

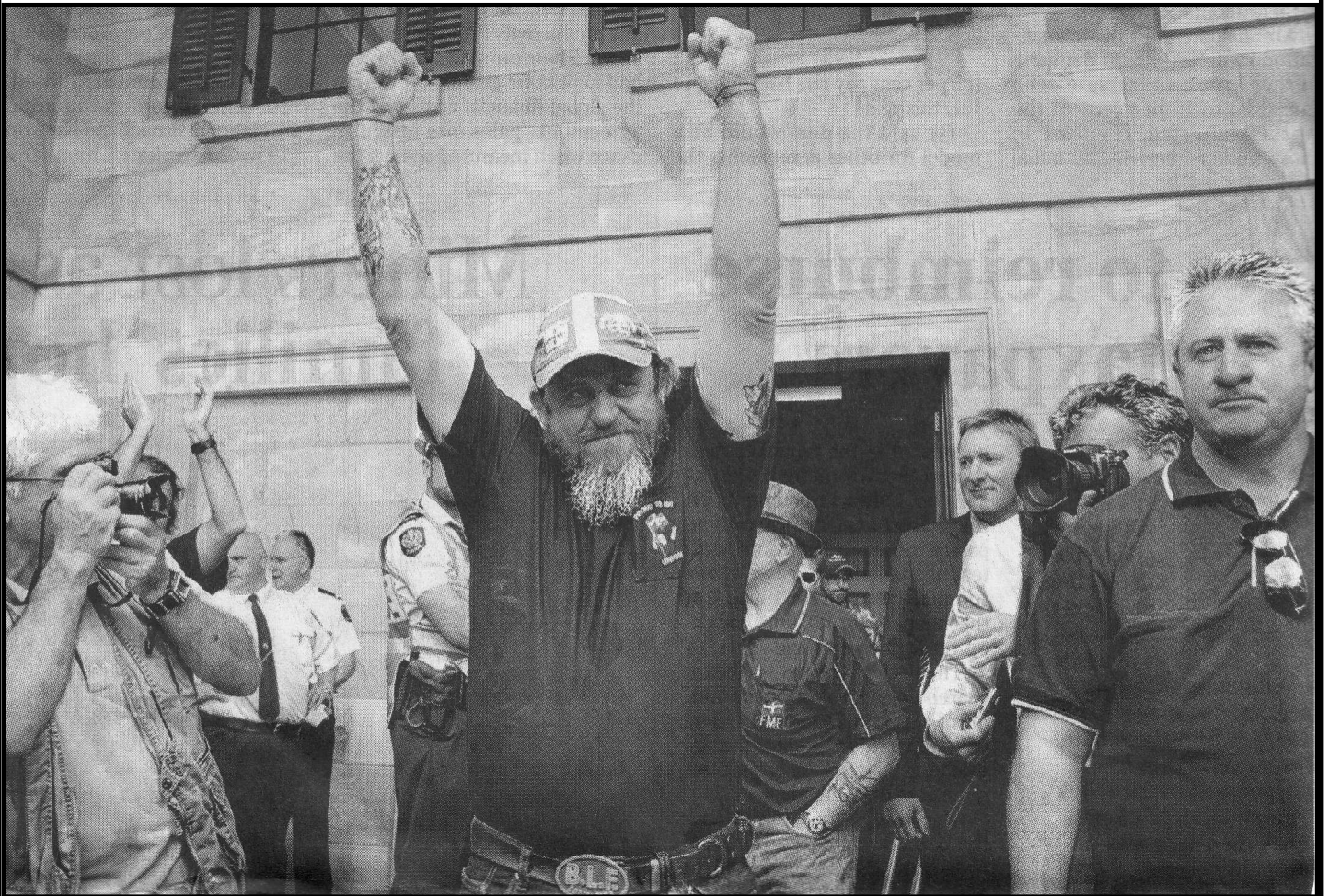
REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia
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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

DESPITE THE ARK TRIBE VICTORY - GILLARD ALP GOVT. DETERMINED TO RETAIN THE REPRESSIVE POWERS OF IT'S BUILDING INDUSTRY WATCH DOG (A.B.C.C.)!



