being bullied, they are being told a few home truths.

Sparks: I understand some of the non-unionists particularly conductors join the union when they are in trouble.

Oswald: You are correct, then after a couple of months they become non-financial.

Rastus: Remember the incident at Broadford.

Olwyn: This was reported in issue 154.

Clarence: The conductor involved was not in the union. Before he joined V/Line, he was a farmer who hated unions.

Oswald: A number of union members felt sorry for him, as he was provoked in this incident, but as he was not in the union, there was nothing they could do.

Roscoe: When he had to front Human Resources, a Conductor Services manager represented him. The union said no union representative was to defend him, as he was a non-union member. He was sacked and he appealed to Fair Work Australia, where he was defended Bro-Bono by a lawyer. He did not get reinstated, but received a financial settlement.

Jethro: Who paid the lawyer after the settlement?

Rastus: As reported in previous issues. This time v/Line has recruited externally for drivers and some of these recruits have not joined the union. They are on their own, if they are in trouble.

RW: Once again we have run out of space. Some of these people who refuse to join a union, think they will never be in trouble and think of the elusive career path at the expense of union members. One day they will slip up and they are on their own.

Rastus and Roscoe: Once again in having the final say, non-unionists in the rail industry are parasites and free loaders who bludge off their workmates. We, drivers have one word to describe them. SCABS.

In this issue of RW, drivers and station staff discuss recent events at V/Line. As in previous issues, names have been changed.

RW: I hear a manager was made redundant.

Clarence: You are correct. It was the manager of Road Coaches.

Jethro: The station staff of Southern Cross remember him as the Station Manager.

Clarence: A new position of Manager Road Coaches was created and he obtained the position.

RW: Why is this Division called Coach Division.

Clarence: This division manages all the rural coaches under contract to V/Line. V/Line thinks it is not professional to call Coaches, Buses. To the general public and the media, they are known as Buses.

Jethro: He was made manager of the Coach Division over the existing head of the station. In the meantime another manager was appointed to manage Southern Cross. This lasted two years and he was made redundant and the Division was returned to the former manager.

Clarence: When he was manager of Southern Cross, he hated the RTBU and held a dislike for the Conductors' RTBU Delegate from 2003 to 2007. This Delegate stood up to him and was able to introduce an A and B roster for conductors.

Jethro: The conductors/ A and B rosters put most of the relief jobs into a B roster.

Clarence: Unfortunately the union delegate's position was undermined by a group of conductors over a new roster, this manager introduced in early 2007. The delegate found that he was unable to represent the conductors, so he resigned.

Jethro: The manager was glad the delegate resigned, so in 2007, he was able to introduce a new roster that was not family friendly to conductors.

Clarence: This was reported in issue 140 but in a brief summary the same conductors who removed the delegate were able to convince other conductors that B roster conductors were being paid more than A roster. When a study was made of the master roster, they were being paid the same.

Jethro: A ballot was held to amalgamate the two rosters and was carried. We station staff heard a rumour that some conductors bullied some conductors to vote yes. As a result a combined roster was introduced by this manager which was worse than the previous roster.

RW: Was this the same manager who conducted a witch hunt to find out who was contributing to Sparks?

Clarence: Yes he was. After issue 144 appeared he arranged for a CSM to call a conductor into the office on a pretext of obtaining some equipment for his outfit. The CSM gave the conductor a heads up that the manager was going to question him over Sparks.

Jethro: The conductor when questioned cut the manager to shreds, so as a result, the manager placed a notice at the sign in point about people writing articles in newsletters about V/Line. He did not name Sparks.

Clarence and Jethro: Finally, we are glad this manager has gone.

RW: I hear there has been a management change within the Drivers area?

Rastus and Roscoe: You are correct. One of our new managers used to be the line manager for the Western Region of V/Line.

RW: Was this the manager who removed the two contract employees at Mildura?

Rastus: You are correct. Most of this said event was discussed in issue 156.

Roscoe: As soon as she arrived at the Drivers' Depot, she started causing trouble.

RW: In what way?

Roscoe: She took a dislike to a particular driver and started bullying him.

Clarence: She hasn't changed. She tried the same tactics with a station employee at Ballarat.

Jethro: As a result of the debacle at Mildura, the station has now been transferred back to Bendigo.

Rastus: One particular incident occurred a couple of weeks ago. A driver reported in sick and due to a shortage of drivers, a train was replaced by a bus.

Roscoe: The driver who was sick was contacted by this manager and was verbally assaulted by her on the phone. The driver was distressed and contacted his union delegate.

Rastus: The delegate placed the matter into the hands of the Locomotive Division officials.

Roscoe: We do not know what went on at the meeting but a rumour surfaced that she was bawling her eyes out after the union official spoke to her.

Jethro: Drivers hear right.

Clarence: We also heard a rumour that a number of drivers were contacted to work on their rest day. They were unable to work so 17 trains were cancelled on this day.

Rastus: We drivers think that because she is on a contract that due to her unpopularity at Ballarat, she was moved to the drivers' depot to work out the contract.

Rastus and Roscoe: She is hated by 99% of the drivers.

RW: Once again we have run out of space.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the drivers are glad the former manager at Southern Cross has departed as he was known to dob-in drivers. As for the moron who is in charge of the drivers. We will leave you with the message "What goes around comes around." Finally you would be worried when OPTION time arrives for your contract.

STOP PRESS

As this issue goes to print, this MORON who supervises the drivers has stood down a senior RTBU official of the Drivers' Division. The issue he was stood down over is over is the managing director of V/Line trying to change the current EBA. There will be more about this issue in the next issue of RW.

Strikes in Germany's Car Industry

By Thomas Klikauer

In early 2018, hundreds and thousands of workers in Germany's massive car industry with around 800,000 employees, took part in the all-day strikes in the metal- and electrical industries. Germany's metalworkers' trade union – IG Metall with around 2.3 million members – has stepped up 24-hour strikes in January and early February.

In the Southern part of Germany (the location of BMW, Daimler Mercedes Benz and Porsche), major automobile manufacturers and their suppliers were involved, while in the North in IG Metall's coastal area, the aircraft manufacturer Airbus and shipyard unionized workers went also on strike. At one point around 7,000 BMW employees in Munich stopped working. BMW's main manufacturing plant also came to a standstill.

Meanwhile at the largest German BMW plant in the city of Dingolfing 13,700 workers went to strike. As usual, strike action started at 5:00am during the early shift. In IG Metall's Bavarian region no car rolled off the assembly line. Around 23,000 car workers were on strike in Bavaria, especially in the supply industry of Germany's gigantic car industry with almost six million cars produced annually. In Baden-Württemberg, labor disputes between worker and capital concentrated mainly on the two prestige car makers, Mercedes Benz and Porsche. At the Mercedes Benz manufacturing plant in the city of Sindelfingen, all access gates to the factory were filled with picket lines. At the Mercedes Benz plant in the city of Untertürkheim and at the Porsche plant Zuffenhausen, the entire night shift was involved in the strike.

