

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

Only International Workers' Solidarity & Direct Action can Halt the Path to Global War!



**NATIONAL NEWS; NSW RAILWAY NEWS; STATE TRANSIT
NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; EGYPT; FRANCE;
VENEZUELA REVOLT; BRITAIN TODAY; GERMANY; BOOK
REVIEW CORNER; VALERIANO OROBON FERNANDEZ; NEWS
& NOTES; ASSOCIATION OF REVOLUTIONARY UNIONISTS;**

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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National News

JOB NETWORK MEMBER HARASSMENT

On Monday 15/05/17 at the end of my regular job search session I negotiated with Frank of my Job Network Member to schedule my next job search appointment for "3-5pm on Tuesday 16/05/17." I explained to Frank that I was facing eviction. I had agreed to pick up my landlord at 6pm from the domestic airport at the conclusion of my scheduled job search session at five pm the next day. Contrary to normal practice Frank did not give me a written print out of my next scheduled appointment and send he would be calling me in to "sign a new contract, so I would not need written notice". Nor did I receive the usual text message the day before my appointment (due Monday 15/05/17) to my private mobile phone. At that stage I had no forewarning that Frank was not to be trusted and was breaking his word of honour by changing my appointment time without telling me purely to be able to default me by Centrelink for non-attendance.

On Tuesday 16/05/2017 at 11.55am I received a text message to my mobile phone saying "Hi J. Pls call us ASAP as you missed an appt and your Centrelink payment has been suspended under the law. From my Job Network Member.

I immediately drove from my home in Leichhardt to my Job Network Member office arriving at about 12.50pm and vigorously complained to Frank that I had not received any notice that he had changed my appointment time from "3-5pm" to "10.30am-12.30pm" WITHOUT NOTIFYING ME either in writing or in text. It was clear he had changed this appointment time after I had left the office the previous day (Monday 15/05/17). It was also clear he had failed to post with Centrelink the agreed time and the reminder text for the new Tuesday 16/05/17 time schedule. He openly admitted to me he had done so deliberately so that he could cause me to be defaulted by Centrelink. He said he would deny it if taken to court. His fellow worker at the next desk heard the conversation. I asked him if he would be deliberately lying to me in the future over appointment times and he said no. He said he would notify Centrelink of "his mistake" and have my payments restored.

A week later, I left a Wednesday (24/05/17) I again failed to receive written notice from Frank as to my next job search appointment. He verbally agreed that he would not call me in on Thursday 25/05/17 as that was my normal day of paid employment, so instead he would call me in on Friday 26/05/17 as was the usual practice. As he had never called me in on a Thursday when I was engaged in paid employment (except once in 18 months?) I took him at his word. Overnight he proved he lied to me for a second occasion within a fortnight and had changed my scheduled appointment with any notification. This led to a second default with Centrelink in two weeks.

On Thursday 25/05/2017

At 15.55pm I received a text message "Hi J. Pls call us ASAP as you missed an apt and your Centrelink payment has been

suspended under the law. My Job Network Member." I did not have possession of my mobile phone at the time as I was at part time work on my usual Thursday paper round. [The text was sent from mobile phone number.

On Friday 26/05/2017

At 9.06am I received the following text message "Hi J. Pls call us ASAP as you missed an apt and your Centrelink payment has been suspended under the law. My Job Network Member."

At 9.31am I received a text message from Centrelink to my mobile:

"Your payment has stopped as you did not attend an appointment." This was because my job search supervisor at my Job Network Member (Frank had told me on my previous visit there on Wednesday 24/5/17 doing a regular Job Search session, "As you are doing your weekly paid job tomorrow on Thursday 25/5/17 your next appointment is on "Friday 26/05/2017 at 1pm".

Without notifying me he deliberately changed the date to "Thursday 25/05/2017 at 10.30am". I immediately suffered a severe heart strain, stress and anxiety, despite my medication. I drove to my Job Network Member Office and complained loudly about being lied to a second time by Frank. I was ordered from the office by the Office Chief. I collapsed with palpitations to the footpath outside the office and my blood pressure and heart rate increased considerably. Within five minutes the office manager Tony had concocted a non-plausible cover for Frank's actions saying to me on the footpath "It was a mistake by my Job Network Member office in Queensland. They had rescheduled the time of appointment not Frank. There was no obligation to send a day before reminder via text. If there was it was there error".

In the postal mail box I received notification from Centrelink that I had indeed been suspended because of non-attendance of a session with my Job Network Member.

Submitted for consideration by J. of Leichhardt on behalf of the persecuted unemployed of Australia.

ASN APPEAL

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

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

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

Time to Put the Kibosh on Rail EBA 2017 Skulduggery & get the Goodies!

In the case of the 2017 Rail EBA negotiations, the union officials have suddenly been engaging in brazen lying about the actual commencement and have refused to supply regular detailed reports going back many months given the nasties to the grass roots. Particularly throat cutting affecting guards and other grades. Are you aware that Alex Claassens Union State Secretary, does not just have the union job, but also he is on the board of SASS Super and Encompass Credit Union. With this type of position and gross salary in the likely multi hundreds of thousands, he is unlikely to be hard hit by the nasties - the trip to the dole queue for many and a meagre "imaginary" pay rise of 2.5% pa obliterated by spiralling power costs and rents. This is the time to push for much more and so challenge the whole railway network privatisation agenda, Only a campaign based on hard hitting direct action and can foil the certain railroading and likely ballot rigging of the EBA and secure a fair shake of the goodies.

Sydney and N.S.W. Trains Enterprise Agreement 2017

Once again bargaining has begun for an agreement in 2017 for NSW Rail workers. Management has proposed that the pay rise

on offer is still capped at 2.5%, this at a time when a lot of unions are seeking rises well above that figure. If there is to be an attempt to stop rising inequality in N.S.W. then these imposed salary caps have to be challenged.

By now you've seen some of the more draconian measures that rail management (N.S.W. Government) have proposed. Here is a guide to what we consider you should do to get a better deal.

- Don't fall for the old gimmick of trading off conditions for a pay rise. This has been tried in the past and we gained absolutely nothing for the job losses that ensued and the conditions that we lost. NO TRADE-OFFS WHATSOEVER.

- The "facilitation clause" is to facilitate who and what? This clause is about you bartering away your conditions and changes in our workplaces.

Don't swallow the bait on this proposal either, as the only consultation that will take place is the one that takes place behind our backs. NO FACILITATION CLAUSE BECAUSE WE WILL NOT TRADE OUR CONDITIONS.

- If bargaining is to take place on an equal footing we need to demand that the proposed wage cap of 2.5% is taken off the table. NO WAGE CAP and NO TRADE OFFS

- The existing redundancy provisions are already a watered down version of the original 6 weeks pay for every year of work. We are already down to 2 weeks pay for every year worked. We have to stand firm. We have to insist that there are no changes to redundancy provisions that make them worse. We also need to stand up for employees that start work at a later date and who will possibly be younger than us. We don't want them to have worse

on your right to know about your Agreement and your right to have your say on the issues that are important to you. YOUR RIGHT OF INVOLVEMENT AND RANK AND FILE BARGAINING (RATHER THAN TOP DOWN NEGOTIATION) IS A MUST.

Authorised as a public service to the rank and file in our unions who are the real voice in our workplaces and who are most forgotten when they have something to say on issues that affect them.

What are the lessons from the proposed Inner West Bus Privatisation (Operation)?

In May 2017 the NSW Government announced that many State Transit bus routes would be privately operated and that 1300 bus drivers and other support



conditions than we do. NO CHANGES TO REDUNDANCY CONDITIONS UNLESS WE STAND TO BE BETTER OFF.

- Fight to stop Labour Hire companies and their employees from entering the workforce. Often they will be employed on worse conditions that undermine your rates of pay and your conditions. This is the thin edge of the wedge for privatisation of the whole workforce. ALL JOBS MUST BE WITH PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RECEIVING PROPER TRAINING.

- Most of all we need to be more involved in the bargaining process. We need to be informed and be able to have our say on the issues involved in the EBA. A strong rank and file movement within our union ensures that we have the bargaining power to force management on some issues. Insist

jobs would be on the line.

The Government's reasoning for handing over the buses to the private sector was beyond convincing. They stated that it was necessary to privately operate the buses following complaints from commuters about poor timetable "on time running". When asked about the complaints the Transport Minister, Andrew Constance could not provide any evidence. Anyway, if on time running is an issue how will devolving the buses to the private sector solve this problem? Drivers have constantly railed about tight running schedules amid Sydney's growing traffic density as a major problem. A private operator will not fix this, nor will it save money for NSW Transport. The Minister has already said that it will not cost less.

The real reason for privatisation is ideological. The privatisation panacea is the

Liberal Government's reason for its own existence. As far as they are concerned privatisation solves everything, especially for their mates at the business end of town. Commuters in the Inner West are not fooled by the rhetoric of the Minister and know that handing the buses over to the private sector will leave transport services precarious at best. There has been good support from the Inner West community to keep bus operation in public hands. A recent meeting called by the Greens to garner support against the privatisation was well attended by locals from the Inner West as well as a handful of bus drivers and RTBU Officials.

The RTBU has held a restricted day of industrial action and a Fare Free Day but generally all actions have been controlled from the Union office. The issues of privatisation are similar to many that are operating in the rail industry where little has been organised in the way of fight back involving rank and file workers. If the union office was serious about a campaign then all sectors of the union would have been mobilised in the fight.

Politics being what it is, the union has instead opportunistically used the issue of bus privatisation to garner support for ALP candidates in NSW. We have in the past heard Union officials publically state that "we don't care if jobs are in the public domain or in private hands as long as we have the membership."

"You can't stop privatisation" that's what the union chief once told me.

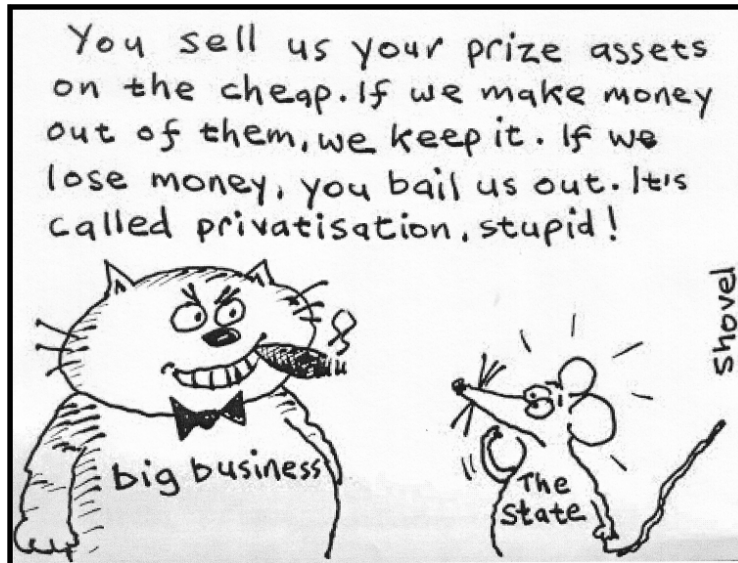
So we've had a handful of bus drivers turn up on the street for the cameras while the leader of the ALP Opposition in NSW, Luke Foley, waxed lyrical about keeping STA buses in public hands, promising also to return the Industrial Allowance that was taken from bus drivers for taking Industrial Action. Returning the Allowance is hardly an issue for busies who are likely to lose their jobs. Foley's spiel followed that of the Union Secretary of the Bus Division and a number of ALP candidates in the effected electorates.