NATIONAL NEWS; VICTORIAN NEWS; N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS;
STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS;
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN NEWS; MARITIME TRANSPORT NEWS;
WORK IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH; N.Z. LABOUR NEWS; BRITAIN
TODAY; CANADIAN WILDCAT STRIKE; BRAZILIAN SYNDICALISM;
BOOK REVIEW CORNER; NEWS & NOTES; PLUS MORE!

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.

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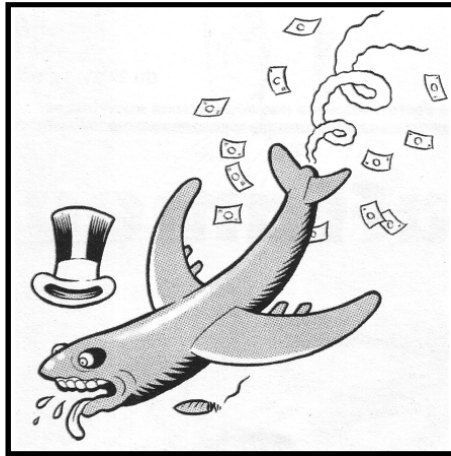
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ans of all political hues to regulate that small section of society that through their ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange dominates the political agenda in this country.

When the government of the day no longer



represents the will of the people and the institutional structures that have been forged to represent their interests are incapable of putting the interests of the people they represent ahead of the interests of unaccountable corporations, the scene is set for radical revolutionary change. Whether this occurs tomorrow or in a decade's time is irrelevant. What is relevant is the forces that are unleashed when people lose faith in a system that has been created to represent their interests are strong enough to sweep aside those institutions, political structures and corporations who have, through their actions, usurped the will of the people.

It is sad it has taken forty years for people to begin to acknowledge it took a disaster that had a profound impact on the lives of thousands for occupational safety to be taken seriously in Australia.

What was extraordinary about the collapse and the Royal Commission that was held to find answers for the disaster was the way the wives and children of those killed and injured were treated. Workers in Australia in 1970 in an era when workplace safety regulations were almost non-existent were treated as little more than disposable commodities. Their families were, to a significant degree, left to fend for themselves.

In all the "celebratory" stories about the 40th Anniversary of, the West Gate disaster nobody in the fourth estate raised the role the death of these men played in the radicalisation of the Trade Union Movement. The Builders Federation militancy was, to a significant degree, due to the West Gate Bridge collapse. The Royal Commission into the disaster apportioned blame for the disaster but didn't make major recommendations about improving workplace safety and improving the lot of the husbands, wives and children of those injured and killed in workplace accidents.

That impetus didn't come from employers, government or Royal Commissions, it came from unions in Victoria and other parts of Australia taking a more militant stand. The tragedy today is the actions that were taken to improve people's working conditions and the compensation paid to injured workers and workers who died and their families have now been declared illegal. It is illegal to strike in Australia except outside workplace bargaining agreement negotiations. Workers can be fined and jailed for striking, unions can be bankrupted and deregistered. With union membership down to 12% and a rank and file that's more interested in job security than working conditions, it is highly likely it will take another disaster of the proportions of the West Gate Bridge tragedy to awake Gulliver in Lilliput.

Thanks to

the Anarchist Age

National News

DOUBT!!

Anybody who still believes the removal of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister by some of the most powerful corporations on this planet for trying to introduce a piddling super profit resources tax on the mining sector was an aberration, only has to look at the behaviour of the banking sector to realise where real power lies in this country.

Power in Australia does not, as most people assume, lie in parliament. Ultimate political authority in Australia is not exercised by the people through their political representatives in parliament, it is exercised in the boardrooms of major corporations whose primary concern is to maximise profits for their major shareholders irrespective of the human, social or environmental costs.

The complete and utter disdain shown by the big four banks to the entreaties of the government of the day to not increase interest rates beyond the level raised by the Reserve Bank Board highlights the unwillingness and inability of parliamentari-

FORTY YEARS TOO LATE

Melbourne's West Gate Bridge collapsed 40 years ago on the 17th October 1970. This year, unlike most years, the thirty five men who died in the bridge collapse and those who survived were publicly remembered.