In the northern part of Germany, workers at the aircraft manufacturer Airbus stopped working – “downing all tools” in several factories in Hamburg, Bremen and Lower Saxony. These strikes not only included the aircraft manufacturer itself but also its regional suppliers. At the TKMS shipyards in the city of Kiel, the Meyer shipyard in Papenburg, the Rostock Neptun shipyard and the ship engine manufacturer Caterpillar, with around 30,000 employees followed IG Metall's call to strike.

Similar strike activities also occurred in an industrial heartland around the city of Hanover. Picketing workers became highly visible when dressed with the “red union logo”. These were union issued safety vests. In the freezing cold winter morning, workers lit a bonfire in a barrel to keep warm during Germany's harsh winter months. Despite the onset of global warming, the months of January and February in Europe are cold and icy. As striking workers stood in front of factory gates, one tends to freeze faster than many think (based on my own personal experience during the 1984 strike). While an early morning coffee surely helps, a fire keeps one warm until hot soup arrives for an early breakfast. Many striking workers – although often striking in shifts as they follow a union organized roster – end up being in the picket line all day.

Overall, workers of the IG Metall trade union went on strike in about 250 companies nationwide for 24 hours often during the morning shift starting at 5 or 6am. This included the bearing manufacturer Renk AG in the city of Hannover. There, unionized

As union flags and strike banners are rolled out, loudspeakers and amplifier systems are set up. Many workers are involved in these early short term strikes. They are the so-called “warning strikes” held during the initial periods of a collective bargaining round. They are intended to warn employers what lies ahead if employers, bosses and their henchmen called “managers” remain unwilling to negotiate. More often than not, strikes in Germany are a well-orchestrated and well-rehearsed ritual. This has hardly ever been an anarchistic working class. Instead, Lenin once said:

“in a rare flash of humour, that the German Social Democrats would never launch a successful revolution in Germany because when they came to storm the railway stations they would line up in an orderly queue to buy platform tickets first.”

Order-loving Germans keep in line never challenging capital apart from the 1918/19 revolution. Works are incorporated into the structure of German capitalism. At many plants, workers have been involved in several such “warning strikes” during January 2018. These strikes can be short of just half an hour to 40 minutes, others are longer and can last for up to three hours. Some extend to an entire shift or a full day. Often very early in the morning around five or six o'clock, the crowd of striking workers assembles in front of a factory gate. In general, about 100 workers are sufficient to stop a factory gate from operating. Such a morning shift of striking workers can completely close down a factory gate. As time goes on, more than 350 employees can be on strike. In small suppliers this can mean the entire workforce is

on strike. Such picket lines make sure that all driveways to the factory are occupied with striking workers. Often blocking a gate is enough. In most cases, there are no longer factory gates that are chained up or welded together. Today, union rituals have it that in many cases these gates are not even cordoned by masking tape. A line of striking unionists is enough. Every now and then a vehicle drives carefully approaches such a gate. The striking unionists usually control identifications as only those who fall under emergency service agreements may enter the factory. On this



workers were the first to go strike in the union's Lower Saxony area.

Workers strike in Germany in January 2018

Traditionally, striking workers often pitch up a union tent across the street or directly in front of a factory. These are used as a “strike office” and activities include drawing up a roster for striking workers, making coffee and sandwiches, providing information, talking to the local press, etc.

particular day, only about 20 people are inside the plant, some maintenance technicians, factory security, a few senior executives – doing, well, nothing. The mood in front of gate determined as production is completely silent all day long and this is over three shifts.

At this particular factory well over 80 per cent of the employees here are organized in the IG Metall. One of the unionised strikers is a computer programmer – a specialist in CNC or Computer numerical control automated machine tooling. He generally likes his work and has been working here for 33 years. “We are not here to strike against the company – we are striking for our demands” he said. The demand of the unionised workers is a six per cent wage increase, the right of part-time workers to be employed full-time, an increase in salary compensation for shift-working and support for employees raising children or caring for dependents. Surely, many want higher wages. But many others want better conditions too.

In the overall scheme, this is not complicated or special. Those things are as important as the 35-hour week as the standard working in West-Germany’s metal industry. This includes car manufacturing, shipping, aircraft, etc. Many workers want to work shorter hours. More and more young fathers are taking parental leave – available on a legal basis. Just a few years ago that was not really a significant union issue. When the first young fathers made use of state regulation engaging in parenthood. Even factory based works council had to adjust to such new demands. But soon works council members themselves made applications for such provisions. As these were granted (a legal requirement), the reduction of working time moved centre stage not only in the western regions of the metalworkers’ union but in East-Germany as well where fourteen years ago, the IG Metall lost a bitter battle over the introduction of the 35-hour week.

But even in Eastern Germany, a union strike is held to adjust eastern working time (still at 40 hours per week) to western standards, i.e. 35-hours per week. Remembering a great fight and a traumatic defeat is omnipresent in many union offices. This also the case at the works council office in East-Germany at the Volkswagen factory in Zwickau. Even the unionist’s coffee mugs with the union logo of the “35-hour-week” strike is a daily reminder of a great strike once lost.

Long before the western take-over of East-Germany and Volkswagen’s take-over of East-Germany’s car making, West-Germany’s IG Metall fought in the 1980s for the introduction of the 35-hour work week and won. Meanwhile, at the works council office’s wall two maps still

illustrate where and with what kind of strike actions unionised workers of the IG Metall fighting to shorten weekly working time from 40 to 35 hours during summer 2003. Union workers fought for that in regions such as Saxony, Berlin and Brandenburg but for employers, i.e. capital prevailed.

At Volkswagen alone, about 6100 unionised workers were on strike at that time during the strike. After four weeks of strike action workers thought they should go on but the union leadership decided differently. On June 29th 2003, the union leadership ended the strike in East-Germany. Losing was hard. The defeat was bitter. Losing a strike hurts to this day. Fourteen years later, however, the trauma is slowly fading and the union is making a renewed effort for the 35-hour week in the east. In the current labor dispute, for the first time 24-hour strikes are happening. The current collective bargaining agreement was terminated in Berlin and Brandenburg at the end of 2017 opening a fresh round of collective bargaining. In neighbouring Saxony – an IG Metall stronghold – striking will only be possible in June after the current collective agreement has ended. As a consequence, unions and employers have agreed that the employers in the current round will start discussions on a commitment to negotiate on the reduction of working time in the East.

It is time that the East adjusts to the West to ensure the same working conditions for all workers throughout Germany. Working too many hours, just because a company’s factory happens to be in the east not in the west is not fair. How can Volkswagen explain that? It is no wonder that some East Germans feel like second-class people. As a consequence, there is massive and defiant protest in elections and on factory doors. The issue of working time is simply a matter of justice.

However, the union’s fight for justice in the East also faces several problems. In the current collective bargaining round, other topics have dominated. For many in the corporate media and inside the union the current strikes are about a six per cent wage increase and the question of employees working part-time or full-time. These are important topics just as the more flexible arrangement in what is often euphemistically reported as “work-life-balance” that is more often than not a managerial myth. Giving substance to the myth is the union’s plan to allow workers to care of relatives and the elderly. This is an important topic in a rapidly aging society such as Germany. This is, of course, also linked to whether workers are receiving a financial compensation for care work. In this impor-

tant topic, politics has lost its willingness to engage in opening up political space for the union to become a pioneer in such an important social debate.