In their latest public show, after hearing speeches from the ALP candidates, bus drivers were asked for questions to be put to Parliament aimed at embarrassing the Government. As if Parliament ever solved any workers problem or was even interested in the welfare of workers? What brazenness from the union officials to pull on such a stunt. It's no longer about the jobs of bus drivers and STA staff but about getting local ALP candidates elected. It's a

real slap in the face for the bus drivers because it shows that the union can't mount a campaign using its own workers to win a dispute. Can't or does not want to? Such wanton opportunism.

Let's look at the track record of union officials and judge for yourself. What are the chances of them mounting a fair dinkum campaign to halt privatisation? Here are a few examples of how they fared when faced with the issue in the past

* Eveleigh Workshops- closed in 1988 during the ALP Wran era about 100 years after construction. It once was one of the largest enterprises in Australia employing around 5000 workers in its heyday and was the origin of the famous 1917 national strike. Despite a vigorous campaign from rank and file work groups it closed with barely a whimper from the union hierarchy. In the 1980's the workshops spawned a rank and file challenge (A.R.U. Reform) to the right wing old guard within the union, going close to defeating them in a well



organised election.

* Chullora Workshops - despite \$61million being invested to upgrade the facility between 1980 - 1985 it closed its doors in 1994 with the land later sold to News Ltd and Fairfax for their print mills. Maintenance was outsourced to A Goninan and Co in Auburn in a brand new facility. No all out campaign was forthcoming to halt privatisation of the maintenance of City Rail's electric cars.

* Freight Corp - At the time of the Freight Corp sale it was already making a small profit. From the inception of incorporation of freight business in NSW the then State Secretary of the RTBU said on a number of occasions that he saw no future for rail freight in NSW. He believed that privatisation of Freight Corp was the best course of action despite the fact that rail freight workers would be only guaranteed their jobs and working conditions for a

limited time. A few years later privately owned freight business in NSW had been turned into a lucrative business model with myriad of operators. For the former workers of Freight Corp it was a betrayal.

* Opal "Smart" Card - introduced in 2012 the travel card takes revenue collection out of the public domain and puts it purely in the private domain creating an easy profit for the new operators, a consortium of Commonwealth Bank, Cubic and Downer. While this was a no-lose situation for the new operators, in the workplace it was wholesale slaughter.

Ticket sellers (Sales Clerks) and Station Staff who traditionally sold tickets lost their jobs. The travelling public lost a lot of options with their ticketing and travel arrangements and now pay much more under the new fare structure. There's no doubting the convenience of the card for some people, but when things go wrong it is difficult and costly to remedy the situation. There is no way to get a refund or to

fix your problems with your Opal Card at a Station ticket window as this is handled online or over the phone with the new operators.

Rail staff were slowly being cut out of the system until they have now no role in revenue collection or ticketing at all. There are concerns that further job losses will follow, e.g. ticket barriers are not essential to the operation of Opal.

Was there any opposition to the new ticketing and revenue system? From the employees point of view they would have preferred that it remain in house, operated by them. From the union bosses point of view, despite the job losses, not a whimper of

disapproval about the privatisation and loss of jobs.

* Station and Train Cleaning - in the past few years cleaning has been progressively outsourced with the loss of hundreds if not thousands of jobs. What makes this so bad is that knew unscrupulous operators now hire cleaners (some on 457 visas) at a pay rate and on conditions that are far inferior to those of the former State Government employees. The new employees are not union members as far as I know. If they were, then the union has an obligation to bring them up to parity with the employees previously hired by the State.

* Epping/Chatswood, Bankstown Metro - The privatisation of these lines is the beginning of the end of Public Transport as we know it. It is a quantum shift in State responsibility for transport. It also has massive implications for job losses down the track. Metro is hoping to eventually oper-

ate these trains without train crew and possibly with minimal Station Staff. Driverless trains are a possibility on these lines in the future.

Yet despite the shortcomings in planning and development, despite the fact that single decker trains don't carry as many passengers and that people will be standing instead of sitting and despite the fact that an overseas company will be profiting from the debacle and repatriating profits out of the country not one official from the union has met with rail staff to voice a concern or to listen to the gripes that members might have.

The Rubicon is no more

As you can see this is not an exhaustive list of jobs and services that have been outsourced. However they are a monumental shift in policy, just as great as that of the Inner West bus privatisation (and yes we believe that this may be the tip of the iceberg as far as bus privatisation is concerned). These are all life changing events as far as public ownership is concerned.

Is it any wonder that public transport workers no longer believe that privatisation of their jobs can be halted.

So what can we do?

We know that the public is against privatisation and that they believe that it

will be cheaper and the travel routes more extensive if it is publicly operated by the government. To win a campaign of hearts and minds we must link with the public who is opposed to the privatisation of public assets. The public have learned much from the privatisation of electricity and the like. The hype from Government circles has not matched reality in terms of price nor reliability.

As workers, we need to support public outcries against privatisation and supporters of public transport. We do that by making ourselves known, helping groups such as those opposed to the West Connex Motorway and other public sector anti-privatisation fights. We need leaflets and organisation to inform and build solidarity with the community.

We also must build solidarity and educate in our workplaces. Pressure must be built to say enough is enough on privatisation. Start an anti privatisation group in your workplace even if you have to meet off the worksite.

Sure, you say, shouldn't this work be done by our union? History is teaching us that that ain't going to happen. It's really up to us to resist the outsourcing, privatisation and job losses.

Don't be fooled either by appeals to vote for this or that politician to halt

privatisation especially when the both major parties support such projects as the West Connex Motorway, private operation of trains, outsourcing of government services, privatisation of electricity, private operation of the Airport Line, privatisation of Sydney's second Airport at Badgerys Creek, private operation of Sydney Ferries and so on ad infinitum.

We have to build pressure ourselves. If union leaders stand in the way, then build a movement that can change the way the union operates to one that is inclusive and concerned about such issues as privatisation. Change your union to one that is not driven by outside political forces that dictate what can or cannot be fought for.

For job security, for a fairer workplace, for an end to exploitation by huge multi-national corporations, for a future with human dignity and not despair, then it's up to us all to take a stand now! Let us know how you can help?

STATE TRANSIT NEWS FLASH

Greens Staff & Community Meeting to Oppose Privatisation of the Buses

There was a fantastic attendance at the meeting held at Leichhardt Town Hall on Monday 19th June (the Greens were expecting perhaps 20 or so and were very surprised by the attendance). It was absolutely packed, mostly with local residents and Green supporters/voters and progressives. There was at least 40 or so STA drivers, mostly from Leichhardt depot.

Home-made posters put up by concerned locals on the night before the meeting seemed to have played a key role in mobilising the drivers' attendance. Upon hearing of the large contingent of drivers intending to go, the union officials put up a notice of the meeting on their website/Facebook page just 2 hours before

the meeting! The union brass turned up even though they had snubbed Greens politicians when lobbying in State Parliament just a week or two earlier.

Chris Preston RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) Bus Division Secretary and even Alex Claassens RTBU State Secretary and other officials attended. They burst into action and were clearly impressed with the local Greens ability to mobilise grassroots. Preston spoke about the privatisation push by the Liberals. He had nothing to say about the common belief that the union hierarchy had prior knowledge of the privatisation push. One can assume this because of the "Top Secret" weekly meetings between the union State Secretary and the NSW Transport Minister Constance.

Jamie Parker NSW Greens MP for Balmain who organised and financed the meeting, suggested people could support his on-line petition which trebled in subscribers on the day of the 24 hour strike which alerted the public to the Liberal Govt's proposal. He omitted to address issues that had been raised privately with him before the meeting such as Transport

Minister Constance ripping up the bus drivers' industry award during the parliamentary debate. This meant the suspension of the Dispute Settling Allowance of approx. \$50 pw. All drivers are now losing the allowance from their pay packets. As a letter in the Daily Telegraph 29/6/17 demonstrates this has divided the drivers in the non affected depots, outside Area 6.

For instance the union rep at Ryde depot said it has been difficult to convince all his members that they must stick together to win the battle in the long run. Another driver, working on the 370 route from Randwick depot, expressed cynicism saying the battle was already lost and the union was going through the motions and we will be no worse off under privatisation. He is wrong, but said the pay cut was hurting him as he had commitments. With these attitudes it is essential that depot militants build confidence with their fellow workers, as history shows if workers stick together they will win. The union hierarchy has eroded this confidence by refusing to organise a mass meeting of all depots, because they all face privatisation and cuts to working conditions, if not before the next State election, then immediately after.

On this point of 'divide and rule' between the depots, Jamie Parker was also asked to

raise publicly the rumour from drivers that Constance allegedly offered drivers from the North side depots the opportunity to sign individual declarations agreeing to renege on any repeat industry-wide Opal Free Day if called by the RTBU like the one held on June 1st last. To call workers to break ranks and reward some drivers with their allowance back is clearly not beyond Premier Berejiklian's strategists? She is worried about industrial action in her own Local seat of Willoughby. Union member splitting 'carrots and sticks' are not beyond her and her business mates. The Taxi industry and Uber shows what happens when workers don't stand together. Ask any Taxi driver.

Another rumour concerns potential corruption in the tendering process? Some say the privatised pie has already been dished out to a Govt. favourite behind the scenes. ICAC caught out the Libs and their developer mates after the last State election. This was hot on the heels on the disgraced ALP Govt. before them. The tendering process will be watched with interest by all. At the moment Berejiklian and Constance have set a long phase in time to test the waters over driver and commuter resistance. The union leadership sank their own ship in this regard by not mobilising Sydney drivers over the privatisation of the Newcastle depots which has gone ahead in July after a 12 month delay, this has set a precedent of which the Liberals are fully aware.

Another issue that was to be followed up at the RTBU meeting the following week was where the focus of the campaign should be. The RTBU officials are focusing solely on area 6, the affected Inner West. It would appear this is a defeatist policy of promoting Luke Foley's credentials for the next State election which they are on paper. But to isolate the other Northern and Eastern depots from the campaign while expecting them to take a pay cut is a ridiculous strategy. Berejiklian has no fear of losing political seats in the Inner West.

Preston in responding to a retired MUA (Maritime Union of Australia) member of the "old school", who demanded "Direct Action" by drivers and the so called union to fight privatisation - I didn't quite catch it - but I think he referred to the IR court directive - that any such - snap strikes etc "would be illegal" so he can't call for it. However he provided the caveat that he is not responsible for grass roots initiated direct action. He didn't seem to recall that he had called for "illegal" industrial action already in the shape of the 24 hour snap strike and Opal Free Fare day. So the ice has been broken on the union taking illegal action. If there are fines for illegal indus-

trial action, perhaps surpluses from the STA drivers Traffic Fine and Picnic Fund which have never been paid to drivers for many decades as a premium, and would work out as a tidy sum, should cover any such fines! When was the last time STA drivers ever had a picnic? Drivers could have a chat "en masse" with Chris on these issues when he next comes to visit your depot.