Meanwhile, others think even more into the future as strikers at Volkswagen’s Saxony factories are calling for a fight to introduce a 28-hour work week. This is a great option and many people would not need to be asked twice about that. Shorter working time is strongly supported. Eventually, unionized metal workers in West and East are fighting for the same goal: shorter hours. That did not seem to have happened during the last fourteen years after the East-German strike was lost. Searching for reasons for the strike debacle, a whole range of possible causes can be identified. Inside the union bureaucracy, there was a rather widespread reluctance to discuss them openly.

In addition, there were many accusations and injuries at that time. At one level, the failure might have had something to do with the union internal power struggle raging between the union’s boss and his deputy. The boss simply did not want the deputy to become successor. Other factors may have played a role, for example, the inexperience of striking in a country formerly run like a semi-dictatorship. Nonetheless, the renewed strike for the 35-hour week has a good chance of success in 2018. Years ago, in the East, not everyone wanted to strike for the 35-hour-week topic. At that time, unemployment was high then and -many were just happy to have a job after the East-West unification resulted in economic misery under neoliberalism’s failed policies. In any case, many workers did not want to risk becoming unemployed again. At that time, many had to witness how strike breakers passed unionized workers at the factory gates. These were unsightly scenes for both sides – unionized workers and scabs.

Legendary was the use of corporate helicopters to supply an automotive supplier in Dresden. Pictures of such actions broadcasted by the corporate media often worked as turning points against striking workers. Another reason for the failed strike was perhaps the veto of powerful works councils from auto plants in the West – not supporting their colleagues in the East. Furthermore, the union has also moved from industry collective bargaining towards enterprise bargaining – a exception in German industrial relations. IG Metall took out individual companies from the labor dispute by moving them onto enterprise agreements and thereby weakening the collective power of workers striking in an entries industry An auto parts supply company in East-Germany’s Zwickau called “Gelenkwellenwerk” is such as case.

More radical trade unionists in the East have taken note of union reports published by IG Metall Berlin-Brandenburg-Sachsen arguing that the fight for the alignment of East-West working hour alignment will be supported by works council bosses virtually from all major German car manufacturers. The supporting statement was signed by the works councils at VW, Porsche, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Opel (ex-General Motors and now owned by French car maker PSA), as well as at Siemens and Bombardier, which have substantial production plants in the East.

Back at the East-German Volkswagen factory, many would also like to see that. But many realize that, unlike in 2003, the immediate introduction of the 35-hour week might take some time. As wage “equalization” between East and West can be achieved in the short-term, a step-by-step plan may well be the outcome. Inevitably,

we will move towards an alignment with the West. On the down side, many also suspect that employers bring out the big guns firing against our union. Nonetheless, the current economic situation is beneficial. Many hope that something is moving. And if not? If the union fails again, the issue of shorter working time will be buried for a long time in the East. Unionists are determined that this does not happen – again.

By mid-February the strikes came to an end when the IG Metall union and employers reached an agreement on which the union commented “it is a reasonable compromise”, often meaning workers will suffer. The agreements reached in one geographical area usually serves as a pilot agreement. The agreement stipulates that by 1st of April 2018 wages for workers in the metal industry will increase by 4.3% and there will be a € 100 payment – valued at a bottle of wine during a CEO’s busi-

ness lunch. By 2019 another € 400 will be paid. But the agreement also opens the door for employers not wanting to pay this. Under a clause – economic hardship – individual companies can deny wage increases albeit only with union agreement. And there will be slow entry into the 28th hour work week. In return, employers will be granted upward movements on working time.

The new rule is that “on average” a company has to work 35 hours per week but some work 40 hours again – a return to the old days many thought they had gone. There will also be an allowance for “care-workers”, workers who care for elderly, etc. Having a 35 hour work week in East-Germany is still rejected by employers. While trade unionists claim that they will negotiate this, employers say “no”. Perhaps this indicates more strikes may be ahead.

French Workers Fight Macron Austerity Plan

24/3/18

Big struggles are taking place against the austerity programmes of the Macron government in France.

Last week rail workers began strike action that closed down most of the French rail network. They were joined on strike by Air France workers demanding pay rises and electricity workers and refuse collectors. Meanwhile there were occupations by students against the plan by the government to limit access to university educations.

This comes on the fiftieth anniversary of the May-June events of 1968 which resulted in occupations of factories, schools and universities, a general strike by 10 million workers and barricades and street fighting which threatened the overthrow of the regime led by President De Gaulle.

The Macron regime is determined to push through its austerity measures. What is different now is that the French Communist Party, which had a huge influence in the working class in 1968 and was able to divert and sabotage the struggle then, has collapsed. This was partly due to what it did in 1968 but also to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Socialist Party, for its part (founded a year after the May-June events), has shown its true nature by successive governments that passed austerity measures. Workers’ disillusionment with the Socialists could be seen when

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a former Socialist bigwig and now leader of a new leftist party La France Insoumise (France Unbowed), was thrown out of a demonstration last week to the cries of “Neither God,

electorate voted, disgusted by the socialists and seeing little choice between Macron and the far right party Front National of Marine Le Pen.

The struggle in France is vitally important.



nor master, nor Mélenchon.”

Macron himself emerged from the Socialist Party. An ex-banker and senior civil servant, and serving minister within successive Socialist governments; he plans to continue the anti-working measures of the previous Socialist government of Hollande. It should be remembered that when he was elected less than half of the

Workers, students, the unemployed and pensioners need to build links and to develop grassroots organisations and mass assemblies. They should not be deceived by any of the political rackets posing as the friends of the working class.

* La Lutte Continue – French for ‘The Struggle Continues’.

See Page 13

3/4/18

PARIS - French rail workers launched a series of nationwide strikes on Tuesday, threatening months of transport disruption in the sternest challenge yet to President Emmanuel Macron's efforts to modernize Europe's second biggest economy.

State-run rail company SNCF, which Macron wants to overhaul, said 48 percent of the workers needed for the network to run smoothly were absent, as they joined the protests against plans to trim benefits including job guarantees and generous pensions.

Just one in four trains ran in the Paris region, while only one in eight high-speed TGV trains were operating. At Gare du Nord, Paris's busiest station, platforms were so crowded that some commuters fell onto the tracks. Other stations were plunged into darkness, the lights and ticket machines switched off.

French media dubbed it "Black Tuesday." "I do understand why they're striking," said Marie Charles, a Paris commuter. "But today is my first day in a new job so I have to admit I could have done without the strike."

Outside Gare de L'Est, crowds of SNCF workers denounced the government and set off flares that filled the area with smoke.

Many students, who have launched their own demonstrations against education reform, joined the protest, and some workers in other sectors downed tools in sympathy with the rail workers. Others plan to do so in the coming days.

The four main rail unions plan to strike for two days out of every five for the next three months — a total of 36 days of disruption — to fight a shake-up of monopoly SNCF before it is opened to competition in line with European Union rules.

The protests come as France prepares to mark the 50th anniversary of the stu-

dent-led riots of May 1968, when the entire economy came to a virtual halt. The work stoppages so far pale in comparison with those events.

The last French leader to square off against the rail unions came off worst. The strikes of 1995 paralyzed France and forced prime minister Alain Juppe to pull the measures — a defeat from which he did not recover.

The unions are broadly weaker now and divided over how best to handle Macron's many social and economic reforms — a division Macron hopes to be able to exploit to his advantage.

If the 40-year-old president succeeds it will set the tone for other reform plans, including revamping the education system and overhauling pensions. Macron has already faced down the unions to ease labor laws, making it simpler to hire and fire.

PUBLICITY BATTLE

Speaking to parliament, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said the way the SNCF operated could not continue.

"I respect the strikers because going on strike is a constitutional right... But ... we also need to respect the millions of French who want to be able to get to work," he said.

Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne urged unions to negotiate, but union leaders hit back.

"The railway workers are not doing this for the fun of it," said Philippe Martinez, head of the hardline CGT union, the biggest among railway workers.

SNCF President Guillaume Pepy said the strike was likely to cost the company 20 million euros a day in lost revenue at a time when it is already adding three billion euros to its overall debt pile of 47 billion euros every year.

In a bid to boost efficiency, the government wants to end rail workers'

jobs-for-life, automatic annual pay rises and early retirement rights — benefits that date back to the nationalization of the SNCF in the 1930s.

The government has painted the rail workers as enjoying outdated privileges, a notion the unions reject. "The salaries aren't amazing, the work conditions are difficult, and for some it means working every other weekend," Martinez said.

Macron will need to keep the public on his side if he is to defy the unions and push the reforms through. An Ifop poll on Sunday showed that just over half of French people view the strikes as unjustified.

SHOWDOWN

Macron wants to transform the SNCF into a profit-maker. The unions say its debt was caused by excessive investment in France's high-speed network and accuse Macron of paving the way for privatization, which officials deny.

The government has sought to ease tensions with assurances that the arrival of foreign competition on French rail tracks, pencilled in for gradual rollout from 2020, can be delayed.

As well as testing Macron's mettle, the rolling strike will also challenge the resolve of unions to maintain a common stance. The Communist-rooted CGT wants the industrial action to spread to other sectors but has so far seen limited support.

Some energy sector workers walked out on Tuesday in protest against the planned liberalization of the power sector, but there was little impact on power output.

Air France workers also went on strike over pay on Tuesday, although the company said it expected 75 percent of flights to operate as usual.

Indonesian Anarchism & Syndicalism

Continued From Last Edition

Apparently, the first anarchist cell appeared between 1914 and 1916, as demonstrated by the Review of the Anarchist Movement in the South Seas.

In the notes, published in the Chinese anarchist publication in 1927, it was stated that in the Indies there were "many comrades doing their best to spread propaganda in the form of a newspaper called Minsheng [People's Voice] in the ports of Southeast Asian is-

lands." [12]] The Minsheng newspaper was founded in 1913 in southern China by an anarchist, Liu Shifu, and published until 1916 and also in 1921. The newspaper is widespread also among Chinese outside of China.

Liu Shifu, a figure of the twentieth-century Chinese revolutionary movement and the Chinese anarchism movement in particular.

Former Chinese League activist Bai Binzhou (Pai Pinchow), who previously

initiated the Batavia newspaper Hoa Tok Poe, and another anarchist, Wang Yuting (1892 - 1967), arrived in 1918 from Kuala Lumpur and published a newspaper anarko-communist Zhenli Bao in Semarang. [13] In 1918, an anarchist Liu Shixin, Shifu's brother, began editing the publication of Soematra Po newspaper in the Deli area of Medan. [14] [15]

According to Liu Shixin's memoir, he went to Southeast Asia in the summer of 1918 with a group of 6 or 7 men. Initially they stopped in Singapore, but then they moved to Sumatra to propagate socialism. "They have no plans and concepts of the

organization as a whole, with a very bad practice." Soon they attracted the attention of the local police, who called them "Bushawei" ("Bolshevik").[16]

In 1919, in the Indonesian archipelago, a small group called the Society for the Truth of the Southern Seas based in Singapore was formed, they were spreading material about anarchism.[17] Prominent figures in the Society of Truth, as Chinese researcher Li Danyang said, were Liu Shixin.[18] In April 1919 in Semarang, Chinese workers created the "Labor Party", which was actually in anarchism. The magazine is the previously mentioned Zhenli Bao, published twice a month. The active agitation in this newspaper is echoed by an anarchist named Wu Dunmin, who lives in Malaya England. To the British authorities in Selangor he explained during the interrogation that Zhenli Bao published by the "Labor Party" with a view to "promoting human rights". But actually, he is openly spreading anarchist ideas in this publication. Thus, in an editorial on May 1, 1919, he clearly welcomed the worldwide working-class struggle and the achievement of the socialist movement, stating that in order to achieve "a free and happy communist land of mutual help" the workers must shake "the shackles created by the rich", then after that embodies anarchism.[19] That same year, Bai Binzhou and Wang Yuting founded the Sanbaolong Yuebao newspaper [Voice of Semarang], published until 1922.[20]

Anarchist work is also done through the local branch of the Chinese Labor Union, or the "Working Party" in Surabaya and other cities.[21] According to British intelligence, the Dutch East Indies authorities in the 1918-1920s experienced major problems with Chinese anarchist communities in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi. Through police search and with numerous confiscated documents, showing local Chinese anarchist relations with anarchist-anarchists in China and Singapore.[22] After that, in 1918, by the East Coast of Sumatra Institute, the activities of some workers' organizations show they have "economic motives" with certain "political foundations". Particular attention was paid to the distribution of Chinese and Malay newspapers, which expressed "revolutionary and socialist ideas". Also rioting in the plantation was accompanied by repeated attacks on Dutch administrators.[23]

In response to the intensity of the propaganda, the Dutch authorities detained two editors of Soematra Po in March 1919, including Liu Shixin (in English document he appeared as Shek Sam), and other anarchists in Medan, as well as Zhong Fen in Makassar, on the pesantren island. The reason for the arrest was the "suspicious documents" found by police, with a plan they called the "Bolshevik main propaganda campaign".[24] After 52 days of detention, Liu Shixin was deported from the Indies for spreading the idea of anarcho-communism and the Russian revolution. In the summer of 1919, he returned to Guangzhou.[25] Arrested in Java, Wang Yuting and Bai Binzhou were deported to Hong Kong in early September 1919.[26] Zhong Fen and other active agitators are also deported. Chinese workers from Swatow await their contract preparation by immigration officers at the Medan



employment inspectorate, Belawan around 1920-1940.