Another local resident supported the snap strike and free fare day and also called for direct action by drivers to fight privatisation. Another guy who spoke was a driver from Leichhardt depot. He was on the roster committee and mentioned problems with developing good/sane rosters since Transport for NSW was set up.

Another interesting point raised by one of the Greens politicians was the likely use of Leichhardt depot as a site in the construction of the WestConnex. Jamie or another Green was to look into it. It was another



possible reason for privatisation.

So it looks like sections of the Greens hierarchy may be in on the privatisation conspiracy, together with the union hierarchy and the ALP.

Don't Sell Our Buses Community Assembly

This meeting was held at the Uniting Church at Pitt St. City on 28/6/17 organised by Unions NSW. It seems connected with the RTBU State Secretary Claassen's Hillsong Church associations and an ALP Community Alliance electoral strategy involving Churches. It was chaired by Chris Preston RTBU Bus Division Secretary. Similar meetings were held in that week in the City organised by the ALP and the union hierarchy. One even starred Shorten Leader of the Federal ALP Opposition.

No questions from the audience were allowed and no debate, displaying the absolute contempt the union hierarchy and the ALP bosses have for drivers and those genuine concerned people who attended. Interestingly, there was a cop van hanging around outside. Perhaps to intervene against anyone trying to raise questions and challenging the bureaucratic running of the event.

Some important questions to be raised included: (1) The importance of holding a joint rail and bus workers mass stop work meeting to fight privatisation. (2) Does the union have a strike fund? As a serious industrial campaign needs to be waged. (3) What is the union doing to compensate drivers for the loss of the Industrial Allowance? (4) What is the union doing to negate the "Transmission of Business" clause in the current EBA? This clause has featured in all STA EBA's since 2002 and gives the green light to privatisation. (5)

As these clauses feature in all NSW public sector EBA's, what is the union going to do to work with the unions in these sectors to oppose privatisation? The ALP and the Union hierarchy were planning to hold on Wed. 5/7/17 a community day of action. The union hierarchy and the ALP bosses are trying to encourage people in the Inner West to get 10,000 signatures on petitions to Parliament and chat with people, etc about privatisation of the Inner West. Such an approach is completely useless! The Libs are mainly worried about the North Shore buses and to a lesser extent Eastern Suburbs buses in regard

to upcoming Council elections in early Sept. 2017. The Libs are already in hot water over Council Amalgamations. Unions NSW and the union hierarchy planned to devote huge resources to this useless campaign. No mention was made of these council elections and the need to raise STA bus privatisation as an issue on the North Shore and Eastern suburbs which would worry the Libs considerably.

Luke Foley, ALP Leader of the NSW Opposition spoke and constantly used the code word "reform" of STA drivers being needed. It meant incremental cut backs to drivers' conditions as the way to go rather than full on privatisation. The Greens NSW MP Mahreen Faruqi had a similar outlook and also emphasised new technology. Interestingly in contrast to the Leichhardt Town Hall meeting (with 40 approx) - only approx 30 STA drivers attended the meeting mostly from Kingsgrove. The audience was composed mainly of Union bosses and their lower rung officials and

ALP hacks. There was a video made probably for Union NSW/ALP propaganda. You needed tickets to attend. There was about 200 people overall.

So the meeting looks like mainly as an ALP electoral stunt. So they and the union hierarchy which has stopped all industrial action, can "look like they are doing something" in fighting STA bus privatisation, but in reality waging a totally ineffectual commuter/ community campaign.

Sparkie

STOP (Sydney Transport-Users Opposed to Privatisation)

Clearly the travelling public from pensioners to working daily commuters see the threat of privatisation of the bus and train industries. They are fed up with the

New Insights on the STA Bus Privatisation Conspiracy

There is an important new dimension to the STA Bus privatisation conspiracy revealed in an article in 'Neighbourhood'. It's a free newspaper from Surry hills. In its July 2017 No.3 edition, there is an article entitled "Automatic For The People". Check their website neighbourhoodpaper.com for the full article.

The NSW Govt and their business mates hidden agenda for privatisation of the Inner West STA buses/routes and then subsequently the rest of the STA, is to wreck up public transport and force people with the money to use tollways. Should driverless vehicles such as personal cars, Uber taxis and buses become the norm perhaps in 1 to 5 years time, the Govt and its business mates are planning to lock, their operation in tollways.

major parties state and federal privatising essential utilities, major resource assets and heritage buildings. The community is being impoverished to fatten up corporate mates and global conglomerates. Like the bus drivers people want to resist out of necessity for their futures. A group of individuals have started Sydney Transport-users Opposing Privatisation (S.T.O.P) in response to the immediate attack on Inner West buses and drivers. They hope STOP will encourage the formation of grass roots community groups all over Sydney in support of rank and file groups developing at the depots and work places as we all have a common cause. Hands off the People's Assets Now! In sharp contrast to the ineffectual commuter and community campaign being promoted by the Greens hierarchy and the union hierarchy/ALP bosses, a new grass roots community movement has emerged to put a stop to bus privatisation.

Transurban will operate and own amongst other freeways/tollways, M4 (ending at Haberfield) and M5 (ending at St. Peters) so fitting with Inner West STA depot/routes privatisation. On these freeways/tollways, they want a special lane for driverless vehicles. These vehicles will be forced on these roads via Govt regulations unlike conventional vehicles with drivers for so called safety reasons. Poor people will be forced on to the cramped and over-priced private buses and railways networks. The article reveals that at the 'AFR Business Summit' held in March and the 'National Infrastructure Summit' held in June, Transurban was positioning itself to take advantage of this new driverless vehicle technology for their profit making via lobbying the NSW Govt. to compel driverless vehicles to use dedicated lanes on their tollways.

Today populist politicians like Malcolm Turnbull travel on public transport as 'one of us'. Under the cattle truck privatised

STOP will be waging a vigorous campaign to enlighten commuters and locals in marginal Lib seats in Sydney and the seats of the Premier and NSW Transport Minister. It will particularly focus on making bus privatisation a big issue in these areas in upcoming council elections. STOP will assist people in the community and on the job in the STA to establish their own committees and activity. In the interest of solidarity sign the on-line petitions from the Greens, RTBU and Unions NSW and other political parties and community groups who are taking a stand. Unity is strength.

If you want to discuss generating action in your area, contact us via

STOP PO Box 703 Leichhardt 2040.

transport, you won't see him or the NSW Premier Berejiklian or NSW Transport Minister Constance there. Currently, Berejiklian and Constance with their considerable media manipulation resources are constantly holding media stunts about allegedly improving public transport to divert public attention away from their incremental privatisation agenda.

Lithgow Buses and Opal Exemption

An article in 'Senior' Newspaper July 2017, reports about the case of Lithgow private buses which don't accept the Opal. Gold Opal card holders are being charged double the Opal fare capped at \$2.50 per day. It's an indication of the way ahead. So in the case of STA bus privatisation, the Govt. will either subsidise a private operator to maintain profit levels or allow exemptions from normal Opal fares as in the Lithgow case.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW we will discuss Human Resources and their efforts to introduce a complaint workforce into V/Line. Once again Drivers, Conductors and Station Staff will discuss these ongoing issues. Once again names have been changed.

RW: What is going on with Human Resources?

Rastas and Roscoe: They are trying to introduce a complaint workforce.

RW: What do you mean?

Clarence: They want to have V/line employees acting like robots.

Jethro: In other words they will pick who they want in various positions within V/Line.

Sheona: They set the rules in the selection process for applicants.

RW: In what way?

Penelope: I will give you an example of what happened in regards to the selection of station staff for an outer suburban station which opened at the end of January.

Jethro: One of the applicants was told by Human Resources that the Referees he used on his Resume were not acceptable to Human Resources and Human Resources would select who they want as a Referee. Their selection and not his.

Clarence: That's not all. I did hear about the selection of a Staff Clerk for a vacant position at Southern Cross.

Jethro: A similar incident to what was reported some eight years ago was in issue 131.

Clarence: You are correct. The successful candidate for Staff Clerk was placed in the position in his spare time to learn the position. Another candidate asked to be given a trial in the position during his spare time, but was told by the manager in one word. No!

Penelope: This gave the successful candidate an unfair advantage over other candidates. A similar thing happened eight years ago for the selection of a Customer Service Manager and was reported in issue 130.

RW: What about the selection for Drivers?

Rastus: In the years up to 2009, most of the Drivers came from the Electric Trains and some from various Freight Companies such as Freight Australia. The Electric Train Drivers had a Right of Return.

RW: What was Right of Return?

Roscoe: This goes back to the 1970's when due to Closures and altered work practices on Country Lines, a large number of Passed Out Drivers were compulsorily transferred to the Electric Trains.

Rastus: Under Right of Return when a vacancy occurred at a Country Depot these drivers had a Right of Return, to a job in Diesel Locomotives.

Roscoe: When Privatisation occurred in 1999 the original agreement was honoured as it was a legal document registered with the Arbitration Commission.

Sheona: By 2001 a decision was made to recruit internally. Also redundant drivers from freight companies were recruited.

Clarence: Interest from the latest intake of drivers was high and a fair number of employees applied for the positions and most internal applicants were unsuccessful.

Sheona: The selection tests were tough particularly Mechanical Aptitude, but wait for it, two of the failures were qualified Diesel Mechanics. No wonder morale is low amongst employees.

Rastus: Human Resources considered that many of the internal candidates were unsuitable so they have advertised externally where interest has been high. In fact qualified drivers from Freight Companies have applied and they were unsuccessful.

Penelope: The same thing has happened



with conductor vacancies. A large number of station staff have applied and they were unsuccessful.

RW: I have heard of the unsuccessful applicants for a driver's position resigned from V/Line and has decided to do a Second Person's course in NSW.

Jethro: You are correct. The applicant was upset at always being unsuccessful so he decided to do the Second Person's course at one of the training companies in NSW.

Rastus and Roscoe: We have heard stories about the Training Schools in NSW. We know they charge high fees for the Second Persons Course. Perhaps someone with a knowledge about these Training Centres could report in a future issue of RW.

RW: What about a future shortage of drivers?

Rastus: The way Human Resources recruits drivers and the time they take, the shortage will get worse and they will have to pay a bounty to return some of the drivers after retiring age.

RW: We move on. What is the code when an employee is stood down with pay?

Sheona: They stay at home and are called to Human Resources for an enquiry. They are not to talk to anyone about the reason they are stood down.

Rastus: They could be stood down for anything and some matters are minor. As we have said in previous issues of RW. I think of the stress it causes an employee. In fact some have been stood down for four months before a decision is made.

Jethro: They haven't changed. They are still trying to frighten employees.

RW: Once again we have run out of space. I will say one thing, Human Resources has to be cleaned out from top to bottom and people placed in there who are promoted from within V/Line and not a bunch of university graduates.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say. Human Resources are a bunch of Bullies and Bludgers. We Drivers call on V/Line employees to STAND UP to them. Finally if you are in trouble with Human Resources let your WORKMATES know. FINALLY, you touch one employee, you TOUCH ALL.