Regardless of this repression, it did not allow the Dutch East Indies government to obliterate the anarchist movement. Demonstrated in 1920-1921 in Sumatra, a wave of strikes erupted on the railway line of the Deli Railway Company, as well as the next greatest strike that erupted in early September 1920. Five thousand contract labourers and 10,000 civilian railway workers demanded a raise. Join also in strikes, postal and telegraph employees. In addition, local farmers sympathize with strikers, supplying rice and other food.[28] Some of the participants in the strike demanded retaliation against Dutch colonial officials.[29] Many troops were drawn into the Deli area, the cannons were directed to the building where the assembly was held.[30] Intending to thwart the strike, the local government arrested

ten activists initially, accused them of breaking the contract, and hundreds of workers were imprisoned along with those arrested, saying: "In prison we will give better food than at the company." The result is that those arrested were released. Under the threat of dismissal of all participants of the strike, after 15 days of struggle, the long struggle ceased and ended.

The strike's inspiration campaign, according to the authorities, was Zhang Shimei an anarchist-communist from Fuzhou (in Fujian province in China), who came to Medan from Singapore.[32] His biographical details, cited in various sources, are said to be distorted because of his rebellious nature.[33] It is known that he spoke with phases in Malay, and the government was afraid Zhang would continue his anarchist propaganda even in custody. Therefore, he was exiled to New Guinea. In 1923, he was pardoned by a royal amnesty and deported to Singapore.[34]

The decline of the anarchist movement in the Indies was due not only to repression, but also to the disappearance of the movement in neighbouring Malaya. Although as far back as 1926-1927, the branch of the Hong Kong Mechanics Workers Union operating in the East Indies supported syndicalism.[35]

One of the last traces of the presence of Chinese anarchists in the Indies was Fu Wumen's activity, which fascinated various anarchist publications between 1918 and 1924, and in September 1928 came to Surabaya. Until 1929, he was listed as chief editor of Dagong Shangbao newspaper.[36] However, there was no evidence of his participation in the anarchist movement during this period.

In the Netherlands, some young Indonesians have contacts with Dutch anarchists. Having found themselves in a much more liberated environment than under the colonial regime in the Indies, many young men built relationships with left-wing political forces (including Social Democrats, revolutionary socialists, and Communists), and took part in the work of the League International against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression, which at its congress were also anarchist anti-militia speakers.[38] Some youths showed an interest in anarchism. Among them, for example, the first prime minister of the Republic of Indonesia.

To Be Continued Next Edition

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW Edited by Peter Cole, David Struthers and Kenyon Zimmer. Published by Pluto Press

The Challenge of New Strategies of International Capitalism

Global capitalism is developing ever more savage features in the shape of the gig economy and Uber, drastically reducing workers' conditions using the legal fiction of self employment to side step legal entitlements of "wage" workers. This morphing of capitalist operations is interwoven with the international privatisation conspiracy. This new form of company operations and outsourcing of state functions is facilitated by corporate unionism with its close collaboration with Big Business and integration with various arms of the State. Whilst numerous proxy wars between super powers' and bloc's client states have erupted and a looming WWII scenario is becoming alarmingly apparent.

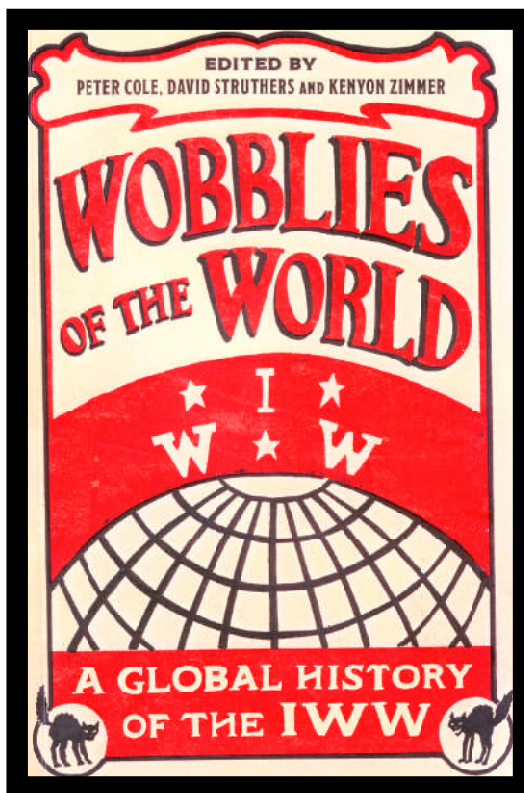
What passes today for international syndicalism in no way meets the challenge and is very far from coordinating direct action within or across industries or even individual companies on an international basis.

This collection of essays looks at the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) as a global phenomenon in its early days. Despite limited numbers in the USA and worldwide, it had branches in dozens of countries with most enrolled members in the USA. Critical to this growth and influence of the IWW and the international syndicalist movement was an assortment of highly experienced transnational industrial militants: organisers, journalists and editors. These militants pursued a flexible approach taking account of local conditions to exert IWW influence and build the organisation. In stark contrast to today's middle class/student and university milieu elements noted for their sect building proclivities. Heavily informed by the Stalinist Legacy and identity politics which ensures that syndicalism, particularly in the Anglo World remains congeries of exotic sects, cults and in certain countries allegedly micro democratic versions of the corporate unions.

A Cast of Transnational Wobbly Militants

This volume focuses a spotlight on a gallery of outstanding transnational IWW militants mostly involved in the anarchist

movement. In those days of the late 19th Century and the early 20th Century and subsequently, it was a current in the revolutionary workers movement. In contrast to such outstanding militants of the emergence and zenith of international syndicalist and anarchist movements such as Rudolph Rocker, Errico Malatesta, Tom Mann, George Maximoff and lesser lights discussed in this volume, today particularly in the Anglo world, we have the misfortune to glimpse squalid, morally and ethically depraved "politicos" which pass as prominent figures in so called anar-



chist and syndicalist milieus. Often engaging in the slimy peddling of sect/cult and micro "allegedly democratic" corporate union building recipes.

One of the most interesting essays is "A Cosmopolitan Crowd:" Transnational Anarchists, the IWW, and American Radical Press by Kenyon Zimmer. It throws much light on the anarchist involvement in the formation and development of the IWW in the US and in particular its foreign language publications. It sketches the profound impact of transnational anarchists on aspects of the organisation and activity. He shows 14

anarchist delegates participated in the founding IWW convention. Whilst anarchists edited at least 19 IWW publications before WWII. In the 1919-20 period, anarchists edited publications that had a combined circulation of 47,000, which was 4 times the circulation of the English Language Industrial Worker. The official organ of the IWW.

Spanish Anarchists and Maritime Workers in the IWW by Bieito Alonso.

sketches the activity of anarchist militant, Pedro Esteve. This essay throws important light on his critical role in the formation of the IWW, and shows anarchist/syndicalist militants of those days understanding the critical importance of winning workers in strategic industrial sectors to syndicalism. Esteve was particularly involved in prepa-

ratory work leading to the formation of the organisation such as his 1902 nationwide propaganda tour to organise miners in the US. Whilst he was a key figure in the anarchist group "Right to Existence" based in Paterson. Its newspaper "La Question Sociale" provided news of miners struggles and assisted miners struggles. This activity contributed to the WFM (Western Federation of Miners) playing a key role in the founding of the IWW. Esteve was also an unofficial observer at its founding convention in 1905.