EGYPTIAN TEXTILE WORKERS' STRIKE

Once again the workers of Mahallah have gone on strike against both management and unions over the non-payment of wages.

In the Mahalla al-Kubra district in the Nile Delta, where Egypt's textile industry is concentrated and which has always been amongst the vanguard of Egyptian movements there is an all-out strike of 17,000 workers. Workers are demanding wage rise to cope with 33% inflation. Workers have promised "We will fight to the bitter end". A victory here could trigger protests across the country.

The movement began on Saturday night (August 12 with a partial strike for a few hours, but in the face of the company's inflexibility and the provocations of security guards (who asked workers to denounce the "agitators") the strike was extended to thirty establishments in this industrial hub. According to the Egyptian independent press the strike is 100% solid.

The workers are demanding those annual bonuses, and profit-sharing payments which often end up disappearing from pay slips. In this case, the strike started over a

bonus payment that was due in July. After waiting for a month, the strike started, with a much wider list of demands, which add up to a 10% increase in wages.

The company, the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company, has repeatedly attempted to negotiate with the workers but only through the state-owned union, which does not play any role in the strike and often takes the side of the state and the bosses.

Although the company was ready to make concessions, workers have refused to accept any compromise and say they want to continue strike until all their legitimate demands are met. Many believe that the mas-

sive strikes of Mahalla in 2006 and 2007 and the long wave of social protests that arose there were the spark for the 2011 Tahrir Square protest.

Mahalla has often been a beacon for a wider movement in the country especially since the economic situation for the working class is dire (it's not so great for the middle class). The regime could use repression against the workers but this would be more dangerous than repression against Tahrir Square or even the Muslim Brotherhood. But to concede their demands (as the state has done in the past could equally open the floodgates to more demands from the rest of the working class

The words of one striking worker from Mahalla, recorded by the independent platform Yanair Gate: "Once again the



revolution will start from us, from Mahalla, as it did the first time. We will not give up our rights whatsoever. We will continue the protest".

Thanks to ITC Blog

FRANCE

On August 11th, around 50 delivery workers demonstrated at Republic square in Paris against Deliveroo's planned rate decrease.

The pay is planned to be lowered from around just under 10 euro per delivery to a mere 5 euros. Beyond this new rule, workers denounced their precarious working conditions in general.

The bicycle couriers, mostly employed by Deliveroo, Foodora and Uber Eats, protested the sharp drop in pay that Deliveroo will be implementing from August 28th.

Most workers are currently paid 7.5 euros per hour plus a 2 to 4 euros 'bonus' per delivery. Others earn 5.75 euros per delivery in Paris and 5 euros outside of the capital.

Deliveroo will now apply a single 5 euro-per-delivery pay rate. The company is known for its aggressive measures against workers.

Last May, it sparked outrage among bicycle couriers when it appeared that some workers' apps were arbitrarily deactivated leaving them jobless.

Deliveroo argued that this was due to non-compliance with the terms of the contract, such as workers not wearing the green uniforms.

But beyond this recent measure, protesters denounced precarious conditions: firms offer no medical insurance, no money to cover bike repairs, and demand excessive working hours.

One protester said that for a 35-hours work week - the French labour hours limit per week- he only earns 600 euros, which is 400 euros below the minimum wage.

Resistance among delivery workers in France has been building up starting shortly after the nationwide struggle against the downsizing of workers' rights in the Spring of 2016.

In the Parisian region, CLAP (collectives of autonomous delivery workers of Paris) was created a few month ago and members of the collective were present at the protest on Friday. Thanks to Libcom

The collective hopes to federate workers in the streets and has been regularly speaking out on national media such as France 2. It seeks to organize for better working conditions, against pay cuts as well as physical and economic insecurity.



Venezuela Revolt

Repression and revolt in Venezuela: An outstretched hand for the compañeros, a closed fist for the enemy

In Venezuela, mass protests against the socialist government of Nicolás Maduro have been developing for more than three months.

More than one hundred dead and hundreds of demonstrators detained and tortured at the hands of the Venezuelan police is the current balance of the street agitation that has dominated the political agenda in the Latin American region and even beyond.

2-The campaign of the international left in support of the government of Nicolás Maduro, that classifies the protesters as either simple puppets or agents that are beholden to the interests of the opposition, the mainly right-wing grouping of the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD).

Both discourses interact in the conflict trying to shape opinion regarding what takes place in Venezuela, inside and outside the borders of the country.

For us, what we think is important is to lend a hand of solidarity, even from a distance, to those anarchist / anti-authoritarian compañeros who are taking part in the street clashes against the government.

Side by side with the thousands of young

barracks and government buildings have no interest in being part of the Democratic Unity Roundtable of the right-wing official political opposition.

It is a rebellion that has been ongoing for more than three months whose 'driving force' cannot be attributed to the right, being rather diverse and in many cases young people without any political party affiliations.

We feel an affinity with those who from the autonomy and the fire of the barricades and Molotov cocktails are spreading anti-state/anti-authoritarian ideas within the specific context of fighting against the present government.

In the territory devastated by the Chilean state, as anarchist compañeros we have participated in massive manifestations of social movements over the recent decades that we have no great affinity with, always with the aim of seeking and generating possibilities to attack the police and propagate the destruction of the urban infrastructure of capital and power.

In our experience, we know that in the street we are not always fighting alongside people we are in complete affinity with, but yes we are clear when it comes to who our brothers, sisters and accomplices are with whom we share common goals to overcome the limits of protests that seek to change one law into another law, or exchange one government for another or one state for another type of state, etc.

With propaganda, organization, fire and gasoline, we will fight for a life of freedom.

There is no other way.

As I anarchists we have no interest in saluting 'the people' or 'the poor' of Venezuela. Our fraternity and solidarity are the with the anarchist and autonomous rebels

who rise up in the rebellion of Venezuela, who despite the murders, imprisonments and the tortures of the socialist government, continue fighting and burning reality with their heads held high and fire in the streets.

**NEITHER LEFT NOR RIGHT!
NEITHER DEMOCRACY NOR DICTATORSHIP!
AGAINST ALL GOVERNMENTS!
LONG LIVE ANARCHY!**



The deepening social conflict in Venezuela has a number of interesting edges to address for those of us who are interested in spreading the hostilities against all forms of government and power. Among them, we can find at least two variables:

1-The hypocrisy of the democratic states that via the Organization of American States are calling for intervention in Venezuela due to "the serious violations of people's freedom" by the government. As if in their own territories, in states such as the US, Mexico, Colombia and Chile there exists freedom and respect for what they call "human rights" in the language of power.

people who have risen up, anarchist compañeros decided not to be spectators of what was happening right before their eyes and took offensive action against the police, their barracks and everything that smells of government and repression.

It is a fact that the revolt in general does not have a noticeable anti-state trajectory.

It is also true that in the streets there is a diversity of positions and speeches. But it is also a concrete fact as has been noted by the anarchist compañeros from Venezuela that the majority of the youth who go out to throw Molotov cocktails at the police and burn

BRITAIN TODAY

HOSPITAL WORKERS' STRUGGLE

Since the Spring of this year in several London hospitals about 750 cleaners, security personnel and porters have been in dispute with their employer, Serco. They are part of the lowest paid workers in the U.K.

According to a 2014 report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission the turnover of more than £8 billion in the non-domestic cleaning sector is brought about by about half a million "largely invisible" workers. They are from East and West Africa. Many work on an informal basis without any job security. So far this has entailed that their fear to lose their jobs prevented them from taking action to ameliorate their living conditions. It's promising for the workers' struggle, not only in Great-Britain but across the whole of Europe as well, that this part of the proletariat has come into action.

The Employer: One of the Richest Enterprises in the UK

The employer of those on strike is one of the richest enterprises of the United Kingdom: Serco Group plc, an outsourcing company. For its customers Serco exploits public and private transports, exercises road traffic controls, has activities in air traffic, weapons industries, detention centres, call centres, prisons and schools. In 2016 Serco's turnover amounted to about £3 billion. This year it engages 50,000 employees. Its CEO is Rupert Soames, grandson of Winston Churchill, who 'earns' £850,000 per year plus bonuses.

Precursors of the Strike

Support services workers employed by Serco at the Royal London Hospital have started a wildcat strike in April this year, as their morning breaks had suddenly been cancelled. On April 1st, Serco had obtained a contract of 600 million Pounds for servicing a number of London hospitals, among which the London Royal Hospital. At the start of their working day, on Tuesday April 4, the cleaners were welcomed by a letter stating that their tea-break in paid time had been annulled. One of the

workers, Mary Agyei, who had come from Ghana 25 years ago, and who has been working in the hospital for 9 years, decided to call on the 140 cleaners to henceforth take a tea-break in the canteen all together:

"We shouldn't be ashamed of wanting to take a break. We work hard. We need it. Lots of people were nervous they would be sacked, but if we were all together they couldn't get rid of us."

On Friday April 8 Serco apologized by saying that the measure had been taken by



the initiative of a local manager. The tea breaks have officially been restored.

This wildcat action shows that collective struggle is possible and rewarding. In addition, the strikers are encouraged by successful strikes in the cleaning branch like those at the London School of Economics against the Irish outsourcing company Noonan.

The Stakes of the Hospital Strike: Wages

The current strikes are organized by the largest British trades union, Unite, that is federated with the T.U.C. The sudden combativity among the cleaners has taught

Unite that more workers' reactions will be organized by the workers themselves, outside of the union. In order to anticipate on this, and to obtain the leadership over an inevitable movement among support services workers in the hospitals – and maybe in other enterprises as well – Unite has called a ballot among its members in June for a 48 hours strike at the beginning of July. Because this has made no impression, it was followed up by a fortnight strike on from July 25, with more actions to come in August and September if necessary.

According to a message of July 17 on Libcom (1) 700 cleaners, porters and security guards at several hospitals in London (Mile End Hospital, Royal London Hospital, St. Bartholomew's and Whipps Cross) had been on strike already for a week for a pay rise of 30 pence an hour, for a shortening of their working hours, and against intimidation by the management. According to The Guardian of August 1st however, on July 17 a 7 days strike has begun. (2) The strikers are picketing outside of the hospital and hold signs with slogans like "slippery Serco", "Low pay, no way" and "No racism in the NHS". (3)

The trades union Unite focuses the action's demands on a pay rise of 30 pence per hour in the first place. This demand is linked to Serco's promise to pay all workers in London the usual minimum wage of 9.75 per hour, which is supposed to suffice for paying the higher costs of living in the London area. But several sources indicate that these costs have risen to such heights that it's impossible to pay the rent, to pay for food, clothing etc. from this minimum wage. Many cleaners, as appears from

The Guardian, are forced to take one or two additional jobs in order to make ends meet. As a consequence they hardly see their children, or even do not see them at all, and have no time left for a social life. These issues are common among all lowest paid workers in the London area. They all are watching the trade union's action at the hospitals in the hope they succeed... or they may be looking at their failure.

Background: The Intensification of Labour

Apart from the issue of too low minimum wages, however, something else may be of even greater importance. Since Serco has

taken over facility services, new managers have been employed on the work-floor who do everything to increase the exploitation of the workers. Activities like the serving of meals to patients have been discarded. Keeping in contact with the patients is however of great importance to the cleaners because of the appreciation and the status that this entails. Instead they are currently being pressurized by Serco into cleaning ever more departments, the weakest among them the most seriously. The consequences are devastating to both the hygiene in the hospitals and the health of the workers. In addition, the working pressure leads to unpaid overtime work and exhaustion, notably with elder employees. In other cases cleaners are forced to take over the task of health assistants (assistance to nursing personnel) without extra training. In short, Serco has begun to earn back its investment with an aggravation of tasks, an intensification of labour on a large scale.

From many situation, also in the Netherlands, we know that the trades unions are all too eager to assist the management with this kind of restructuring of labour. But in order to succeed in this the union has to crack up its credibility with the employees first. It goes without saying that they'd welcome some extra members, paying financial contributors as well.

Heading for a Defeat?

When we compare the wildcat action against the cancelling of the tea-breaks with the current union actions, we see differences to the disadvantage of the workers and their chances of success:

* The wildcat action had (evidently) not been announced and took the management completely by surprise. By contrast, trades union actions are all announced in advance, so the Serco management can take its precautions. And Serco does so indeed: through temporary employment agencies willing workers are hired who have no right to a strike benefit from the union, and who will immediately lose their jobs if they would join the strike, as some have expressed they would like to.

* In the wildcat action the workers decide on everything. Now it's the union that decides.

* The wildcat action has taken place on the work-floor, enabling the workers in action to immediately act on an engagement of strike breakers. Now, under the leadership of the trades union, they are picketing at the hospital gates, where they cannot discern strike breakers from the countless patients, visitors and nurses who go in and out at a hospital.

The long duration of the actions is certainly not to the advantage of the strikers. What matters is extending actions rapidly towards other categories of workers in the same enterprise (here: towards nurses, laboratory workers, doctors, etc.), towards other enterprises and sectors, for instance to the low paid workers there. A struggle encapsulated by a trades union that focuses on a sector or trade, by contrast, impedes this necessary extension of the struggle. The trades union does not aim at this extension at all, but at its recognition by Serco and by the state. According to the aforementioned message on Libcom, in the case of Unite it is clear that the presi-

dent of the union, Len MacCluskey, is an important supporter of Corbyn's leadership over Labour, and that he has expressed himself in favour of restrictive immigration controls. Well, it's also known that Serco checks the immigration status of its employees, and, when this is esteemed necessary, has them deported. It is not a coincidence that Serco is in the business of exploiting detention centres as well!

It's important that the cleaners – many of whom have an immigration background – not only understand well who their employer is, but also who the trades union is that pretends to fight for their interests!

FC, August 3rd, 2017

[url=<https://libcom.org/news/st-barts-hospital-strike-continues-17072017>]
[<https://libcom.org/news/st-barts-hospital-strike-continues-17072017>][url]

(2) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/01/some-days-i-feel-like-ill-d-rop-dead-britains-biggest-cleaners-strike>

(3) *At the National Health Service doctors lately have been forced to carry out identity controls in order to keep out "illegals".*

Translation from Dutch: H.C., 4 August 2017,

Latest corrections: 6 August 2017.

Source: <https://arbeidersstemmen.wordpress.com/2017/08/03/gb-veelbelovende-ziekenhuisstaking/#more-9044>

UK: DELIVERY DRIVERS' NEWS

Self-employed worker's report about the ups and downs of driving for Amazon.

Currently two of our friends work as delivery drivers, one drives self-employed for Amazon Flex [1], the other delivers groceries for Tesco. Both delivery drivers are connected to bigger local distribution centres. Before we look at the conditions at Amazon Flex we want to summarise some basic information about the parcel delivery sector.

The sector employs more than quarter of a million people in the UK. With the expansion of internet shopping the number of delivery warehouse workers and drivers grew rapidly. There are currently 3.5 million vans on UK's roads, most of them for commercial purposes. In 2015 more than 1.5 billion parcels were delivered in the UK.

The Royal Mail's market share has been decreasing with new delivery companies entering the market, currently it stands at about 35%. There are around 15 parcel delivery companies in the UK that have a national network and only 35 companies that directly employ more than 100 people. In total there are over 11,000 registered 'delivery companies', most of them have less than 5 employees. Only around 100 delivery companies in the UK have a turnover of more than £5 million. [2] While nationally we might see a diversification of delivery companies, globally we see a concentration process.

Companies like DHL or TNT dominate the sector, which is capital intensive: while some of the last-mile delivery can be outsourced to self-employed guys who own their car or moped, a fast delivery of large volumes of parcels requires modern

distribution centres, trucks and even aeroplane fleets. City Link went bust in 2014 and UK Mail got in financial trouble over investments in highly automated distribution centres in 2015. The company was subsequently taken over by DHL in 2016. According to Royal Mail analysis, over-capacities in the sector currently stand at 20% and are growing.

Most revenue is still made from deliveries between businesses (54%), but within six years the share of revenue made from 'businesses to individual customer'-deliveries increased from 15% to 34% in 2015. Nearly two thirds of deliveries are 'business to customer', but the delivery companies make relatively less money from that. They try to recoup the heavy investment into their infrastructure by various means:

* by putting pressure on wages and/or use self-employed drivers who own their car (only viable when most parcels are relatively small) [3]

* by making customers pick-up their parcels from pick-up points, e.g. local shops

* by increasing the delivery working day, so vans don't stand idle during the day and more items can be processed daily

* by increasing numbers of items delivered per hour: according to a recent survey of delivery work in London the average delivery round took 276 minutes, 44 items were delivered, only 41% of the time consisted of driving time, the rest was spent waiting, loading/unloading etc.

* by using other means of delivery (on foot, bikes, mopeds) in high traffic areas: average traffic speed in London has decreased by around 6% between 2009 and 2015. Road traffic vehicle delays have also risen over this same time period by between 17-31% in central London.

Despite all the talk about automation - driverless cars or drone delivery - most deliveries still largely depend on the improvisations and local knowledge of human labour: fighting over a place to park in central London, reacting to sudden road incidents, finding your way around London estates and so on.

There have been various disputes in the sector recently - unfortunately most unions focus on a legal recognition of self-employed drivers, as 'workers', which ends up in a battle between lawyers. There has been a legal back and forth at Amazon Flex recently. [4] Deliveroo self-employed drivers have proven that they are workers by going on strike - to which the bosses reacted as bosses.

For more details read the report below - which will also be posted on our 'LondonRebelDrivers' - blog:

www.londonrebeldrivers.wordpress.com

For more details about working at Amazon in general, check out our older articles [5]...

[1]
<http://flex.amazon.co.uk/>

[2]
http://www.ftc2050.com/reports/westminster_parcels_final_Dec_2016.pdf

[3]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-37708996>

[4]
<https://theloadstar.co.uk/amazon-hits-back-delivery-drivers-claim-legally-employees/>

[5]
<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2017/01/17/calling-all-junglists-a-short-report-from-amazon-in-hemel-hempstead/>

<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2016/07/27/amazon-poland-over-2000-people-want-to-go-on-strike-but-restrictive-polish-labor-laws-prohibit-it/>

<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2015/12/20/welcome-to-the-jungle-working-and-struggling-in-amazon-warehouses/>

<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2015/11/11/amazon-in-india-the-e-commerce-jungle-and-workers-reality/>

I write today about my current job for the last 8 months as a driver/courier delivering parcels for Amazon. According to Amazon, I'm an "independent contractor" and self-employed for tax purpose, meaning I have to pay everything from my own pocket, such as petrol, penalty or parking tickets and car insurance, although at the moment, Amazon is offering free extra cover for you during the length of your shift. On average, if I work 5 four-hour



shifts, I end up spending about £30 on petrol, but this can go up if your deliveries are further away.

Getting started

To apply for this job you need to download an app named 'amazonflex', you are required to fill in all the information they need from you like: personal details, driving license, bank details, car insurance, N.I. number - all so they can make a background check on you. After about two weeks you will get the notification that your account is active and you can start to arrange your shifts (or 'blocks' as they call it). The 'blocks' are usually 4 hours long. Sometimes at 8pm in the evening they release blocks of only two hours, which I found out was for re-deliveries of parcels

that had been attempted during the day. But generally, blocks are 4 hours, and the pay rate for them is £52, which is an average of £13 per hour.

Last week, however, was the Amazon Prime week (lasting 4 days from 11th-14th July) and the pay for these 4-hour blocks increased to £60. An email was sent to me some days before letting me know about this promotion: It said there would be more blocks than usual. But I was offered just one block during the whole four-day period, which I accepted, but there were no blocks available at all for the rest of the time, even fewer blocks than previous weeks. Maybe this was because there were already too many drivers for the blocks available - it probably wasn't because the work volume went down or was unexpectedly low because this was a promotional week after all. But when I get these kinds of emails from Amazon, it makes me think that they consider me like an ordinary customer,

the structure and content are more marketing than informative.

Once your account is active and before you can arrange your shifts you are required to watch a training video. This is a series of 16 videos between 2 or 3 minutes long each explaining how the app works, together with how your work will be, for example how to pick up the parcels, how to arrange shifts, what to do if the customer is not at home or you are unable to locate addresses etc...

The videos doesn't really talk about working conditions, only what you have to do. In reality, we have: no assured hours; no holiday and/or sick pay; we don't have a guaranteed minimum amount of shifts and, for me, the worst is that we don't have an agreed amount of parcels we have to deliver on each block - one day managers at the pick-up station can give you 35 parcels to deliver and next day they give you 60 to finish in the same 4 hour block. Also, when the customer is not home you have to mark it as,

"customer not available", then once you finish all your deliveries you are required to go back to the pick-up station to return the undelivered packages. This takes time that I considered as being part of my 4-hour shift. This was apparently not the case but I will talk more in depth about this issue later...

Gearing up for the job

Once you sign up for a block you get a notification an hour before the block starts to remind you that in 60 minutes you start your deliveries. You are then shown your delivery or pick-up station. Once you arrive at the pick-up station, the manager asks you to scan a QR code so that you get paid. This is a new requirement, I never

had to do this before. I asked the manager why and they said the reason was that Amazon had had reports about drivers turning back as soon as they got near the pick-up station so they still got paid, even if they hadn't done any deliveries.

So once you scan that QR code, the manager assigns you a route, that then gets scanned into your app. You can have between 35 to 60 parcels to deliver during your 4-hour shift, which you have to scan in. When you finish you have to let the manager know how many parcels you scanned: sometimes there are big parcels and not everything fits in your car so they want to know how many you take and how many you left.

After this you start your route. Routes are usually close to the pick-up station. I make deliveries in West Drayton, Hounslow, Feltham, Southall, Greenford, Slough, Datchet, Horton, Isleworth, Windor, Uxbridge, Hayes and Heston, which are all within 5 to 25 minutes drive from the pick-up station. Two months back I had many deliveries in an area that were 30-35 minutes away, but I complained. 1 hour of my shift would be wasted if I had to go back to the pick-up station if I had undelivered parcels. I'm not sure if more people complained as well but they haven't sent me that far out again over the last couple of months.