Patrick Hodgers Hickey and the IWW: A Transnational Relationship by Peter Clayworth.

This essay highlights the role of this militant in the "boring within strategy" of the early IWW in Australasia. The author shows Hickey played a critical role in the formation of the New Zealand Federation of Labour (NZFL) also known as the "Red Fed". It was based in a range of strategic sectors such as mining, stevedoring, the gas works, and flax mills. It adopted IWW organisational principles and a direct action orientation. However it was open to support of electoral

politics. The IWW reached its peak of influence in 1912 via its influence in the Red Fed. However following the savage State repression of the Waihi miners' strike undermining workers morale and led to the merger of the NZFL with moderate unions to form the United Federation of Labour (UFL).

Wobblies Down Under: The IWW in Australia by Verity Burgmann sketches the development of the IWW in Australia. Providing an interesting occupational survey of the Sydney IWW local, showing the predominance of militant workers. In stark contrast to IWW locals in the Anglo World

today. She examines Wobbly agitation and propaganda activity involving soap boxing at the various domains/speakers corners and its newspaper "Direct Action" newspaper launched in 1914. The author shows that via its emphasis on "boring from within" of the existing trade unions it exerted syndicalist influence in significant industrial sectors.

Tom Barker and Revolutionary Europe by Paula de Angeles. This essay looks at another transnational IWW militant. The author sketches the panorama of this militant's transnational activity. Barker had been Business Manager of the Australian IWW's Direct Action in 1914 and was involved in the organising of the Anti-War and Anti-Conscription campaign and against the no strike agreement for the duration of WWI. Following his gaoling and deportation to South America he was active in organising an IWW maritime chapter, the MTW (Marine Transport Workers Union) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Subsequently, the MTW under Barker's influence waged a campaign of solidarity for the IWW Twelve (victimised wobbly militants in Sydney) and later he was active in international forums on behalf of the anarchist inspired FORA (Workers Federation of the Argentine Region). Later on he was drawn into Bolshevik regime endeavours via misguided support for the Kuzbas industrial colony in Siberia.

"All Workers Regardless of Craft, Race or Colour": The First Wave of IWW Activity and Influence in South Africa by Lucien van der Walt. This essay also highlights the early IWW militants grasp of the importance of strategic organising and the role of transnational syndicalist militants in facilitating IWW activity. It particularly examines the 1909 Johannesburg tramway strike victory which led to the entire tramway workforce enrolling in the IWW-SA (IWW – South Africa). As workers in such sectors as transport, mining and power had the strategic position to defy existing repressive industrial legislation. Such as the 1909 Industrial Disputes Prevention Act – requiring 30 days notice and a lengthy conciliation process for any industrial action.

With Allies Like These: Reflections on Privilege Reductionism by 2 Hamilton members and 1 Toronto member of Common Cause Published by Zabalaza Books

This pamphlet presents a trenchant analysis of the identity politics that currently enjoys wide influence in progressive movements. I am not aware of this

The IWW in Tampico: Anarchist Internationalism, and Solidarity Unionism in a Mexican Port by Kevan Antonio Aguilar 1915-1930. This essay looks at the IWW's struggle against the centralising corporate unionism alliance involving the COM (House of the World Worker) and the US AFL (American Federation of Labor). It was part of a hub of transnational militant networks and entailed the networking of both anarchists and communists in the unionisation of the city's petroleum industry. This effort was unified by the influence of the Russian Revolution. It was defeated due to a combination of state repression and corporate unionism.

P.J. Welinder and "American Syndicalism" in interwar Sweden by Johan Preies focuses on another Wobbly militant active in both Sweden and the US in the early 20th Century. He was a key figure in the leftwing "decentralist" wing of the SAC (Swedish Workers Centre). This faction founded *Arbetare-Kuriren* as a Weekly newspaper in April 1926. It furiously attacked a rival faction in the SAC wanting to push the organisation closer to Social Democracy (reformist hierarchical unionism). Subsequently in Oct. 1928 Welinder was involved in a split from the SAC leading to the formation of the SAF (Syndicalist Workers Federation) heavily influenced by the USA IWW. Welinder's faction particularly opposed the rival faction's support for the slow accumulation of assets, allies and respectability. Viewing this approach as futile and pushed for reduced union dues to encourage poorer workers to join. Whilst like the IWW in the USA at that time, his faction opposed the signing of fixed term contracts. The SAF collapsed due to low morale amongst its members caused by the rise of Nazism in Germany.

The International Relations

Two interesting essays in the volume which focus on the US IWW's international relations and fostering of international workers solidarity are **"The Cause of the Workers Who Are Fighting in**

Spain Is Yours": The Marine Transport Workers and the Spanish Civil War by Matthew C. White and "The IWW and the Dilemmas of Internationalism" by Wayne Thorpe. The former essay focuses on direct action by Wobbly maritime workers with the support of militants from the Communist Party in support of the Spanish Revolution and Wobbly involvement in the anti-Franco war effort in Spain. Particularly via participation in the Stalinist controlled International Brigades. The author examines how worsening tensions between Wobblies and Stalinists in the International Brigades contributed significantly to the breakdown of any working relationship back in the USA between the C.P. militants and Wobblies in the maritime sector. Contributing significantly to the subsequent major decline in IWW influence in the sector. Whilst the latter essay examines the US IWW's relations with major international labour organisations and that affiliation with even the IWA (International Workers Association) was never realised. The author looks at how the victory of the Francoist forces in the Spanish Civil War led to the massive repression and weakening of the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) in Spain, the most important IWA affiliate. Resulting in the extreme marginalisation of the IWA as a labour international. This development together with the dissolving of the Communist Labour International, the Profintern associated with Comintern support for the Popular Front, provided few international options for the IWW by the early 1940's. In conclusion, the volume under review certainly enriches our understanding of the factors contributing to the rise of syndicalism as a global movement and the role of the IWW in this process in the early 20th Century. Spotlighting the crucial role of key transnational militants and their excellent grasp of organising strategy in building mass syndicalist unionism and exerting syndicalist influence in mainstream reformist/bureaucratic unionism.

Mark McGuire

the fact that the ideology arose in universities but was unaware of what the authors characterize as the Non-Profit Industrial Complex. It turns out that participation in the staff bureaucracies of progressivism requires a university degree earned in one of the Progressive Studies programs in which identity politics was incubated.

The current turn away from class analysis and commitment to revolutionary transfor-

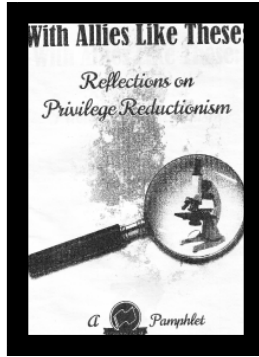
See Page 17

ideology being examined elsewhere or eliciting anything more than hand-wringing over its divisive and destructive effects.