On the road

Once you are on the road you have to follow the Amazon GPS. You have to scan every parcel you deliver before handing it over to the customer or mark it as "customer not available", and in order to do this, it must be within the range of the delivery address. I guess that Amazon wants to make sure you are at the actual address before you do this because otherwise you could just mark it as 'undelivered' as you pleased.

Technology fail

The Amazon GPS works badly. For example, it doesn't warn you about streets with bollards so you have to turn back and find an alternative route for yourself (usually I tap the postcode into Google maps, but once you arrive you have to close Google maps and use Amazon GPS). Sometimes you are 300 yards away and the GPS says "I'm already here", sometimes you are inside the house and the GPS says you're 1 minute away, or I'm delivering multiple parcels in a block of flats, it works fine for the first parcel but not when you want to deliver the second one on another floor. The GPS fails and doesn't let you scan the packages for delivery to the customer. Then I have to call the support team through my app. Usually they are helpful, but not always. It's a bit frustrating when

you are in front of a customer and this happens. Two weeks ago I had an update of the app and now the GPS voice doesn't work, which makes things harder.

I have also received emails telling me that I have missed a block (i.e. shift) when I had not. The app even recognises that I worked that shift so it is interesting that there are glitches like this where information from the app is not received by the company. I wrote back to them and again got the mantra of "termination of contract" as the common threat, despite the fact that I can prove that they are wrong. I don't expect a reply or an apology, and I'm not sure if my emails to them influences my ability to get shifts...

Annoyances

Personally I find one of the worst aspects of the job is that I never know how many parcels I am going to deliver that day - it can be 35 or 60, even if that means that will take longer than the 4-hours scheduled block. Any overtime is unpaid, you only get paid for the 4-hours. At first I was pretty angry with this lack of consistency, but then I went on some forums and figured out that there is one paragraph in the amazonflex app called, "amazonflex program", that states that are you expected to deliver 35-40 parcels in a 6-hour blocks. I complained and showed managers what I had found. I even bought some packages back to the warehouse if I didn't have time to deliver them within the 4-hours. For a few months after this, delivering 40 packages in 4 hours seemed reasonable to them. Recently though, I was given 55 packages. I pointed them again to the guidance in the app, but they had changed it!! That sentence has now been deleted from the app altogether. It seems that they have changed their own policy at will. From now on you are required to deliver the number of parcels they want, no matter how long it takes. I still insisted I would bring parcels back if I don't have time to deliver them, but two days later I got an email from amazonsupport saying that I have to deliver ALL parcels I was assigned, and that if I give back deliveries without attempting them that would lead to the "termination of the program" (interesting choice of language, they do not say termination of contract!)

We have a weekly report from Amazon flex, basically saying how many deliveries we've done during that week, those marked as delivered, as handed over to neighbours or as received by the customer, deliveries after 22:00 (considered as an unsuccessful delivery) or missed blocks etc. Also we get emails if a package was marked as delivered but the customer reports not having received it. Sometimes we have instructions in a footnote like, "leave safely at front porch, behind

wheelie bin or garage". The first week I took back a package back to the depot although it had such a footnote, but it was raining so hard that I decided to bring it back. The manager told me that I should have followed the instructions given. I tried to make them understand that the package could be damaged if I had left it, but the manager kept on insisting he was right. I said I wanted something in writing stating amazon flex team's responsibility in case of damage if I had left it in the rain.

Some time later management complained that an item got damaged after I delivered it to the customer's house and left it at the front door. I got an email threatening me with "termination of contract" this time but there was no information in the email that could tell me when and where this supposed incident happened. This makes me think that these emails are more of a way to put pressure on drivers rather than actually caring about the package getting to the customer and ironing out problems so they won't happen again. I have the feeling amazon use drivers as scapegoats whenever anything goes wrong...

The managers are also trying to pressure me to drop packages with neighbours, in front porches or sheds because they want as many packages to be delivered (i.e. gotten rid off) as possible. It is probably extra work for managers to reschedule packages or maybe they are getting pressured from managers higher up than them that they then pass down to us.

Customers get asked about their delivery online afterwards but it is optional and probably nobody fills it out unless something went wrong with their delivery. They ask customers about the product condition (if it is broken or damaged) and service (if came on the expected date/time), but I have never been told what my stats are, presuming they keep them in relation to individual drivers.

Another issue is around availability of shifts. Once your account is active you can schedule your availability and sometimes you can get blocks in advance. But often it works on a first-come, first-served basis, so you have to act quickly or you may end up with too few shifts.

Once you scan your packages and you are on your own, with no managers controlling or shouting at you, the working environment is not so bad. On the other hand there is not really any chance to build relationships with other delivery drivers. When you go there to pick up your parcels, there is not much time to chat because other drivers need your parking slot. You can sometimes manage to talk to people while we wait for the managers to assign our route, but the truth is that it is difficult to build a relationship because there are always different drivers on each shift. The

closest relationship I have is with the yard marshalls instead of other delivery drivers. I have the feeling of being isolated not having work colleagues anymore, which some people might like but not me. I miss having colleagues who you see more often and can have a bit more confidence in.

This all paints a very bad picture but all in all, compared to other places I have worked (mainly warehouses around west London), it is not so bad. I mean, I have definitely worked worse places! I have the feeling of being used, with no decent

working conditions and having to do what the managers say, and not having any rights to do anything. Amazon can change our way of working or pay without any interference from unions, the government or anybody. It feels like they can do what they want and I only can shut my mouth or just leave. But these feelings were all actually much worse in my other jobs, which just shows how bad things are in general. Currently I receive hardly more than two, three blocks per week, while I have received 4 hour blocks with 78 requested de-

liveries – nearly double as much as during the time when I started working at amazonflex. I have difficulties getting the money for the car insurance together and look for other work.

I hope you find this report interesting about my experience on this called “gig economy” that after some months I call the “giggle economy”.

GERMANY: FOOD DELIVERY WORKERS' STRUGGLE

It was an unusual sight: on the 28th of June in Berlin about 70 Foodora and Deliveroo riders dumped a huge pile of old bike parts on the street in front of the Deliveroo offices in Berlin. This marks the second time the workers of the international start-up companies have taken to the streets in Berlin in their fight for better working conditions. Wearing their distinctive pink and blue uniforms and shouting slogans like “What do we want? Fair wages! When do we want them? Now!”, they were joined in support by members of the general public as they brought their protest right to the companies’ doorstep.

The action was planned by riders from both companies organising within FAU (Free Workers’ Union - a syndicalist style grouping) Berlin since January of this year. As more and more riders are joining the union, they also increasingly coordinate with similar campaigns across Europe, all using the hashtag #deliverunion.

Across the board, they are drawing attention to their precarious working conditions and low wages that are typical for workers in the growing so-called “gig-economy”. Companies like Foodora and Deliveroo are continually trying to save money at their workers’ expense in order to maximize their investor’s profits.

To counter that trend, riders in Berlin have put forth a list of three main demands to the companies. Those demands are first, a wage increase of at least one Euro extra per hour or drop, second, a guaranteed minimum amount of hours or shifts per week, and third, reimbursement for all of their operating costs, such as bike parts, bike wear, and mobile phone costs. It is this last demand in particular that the most recent action was directed at. Workers in both companies are riding their own bikes through the city for hours on end, and use their personal phones and

data for work. On average, the resulting costs - in particular the bicycle-repairs - take more than 10% off their wages. Considering that riders are only making just above minimum wage to begin with, their real earnings are far below the 12 € Deliveroo and Foodora are advertising in their recruitment ads.

In the run up to the protest on Wednesday, Foodora and Deliveroo have been contacted twice by the FAU, who are demanding negotiations on the riders’ behalf. So far, Deliveroo has refused to engage with the union directly. In statements to the press and internal emails to the riders, the



company insists that their workers are being treated fairly. This has sparked growing anger and frustration amongst their riders, who feel that their voices are not being heard. With support from their comrades at Foodora and FAU, they are intent on putting pressure on the management until they agree to come to the negotiating table.

Foodora, on the other hand, seems to be responding to the toll the campaign is taking on their public image. In recent email-communications with FAU Berlin, Foodora have said they are improving the system for shift planning and are trying to come up with a way to compensate for bike repairs. On the morning of the demonstration Foodora agreed to begin negoti-

ations with representatives from the FAU Berlin, and offered two possible dates for a first meeting. This is a victory for the campaign, and the riders are very pleased Foodora seems to finally be taking their demands seriously. As a sign of good faith the action outside of the Foodora office was cancelled, and while the negotiations are ongoing and productive, no further actions will be taken against the company. Nevertheless, the riders will watch the negotiation process closely and not be easily placated by a few minor changes. Foodora have shown willingness to comply with some of our demands - now we need to make sure their words are followed by action! To show our continued vigilance, the protest on Wednesday continued with a large demonstration past the Foodora headquarters in Berlin-Mitte.

If Foodora are willing to come to the negotiation table, we are left to wonder what reason Deliveroo has to refuse not just official negotiations but any form of direct communication with the union. Refusing even to acknowledge their workers’ right to organise, Deliveroo management have repeatedly attempted to downplay their demands and put pressure on them to speak to the management individually. However, not only have individual complaints not yielded any results - they also put riders at risk for losing their jobs.

Despite our continued poor working conditions and Deliveroo’s hostile stance, we are emboldened by the speed at which the #deliverunion-campaign is growing and by the results it has already produced in such a small amount of time. Riders and their comrades at the FAU will continue to stand together in solidarity and push for better working conditions in both companies. “For riders, united, will never be divided!”

<https://deliverunion.fau.org/2017/08/08/deliverunion-is-getting-first-results/#more-192>

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

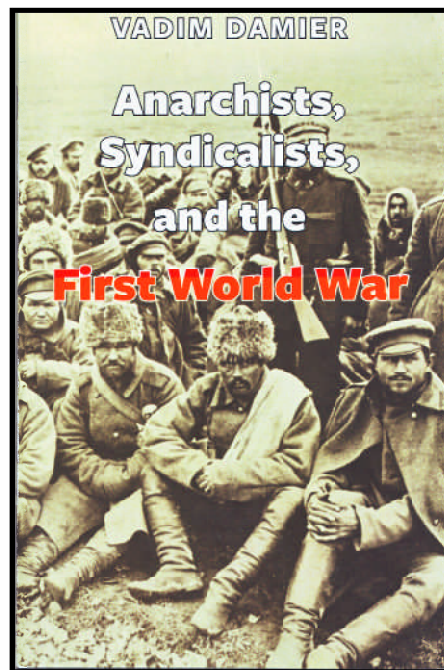
Anarchists, Syndicalists and the First World War by Vadim Damier Published by Black Cat Press. Reassessing The Transnational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies Edited by Constance Bantman and Bert Altena Published by PM Press 2017.

Today we are threatened as never before by the spectre of the eruption of global war. Stemming from major pushes by key sections of the US ruling class for war with China and Russia. Whilst US President Trump is coveting the rare earths and rich mineral wealth of North Korea on behalf of US based mining companies. Tensions between other nuclear weapons equipped powers are increasing elsewhere.

The state of what passes as “revolutionary unionism” is currently in many former heart lands such as France, Spain and Italy in a very poor state. In these countries revolutionary unionism has the look of “micro” allegedly democratic versions of the “corporate-business unions” which wage little in the way of direct action and work within the framework of industrial relations systems often relying on lawyers. Whilst attracted to “red and black” colour schemes and have a nostalgia for long distant mass revolutionary heritages. In other countries in Europe, and elsewhere there is the problem of weird sects and cults fascinated with red and black iconography and often manipulated by the notorious “politicos” heavily influenced by the Stalinist/Trotskyist legacies. Obsessed with political correctness displays and identity politics. Encouraging students/middle class elements to play at activist superheroes/pseudo social workers. Whilst on occasion they do win microscopic victories for tiny handfuls of workers, this activity has no significant impact on the class struggle or challenges the tempo of the employer offensive. They also get drawn into the “smoke and mirrors” performances orchestrated by the union bureaucracy to sellout workers’ struggles. They are also often unwholesomely engrossed in organising so called unions which have largish phone booths as union halls or are completely imaginary. In 3rd World labour movements there maybe new mass syndicalist formations emerging, but so far it is unclear.

Certainly this movement or milieu is incapable of facilitating the internationally coordinated workers direct action and anti-war activity which would meet the new challenge of the path toward war of key forces in global capitalism. Radical measures need to be taken to tackle the problem. In the shape of moving away

from the sects and allegedly micro democratic versions of the corporate business unions into cultivating syndicalist catalysts and associated informal militant networks focusing on key arteries of capitalist economies to facilitate workers large scale direct action and self organisation and turning the tide against the employer offensive and neo-liberal push.



A Dozen Diamonds to Turn the Tide

In contrast to the politicians and sect/cult gurus, the catalyst militant would be heavily drawn into the practicalities of assisting militant workers in the day to day class struggle. Each key militant could potentially be the editor of 2 to 3 workplace papers. So even a dozen could produce quite a network of publications and militants drawn into the work on the job and outside the job. Such media is vital to breaking through atomisation on the job and facilitating collective action. Internet based media would mainly play a supplementary role. Particularly given the atomisation caused by looking at your individual computer. Whilst such militants would encourage scientific processes and research to assist militant activity on the job. This “yeast” will be a key factor in the rise of a syndicalist labour movement in the new time of today.

The “Corporate Unions”

Like the bureaucratic/reformist unions which supported the war effort of various warring states during WWI, today’s “corporate” unions such as the affiliates of the ACTU and its counterparts in other Western countries are certain, to be heavily behind the new war drive. The Corporate unions in Australia like their overseas counterparts are interwoven with the international capitalist “deep state” of the CIA, ASIO, MI5, MI6, etc and local industrial relations rackets and social democratic bureaucracies. Aiding the employer offensive and supporting the constant strengthening of the neo-liberal strong state which will play a key role in repressing workers resistance to the outbreak of war.

Anarchists, Syndicalists and the First World War by Vadim Damier, provides a lot of new and interesting information on revolutionary tendencies in the WWI period.

In the years prior to the cataclysm, there were mass syndicalist union movements with tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of members in many countries which actually did wage direct action on a major scale. Whilst there also existed a significant revolutionary anarchist movement based in the working class. In sharp contrast to the largely lower middle class and student milieu of today. This movement was interwoven with a revolutionary mass media which in certain countries rivalled the circulation of the bourgeois press. Despite this media and influence it was unable to counter the patriotic upsurge in many countries.

The author particularly focuses on one of the most important syndicalist union movements in this era, the French CGT (General Confederation of Labour) with 600,000 to 700,000 members. The author examines how it backed away from launching the General Strike to oppose the war and became drawn into support of the war effort via the “Sacred Union”. However, he fails to adequately discuss the internal factional situation in the CGT, with the “revolutionaries” only ever being a minority of the membership but in the early years exerting wide influence via quirks of the CGT constitution.

In the years immediately prior to WWI, the “reformists” which controlled the largest affiliates downplaying direct action and emphasising the “negotiations” game become predominant, but maintaining “neutrality” from political parties. In this discussion he also throws light on the origins of today’s “Corporate Unions”. Another major reason for this trajectory was the massive patriotic fervour associated with the outbreak of war affecting France, the other Entente powers and the “Central Powers”. The author ably outlines how the

outbreak of war and the associated jingoist upsurge together with state repression made anti-war organising very difficult and caused significant splits in the syndicalist/anarchist movements. It certainly emphasises the profound impact the bourgeois media and cultural/educational set up had in those days, despite a vibrant anti-capitalist workers mass media existing in many countries. The author goes on to outline how massive new grass roots workers' movements mushroomed based on shop steward committees in the UK and Germany later during the conflict due to grievances over conscription and deskilling, and opposition to the union hierarchy's collaboration in the war effort. The author goes on to sketch various generally unsuccessful attempts by resurgent syndicalist and anarchist groups to conduct general strikes and uprisings against the war.

The pamphlet concludes by looking at how alliances developed between Leftwing Anti-War Socialists and Syndicalists, particularly associated with the Zimmerwald Anti-War conference and movement which led to the emergence of the Moscow dominated Communist Parties in the post WWI period. Whilst significant nationalist/patriotic splits erupted in syndicalist and anarchist movements, encouraging syndicalist movements to develop more explicit revolutionary platforms.

***Reassessing The Transnational Turn* Edited by Constance Bantman and Bert Altena.**

This book particularly focuses on the contradictory politics of various syndicalist and anarchist movements and key militants up until the late 1930's and the international networks linking them. Whilst supporting internationalism and the class war in early phases, often sliding into support for nationalism and racialist identity politics informed conceptions in different phases.

One of the most interesting and disturbing essays in the volume is "*Mother Spain, We Love You!*" *Nationalism and Racism in Anarchist Literature during the Spanish Civil (1936-1939)* by *Martin Baxmeyer*. He focuses on the tremendous shift toward nationalism in anarchist literature and racial identity politics during the Civil War. Despite in the pre war years, anarchist-nationalism being a very tiny

current. The author refers to the cases of Progres Autonomista which tried to link anarchism to nationalism (Catalan) to oppose the Central Spanish State and Savador Canovas Cervantes another anarchist nationalist who became a staff member of the CNT (National Confederation of Labour - anarcho-syndicalist union movement) mass circulation "Solidaridad Obrera" daily newspaper during the Civil War. The author sees this nationalist orientation associated with the anarchist/syndicalist movement eg the CNT and the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) in Spain being drawn into defence of the Republican/Popular Front State and war effort. Moving sharply away from its traditional commitment to the revolution-



ary project and class war. He fails to examine how this trajectory was connected with the failure of the CNT to develop a revolutionary political strategy based on a workers councils state in the years immediately preceding the Civil War. Stemming from it being swept up in an insurrectionary cycle encouraged by ultra radical militants associated with the Barcelona based FAI and suffering massive state repression. Consequently the CNT/FAI were drawn into collaboration with the Republican State. Whilst he sees a possible major contributory factor requiring further research being the impact of the curriculums of the rationalist/anarchist school movement in encouraging nationalist conceptions.

Other essays of less interest are "*A Networking Historian*": *The Transnational, the National, and the Patriotic in and around Max Nettlau's Geschichte der Anarchie* by *Bert Altena*. The authors examines the contradictions which developed in Nettlau's views. Whilst he supported cosmopolitan anarchism and collaborated with a range of militants on the international scale with his historical research. In his later years he moved toward supporting a Greater Germany.

Another interesting essay is "*Dangerous Liaisons of Belle Epoque*": *Anarchist Internationalism and Nationalism in the*

French Anarchist Movement (1880-1914) by *Constance Bantman*. It discusses a small group of prominent militants such as Louise Michel, Jean Grave, Emile Pouget and Charles Molarto. Probably the most important being Pouget who as a journalist and editor played an important role in encouraging many anarchists to move toward promoting syndicalism in the French labour movement. All these militants were drawn into positions which contradicted basic anarchist principles of internationalism. The outbreak of WWI and the associated upsurge in patriotic fervour encouraged by the bourgeois media particularly played an important role in the dis-orientation of Jean Grave and Charles Molarto resulting in their support of the Entente powers.

Another key figure in international anarchism in the years leading up to WWI and onwards discussed in the volume is Peter Kropotkin in "*Kropotkin's Theory of the State*": *A Transnational Approach* by *Ruth Kinna*. Like the above two militants he was also drawn into support of the Entente Powers during WWI. Kinna examines Kropotkin's analysis of the State particularly focusing on its monopolising role and link to capitalist patterns of ownership. The instability of the international state system he saw as encouraging a popular anti-state movement, however in the years after the outbreak of WWI, a renewed nationalist upsurge occurred. His support for the Entente powers the author argues particularly stemmed from his opposition to Prussian militarism.

In conclusion, the pamphlet and book under review certainly show the great problems and opportunities for organising presented by the outbreak of major war. Particularly the difficulty in combating the impact of the capitalist media/cultural and educational setups in encouraging patriotic upsurges, spreading disorientation amongst key militants and departure from the class struggle orientation. Whilst the hazards of waves of state repression during war time are highlighted. These publications certainly emphasise the importance of building an internationally coordinated mass syndicalist union movement to oppose the current war drive and fight international capitalism generally.

Mark McGuire

Valeriano Orobón Fernández

A short biography of Valeriano Orobón Fernández, widely regarded as one of the great figures of Spanish

anarchosyndicalism, emphasizing his role as an advocate of the Workers Alliance in the early 1930s, written by a former leader of the Asturian CNT.

Orobón Fernández and the Workers Alliance – Ramón Álvarez Palomo

Valeriano Orobón Fernández has left deep traces of his passage through the international workers movement. Max Nettlau and Rudolf Rocker felt that he exhibited inestimable qualities of talent and revolutionary vision. Few of the authors of the

militant workers movement can compare with him as a writer. If we abide by the authoritative assessment of Manuel Buenacasa, a founder of the CNT and the leading libertarian historian, after Anselmo Lorenzo, only Quintanilla might be a candidate for such a comparison, because of his vast knowledge and exceptional skills as a writer and public speaker. Orobón Fernández was undoubtedly the most powerful factor in the miracle performed by the Madrid CNT when it put an end to the monopoly of parliamentary socialism in the Spanish capital.

No militant of the “old CNT”, as it is often contemptuously called by persons lacking in historical knowledge and discernment, can be unaware of the enormous amount of effective activity in which Orobón engaged during the years of the Second Republic within the ranks of the Madrid CNT, participating in public meetings and writing articles for *La Tierra*, a combative journal whose contributors included some of the greatest figures of confederal journalism—Eduardo de Guzmán, José García Pradas, Ezequiel Enderiz—and for the pages of CNT, an official daily newspaper of the National Confederation of Labour, led by another great libertarian intellectual—Avelino G. Mallada—who, like Valeriano, has most regrettably fallen into oblivion.