The pamphlet clarifies several things about identity politics that had been a mystery to me. I had heard vague references to

Continued From Page 16 mation of society on the left flows from the individualism and hostility to solidarity central to this ideology.

Of considerable interest is the authors' argument that the genesis for this lies in the ruling class' move to co-opt the revolutionary movement of the 1960s and 70s by establishing the Progressive Studies programs in the schools and channeling activity



value in the pamphlet.

into and through them. I was somewhat disappointed that they do not discuss the likely existence of cruder COINTELPRO provocations.

The authors define themselves as revolutionary anarchists. I believe that non-anarchist advocates of revolutionary transformation will also find

How do people think that a movement can be organized to oppose identity politics and re-orient revolutionaries towards working class struggle against capitalism? As of now the left appears pessimistic regarding the future and frightened of the expectation that any fight back will be labeled "sexist". As Marx and Engels once taught us, we have the world to gain.

Steve Kellerman

Debate on Industrial Organising & Strategy

From a Discussion meeting on March 25/3/18 organised by The London group of the Anarchist Communist Group

Organising Workers in West London

The speaker from Angry Workers presented the work they are doing with the IWW in west London. They consciously chose an area of London where there is a high concentration of factories, in this case food processing, with hundreds of workers who are poorly paid, have difficult working conditions and little or no union organisation.

Their strategy consists of leafleting factories and helping to organise meetings with workers who are interested in fighting back. Some of them are also working in the factories. They do not necessarily promote the big actions such as strikes. These would be difficult to organise and could lead to victimisation. They think that power in the factory can be changed in more subtle ways, e.g. working to rule. They are not against working with any union structure that is there but their experience is that the union itself is ineffectual. In addition, they have set up neighbourhood solidarity networks to help people with issues such as unpaid wages. They have had some successes with this.

The speaker's analysis of the challenges was very insightful. Their experience of organising shows the concrete obstacles faced when trying to build a revolutionary working class movement. For example, the divisions within a workplace, created and exploited by management, are a major problem in workers effectively organising. For example, in one of

the factories there are people on 'permanent' contracts and agency staff. The ones on permanent contracts tend to be Asian women from the subcontinent who have been in the country, and in the job, for some time. The agency staff are mainly east Europeans. They even have to wear different coloured hairnets! There are also conflicts over religion.

Another problem is that people often put forward their own individual issue so it is difficult to gain unity around collective



issues. Even though they have had some successes in getting people to meetings and saying they want to do something, it is another thing to sustain this, often when there are communication problems and immense pressure on workers not to get involved.

A discussion followed with one person raising the successes of unions like the United Voices of the World. However, the speaker pointed out that in those cases the workers had already decided to take action and came to the UVW for support. It is much harder to start from scratch. Nothing

can happen until the workers themselves decide that they are willing to take risks. All anyone 'outside' can do is offer ideas and support.

There is no doubt that this organising project faces big obstacles. However, if we are ever going to build a working class revolutionary movement, this focus on the factories and surrounding neighbourhoods is essential. It will not give quick results, but it will be the foundation that will make it possible to transform, rather than just tinker with, the current system.

<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/>

<https://iww.org.uk/london/>

COMMENT:

This whole focus on small workplaces organising highlights a lack of industrial experience and historical research. Superficially, organising in these areas may seem easier than more strategic highly unionised sectors in the economy. However, due to workers low morale and lack of major industrial muscle in these sectors, any organising initiative faces major obstacles. In reality this focus leads into leftist activists being drawn into the orbit of the corporate unions affiliated with the TUC (Trade Union Congress – similar to the ACTU in Australia) Playing at pseudo social workers/lobbyists to "service" workers in these peripheral workplaces for free. Similar to the role played by the corporate unions on occasion funded by union dues and under the counter payments from the bosses and the Govt.

A strategy focusing on strategic sectors in the economy, affecting the arteries of the capitalist system, particularly transport industries remains of critical impor-

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Continued From Page 17 tance to organising in these peripheral sectors. Although this sector is facing major changes such as driverless vehicles. Still this sector is of massive importance for syndicalist organising. Big actions in this sector defying the Govt. industrial relations setup and winning major victories in the class struggle, would raise

the morale of workers in areas of lesser importance. Solidarity by transport workers would be critical to successful organising drives in the above small workplaces via cutting off supplies at busy times e.g. Xmas, etc. Ensuring quick victories and avoiding long drawn out struggles which often end in defeat Whilst creating an expanding syndicalist union movement which could wipe out the bases of corpo-

rate bureaucratic unionism, establish a major syndicalist pole of attraction in the labour movement and turning the tide against the employer offensive.

Mark

A short biography of Fritz Benner, courageous German anarchist.

Fritz Benner was born on 6th April 1906 in Solingen, Germany. By profession he was a belt operator. In 1927/28 he and his brother Willi joined the anarchosyndicalist Free Workers' Union of Germany (FAUD) in Wuppertal. His brother Eugen (usually known as August) also became involved. At this time the FAUD was past its height and only counted a few dozen members in Wuppertal. Activity by necessity moved away from workplace activity to cultural and educational activity mostly organised through the Anarchosyndicalist Youth (SAJD). The Benner brothers followed in a line of agitators like Hans Schmitz senior, a great speaker and organiser, who had died in 1931 following an earlier Nazi assault. In Wuppertal the struggle between the Nazis and the workers' movement was particularly fierce. The Wuppertal anarchosyndicalists had

founded, as in other cities, an anti-fascist fighting organization: the Schwarzen Scharen (Black Crowd). The Black Crowd was able to stop the Nazis terrorising the working class districts in the Black Sunday incident where they were met by a united front of socialists, Communists and anarchists. This was in great part due to the work of the Black Crowds in mobilising a response where workers, ignoring their party leaderships, acted at a grass-roots level in repulsing the Nazis.

In May 1933 Fritz was arrested by the SS, accused of organising a strike. The Gestapo raided the house of the Benners. They did not find the revolver hidden by Willi Benner in the basement or the carbine buried in the garden, but they seized enough material to justify the arrests of Fritz, August and Willi as well as their father. Fertilizer found in the basement of Willi Benner was evidence of a bomb factory and rat poison was evidence that the

anarchists were planning on poisoning the water supply!! The politically non-affiliated father was released after a few weeks. The three brothers remained in protective custody. Fritz was moved from prison to the Börgermoor concentration camp in August and then in September to the concentration camp at Oranienburg. There he encountered the famous anarchist Erich Muehsam. He had to watch (as he later wrote to the anarchist Albert de Jong) "the man I most admired, the man



whose writings had made me become a revolutionary and an anarchist, slowly, sadistically tormented to death."

In February 1934, Fritz Benner was transferred to Lichtenburg concentration camp and freed from there in early April. The illegal FAUD was still active in Wuppertal and Fritz took part in its work. In addition to collecting money for imprisoned comrades, he printed and distributed propaganda material.