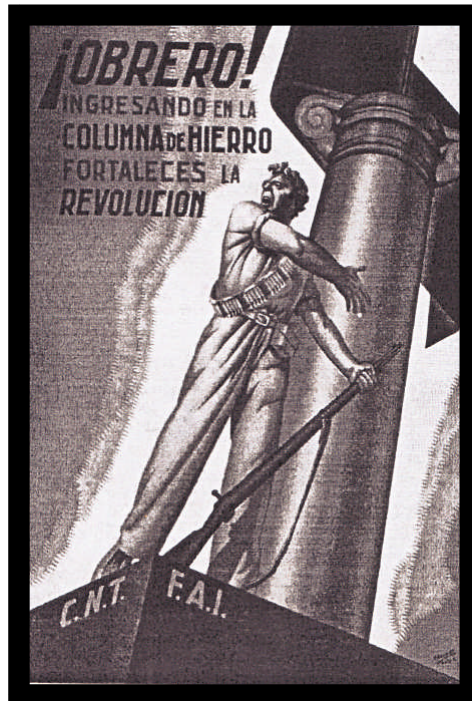
When I first met Orobón, the Spanish Republic of 1931 was on the threshold of a political crossroads. Socialism emerged penitent and seriously weakened by its many years of Ministerial collaboration, with a truly discouraging result for the politicians, and a truly tragic result for the working class, which was unable to satisfy any of its legitimate and urgent demands.

Working class unemployment, far from declining, rose to unprecedented levels, and talk of hunger was not just demagogic rhetoric. In the meantime, Capitalism, led by elements like Juan March, accurately characterized as the “Pirate of the Mediterranean” by Benavides in a popular book, as well as the reactionary generals, who had been relegated to reserve status at full pay in accordance with a decree issued by the Minister of War, Manuel Azaña, openly and with rare insolence conspired against the new regime.

It can be admitted, as an element of analysis already employed by bourgeois historians, that the popular protests and the subsequent mass strikes led by the Confederation hastened the fall of the Republic, which was in any event inevitable, once the elections of November 1933 were announced, in which all the former allies of the past ran their candidates in isolation from one another. Republicans and socialists used the election to accuse each other of being responsible for the failure of the

government, a government rich in academic discourses yet too timid to adopt the measures of an economic, social and military character that the change of course in our history demanded.

The CNT, at its National Plenum of Regional Committees held in Madrid on October 30 and the first few days of November, resolved in favor of waging a vigorous campaign for electoral abstention, seeking to expose the grave errors of the republicans and socialists who, under threat from the right, governed the country against the basic interests of the working class, which had voluntarily joined the battles that the CNT had unleashed in order to escape the dead end of poverty, since the UGT was linked with republican



politics because its leaders held high level positions in government Ministries. Largo Caballero, the General Secretary of the UGT, was the Minister of Labour and used his position in the Cabinet to implement a sectarian and discriminatory labour policy, provoking endless conflicts in an attempt to force the CNT to accept the rulings of the famous Mixed Commissions that he had created. Without prejudice to our convictions in favour of a workers alliance, we must add to the historical explanation for the causes of the civil war the obvious fact of the arbitrary and humiliating laws passed by the republican parliament with the intention of dismantling the CNT in favour of the General Workers Union.

It is painful to recall the systematic and brutal repression exercised in the political process of the joint republican-socialist regime, although it might seem like child's play compared with the methods of extermination applied by Franco after his victory. But historical imperatives oblige us

to faithfully depict the image of the era, regardless of the psychological repercussions it might have on the minds of numerous Spaniards born since then and therefore practically ignorant of the truth contained in the painful accounts of those of us who in spite of everything consider ourselves to have been privileged to have lived through these tragic moments in the life of the country, participating in events that have necessarily been influential in the forward march of the world's peoples.

There is no doubt that the Spanish reactionaries were treated with kid gloves by the Republic, for the implicit and naive purpose of attracting capitalism, and its armed appendage, the army, towards the road of a more enlightened understanding, seeking in this way to reduce the likelihood of a “pronunciamiento” that those of us who were militants in the CNT saw as inevitable in the near future. In fact, however, it was obvious that the fascist forces were preparing to seize power with the support of the Church and the ruling oligarchy.

The caballerista [pro-Caballero] faction of the Spanish socialist party began to lose interest in the game of mainstream politics and instead waged a propaganda campaign based on revolutionary rhetoric, and drew closer to the analytical conclusions of the libertarian movement, which was also preparing for an armed conflict that it saw as inevitable in view of the overall situation of Spanish society. An army that was practically in a state of open mutiny against the orders of the government; suspicious comings and goings on the part of right wing elements, involving countries that would later aid the military uprising; brazen conspiracies in which military and political figures participated, which symbolized revanchist sentiments and the hope of restoring the dictatorship.

There was a very close mutual understanding between the militants of the CNT and the militants of Spanish anarchism—the most realistic of whom were members of the international movement—in their shared assessment that the process of revolutionary maturation had reached its culmination, but we did not have the same views concerning which method was appropriate for confronting the situation, in such a way that the working class would be victorious in the upcoming test of force that was becoming increasingly more obvious and more imminent.

The Regional Confederation of Labour of Asturias, León and Palencia, after having given careful consideration to the question, as always—which conferred a greater effectiveness on its decisions—clearly asserted that the detonator that would inevitably set in motion the mechanism of the

See Page 20

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most explosive news lately has been the announcement in May by the NSW Govt. of the proposed privatisation of inner west STA bus routes and depots. In this edition of RW we throw new light on the bogus campaign waged by the Union, Greens and ALP hierarchy on the issue. We provide reports on some of the "circuses" for the purpose of election stunts they have organised. (See article page 5.)

A new movement has sprung up to wage a serious fight against the Govt's inner west bus privatisation push. It's called STOP (Sydney Transport-users Opposed to Privatisation). Its drawing into its orbit the grass roots of many groups. At the recent Hunters Hill Festival STOP distributed thousands of flyers and received a great reception from locals. The heat was put on the Libs who are worried about upcoming council elections. A clash developed between a group of Libs and STOP supporters, when the Libs were confronted over removing STOP flyers. (See Article Page 7.)

An area where there has been little attention by the mainstream media is the Sydney Trains and NSW Trains Enterprise Bargain Agreement 2017 negotiations. The union hierarchy has been brazenly lying about these negotiations and is preparing a major sellout of workers' jobs and conditions with the new EBA. The ASN is assisting militants to break out of the 2.5% pa pay rise cap being imposed by the NSW Govt. and foil moves to privatise the railways. (See article page 3.)

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 café, library or cinema. Your assistance on the financial plane is also welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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www.rebelworker.org

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SPARKS

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

SPARX

DIRECT ACTION
FIRE FIGHTERS' PAPER.
Sparx@firehouse.com.

Members Voice

Grassroots NSW Public Transport
Workers Organisation
Web Site:
Users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice
Email: Membersvoice2010@yahoo.com
Facebook.com/pa
www.face.com/pa
ges
Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-Group/531240043571323?fref=ts

Grassland Infoshop

207B Nicholson St.
Footscray
3011 Vic.

STOP "Sydney Transport-users Opposed to Privatisation"

PO Box 703
Leichhardt 2040.

Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

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

If undeliverable, return to
PO Box 92 Broadway NSW 2007

Continued From Page 18

struggle between the proletariat and the most advanced elements of liberalism, on the one side, and fascism backed by the “nation’s backbone”, as the army was later called, would be the outcome of the elections scheduled to be held in November 1933.

With this eventuality in mind and under the express mandate of the authorized representative institutions of the CNT of Asturias, we expressed our view at the National Plenum of Regional Confederations that, as our first and most essential task, we must try to fruitfully influence the political formulations of the leaders of Spanish socialism who are most influential in the political orientation of the General Workers Union and who, like Largo Caballero, were threatening to proclaim the revolution. According to the proposal we made at the Plenum, it was absolutely necessary for us to rapidly organize, on a national scale, a public campaign, by way of public meetings and rallies—in which the most capable and prestigious militants would participate—and by way of our press, with the collaboration of the most brilliant and accomplished writers of the Spanish libertarian movement, to con-

vince the parliamentary socialists, and especially the workers enrolled in the UGT, who were clearly frustrated with the results of two years of socialist participation in government, that the only way to save themselves was to employ force against the aggression that was being planned by our enemies. We also urged that we should seize the initiative and take measures to abort the ongoing preparations of fascism. The majority of the Asturian confederal militants were certain that concerted and energetic action on the part of the proletariat of both national trade union confederations, even if not completely victorious, would prevent the army from synchronizing its plans and choosing the most favourable moment for launching its extermination operation.

I think that any impartial observer can now see just how right we were.

The revolutionary strategy that was instead adopted at that memorable Plenum, despite the relentless efforts of the Asturian delegation, considered any kind of cooperation with the UGT to be vulgar “reformism” at a time when we were ready and willing to establish libertarian communism. In any case, if the socialists, as we [Asturians] claimed, were inclined to conquer at the barricades what they had so

resoundingly lost at the voting booth, then the alliance would be opportune and advantageous; the other delegates to the Plenum were content with unanimously proclaiming that we would then join with them, in the streets.

Such manifestations of confidence in our power contained more than a little unwarranted arrogance, although not as much as we would have to witness a few years later, and also now, since the end of the civil war. But that is material for another history.

No one except Valeriano Orobón Fernández wanted to listen to our speeches that were inspired by the intention of convincing our listeners, warning them of the danger the working class would incur by squandering its opportunities and wasting the precious patrimony of energies, which had been built up by the CNT, on necessarily limited subversive uprisings, without trying to win over to our views a force to be reckoned with like the one represented by the General Workers Union [the UGT], and precisely at the historical moment when this fraternal working class organization was coming closer to our strategic interpretation, and thus considerably increasing the chances of a proletarian victory. *To be continued*

Association of Revolutionary Unionists Proposal

Fellow Workers:

The Boston Labor Solidarity Committee proposes the formation of an Association of Revolutionary Unionists. The association would provide space for the exchange of ideas; coordinate activities where feasible; promote working class-wide solidarity; promote workplace organizing; advocate for direct action; encourage rank-&-file activism and democratic procedures in all unions; engage in labor support; and undertake educational programs.

It has been suggested that the Anarcho-Syndicalist Review function in some manner in the creation and activities of the association. This would have to be discussed with the editorial collective of the ASR.

The members of the BLSC are all former IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) members who are unhappy with the turn the IWW has taken since its centennial in 2005. We remain committed to the principles of industrial unionism. (Prior membership in the IWW is of course not a requirement for membership in the BLSC

or the proposed association.) We actively supported the IBEW/CWA strikes against the Verizon corporation last year and this year’s UNITE/HERE food service workers’ strike against Harvard University and are currently supporting the CWA AT&T actions. We’ve put on several public educational programs and have marched on May Day and at many other mass demonstrations during the current political season.

We welcome your response to this proposal. Please feel free to pass it on to others who might be interested.

Responses should be sent to:

Boston Labor Solidarity Committee

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