Fritz Benner avoided another arrest in February 1935 by escaping to Holland. In Amsterdam, he worked in the group of German anarcho-syndicalists (DAS), the organization of exiled FAUD members. DAS was in contact with the illegal groups in Germany, providing them with information and newspapers and taking care of German refugees. At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War Fritz together with Helmut Kirschey, another Wuppertal FAUD member, went to Barcelona. Here

he was active in the DAS group there and later joined the Durruti Column. At the front he began suffering from a lung complaint, which he had caught in the concentration camps. After a stay in a sanatorium he went back to

the front. The political climate had changed, however. Helmut Kirschey had already been detained by the Stalinist secret police the GPU in Valencia, and was only freed by the anarchists shortly before the invasion of Franco's troops. In 1938 Benner left Spain in the direction of Sweden. He was turned back to France from Denmark, because his Spanish pass was not recognised. He went to Holland, where his comrades got him a Dutch passport with which he was able to enter Sweden. There he was arrested for passport forgery and served three months in prison, and threatened with deportation. By the end of the war he was under police surveillance. Since he has no work permit he was, until 1943, supported by the Swedish syndicalist union SAC. He worked in underground activity with Helmut Kirschey and Hans Vesper. In 1940, he was, at the request of the Gestapo, again interned by the Swedish authorities and accused of sabotage on German ships. With the help of a campaign by the SAC and its daily newspaper Arbetaren and a hunger strike, Fritz was released after 4 months.

Fritz Benner married a Swedish woman and had two children with her. In 1949 he returned to Wuppertal, where he joined the Federation of Libertarian Socialists (FFS). He also maintained contact by letter with Rudolf Rocker. At the beginning of the 1950s, he moved back to Sweden because of his family. He died on 11th November 1966 in Stockholm.

Sources: adaption of translation of biographies by Hanni Oostinga at <http://www.syndikalismusforschung.info/benner.htm>

NICK HEATH

Thanks to Libcom

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news in NSW was the “railroading” of the Sydney Trains and NSW Trains EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) 2017 by the union hierarchy and management. In this edition we expose just how outrageous this process has become and its relationship to upcoming union elections. With the ludicrous situation of workers being expected to vote on the agreement without even the full document being supplied to them. An important test run for this brazen “railroading” was a similar approach to the so called approval of the EBA involving the NSW Teachers Union in 2016. See article page 3.

In this edition we present a very practical proposal to tackle the murky problem of the likely rigging of union elections, particularly in the case of important positions. This skulduggery involves the usual suspects of the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission), ALP Godfathers, the union hierarchy and other nefarious forces of the State. The control of the existing bureaucratic unions by compliant management and ALP stooges is of course quite critical to so many big sell outs by union officials. Such as cave-ins to privatisation and workers major jobs and conditions losses. See article page 4.

In this edition we throw new light on the STA bus privatisation conspiracy. Examining its international dimension and how the awarding of the tender to Transit Systems, seems to be a repackaging of the STA into a much more vicious form. See article page 7.

STOP (Sydney Transport-users Opposing Privatisation) continues to be very active in the fight against Bus privatisation. It has been energetically distributing its “emergency” bulletin at many public meetings and generally raising the profile of this important issue. To the discomfort of ALP and Greens politicians, who appear to be just wanting to grand stand and do nothing effective due to dirty behind the scenes deals with the Govt. and the Liberals.

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

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Members' Voice

Grassroots NSW Public Transport
Workers Organisation
Web Site:
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Email: Membersvoice2010@yahoo.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-Group/531240043571323?fref=ts

STOP

“Sydney Transport-users Opposing
Privatisation”
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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.

BRITAIN TODAY

Daily Mail Cleaners' Victory

A group of migrant cleaners – who are members of the trade union United Voices of the World (UVW) – have just won a historic victory at the Daily Mail.

After the threat of an all-out cleaners strike at the Mail's offices in Kensington, and the prospects of large and lively protests and pickets, it is now confirmed that the cleaners' demands have been met: as of 1st April 2018 they will all receive the London Living Wage of £10.20 per hour.

The cleaners – some of whom have been scrubbing and polishing the Mail's offices for nearly 20 years and are outsourced to Mitie Group Plc, a FTSE 250 company – were previously paid only the national minimum wage of £7.50 per hour.

In real terms the cleaners have secured a 25% wage increase equating to nearly £500 extra per month per worker, or around £6,000 extra per year.

This victory will therefore lift the cleaners out of the poverty which, up until now, the Mail has cruelly constrained them to languish in.

The cleaners' bravery in speaking out also captured the public imagination with nearly 100,000 people signing a petition, onChange.org, written by the cleaners under the pseudonym Juliana, in support of their demands.

This was no easy feat for the cleaners, none of whom had been in a trade union before let alone been on strike. Furthermore, on receipt of the declaration of a trade dispute from UVW and notice that the cleaners would be balloted for strike action, the contract manager for Mitie stormed in to the Mail's offices and unlawfully threatened the cleaners telling them that if they ever went on strike they would immediately be sacked.

The cleaners' courage to not let such desperate and unlawful threats intimidate them cannot be overstated.

Winning this wage increase is all the more impressive as just last month the Mail

forced through £30,000 worth of cuts to the cleaning contract, clearly showing that before the cleaners made their demands the paper had no intention at all of investing a single penny more in their salaries.

The cleaners – all of whom are migrants predominantly from Latin America and Africa – also knew that they were standing up to an organisation that is responsible for churning out all manner of hateful bile about migrants, including the pernicious lie that migrants drive down wages.

Well, now the Daily Mail writers need look no further than their own offices to see that this claim is utterly false. It's not migrant workers who suppress wages, it's miserly and unscrupulous employers who take advantage of unorganised workers and keep them on the breadline. Perhaps the millionaire editor of the Daily Mail Paul Dacre will reflect on this before he sits down to sign off on another anti-migrant headline in an office kept clean and tidy by the very people his publication routinely denigrates.

Source: UVW facebook page

UK McDonald's Workers Fight for Pay Rise

The workers, organised with the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU), are fighting for a pay rise to £10/hr, choice in fixed-hour contracts, an end to unequal pay for young workers and for McDonald's to formally recognise their union.

While still only representing a small section of the workforce, the campaign has now spread from the two branches (in

Crayford and Cambridge), which last September took the first ever official strike action at McDonald's in Britain, to three new branches in Watford and Manchester.

Following the last strike, McDonald's staff received their biggest pay rise in ten years; just over 5% for all staff, with over-25s now earning between £8 and £10/hr.

Meanwhile, however, McDonald's boss Steve Easterbrook got a 94% pay rise last year, adding up to £11 million annually – or about £5,500 per hour.

One striking McDonald's employee, Lewis, told libcom.org about rude managers and poor health and safety as well as a lack of security about working hours and unfairness in how they're distributed. But low pay remained a central issue:

"Money is the big issue for a lot of us" he said. "You can do a lot of hours and not see much at the end of it. People end up doing a lot of overtime.

"When you mention money, you hear 'we can't afford it!' from the company but then you see his [Easterbrook's] pay, or their promotions, like the Monopoly one where they're giving away £100,000, but they say they can't afford to to pay their workers properly. It's hypocritical."