Rebel Worker
Web Site:
www.rebelworker.org

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

EBA 2010 and the Democratic Challenges Ahead

Crimson Coconut

With resounding endorsement from the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) Leadership it was announced in a bulletin that 90% of voting members had voted to agree to the latest EBA 2010 which will cover them for the next 4 years. If this is true the membership has spoken loudly and accepted without question whole basis of the EBA. There are however huge reservations over these quoted figures. Some anecdotal evidence suggest that the vote at some locations was much closer than that.

In Wollongong for example just over 50% voted to accept the EBA. Similar figures were reported from some other venues. The Leadership claim in the bulletin that close to 4000 rail staff attended the 84 presentations held around the State. That's an average of 47.6 people attending each meeting. Those figures appear highly unlikely when you

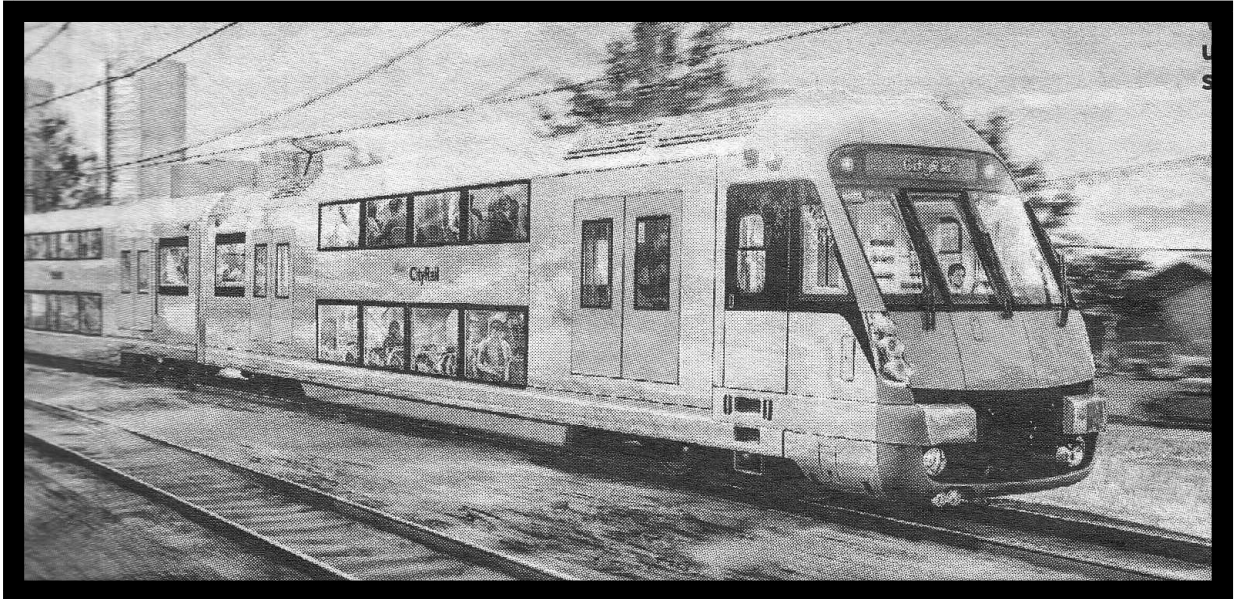
take into account the demographics of the RailCorp workforce. The way briefings and voting took place we just can't tell for sure what the real figures were.

In past EBA briefing sessions some areas were lucky to get half a dozen people attending. Also this time many suburban and outer suburban stations have less staff after the last EBA, making it more difficult to attend meetings. If they attended in their own time this would mark a dramatic shift from the past when it was difficult to get staff to attend anything in their own time, (understandable in the circumstances) even if they were being paid for it.

The biggest problem we have as members is verifying the figures quoted, without taking RailCorp Management's word for it. The process is very controlled from start to finish. I have been told that at some venues banners declared that a "yes" vote

would get you a pay rise of 14.5% over 4 years. This is not in dispute. What was not raised effectively by Management or the union hierarchy is the massive open ended reform process that the EBA locks members into over the next 4 years.

What also is not in dispute is the very undemocratic nature of the EBA process from start to finish and the voting methods employed. From its inception, starting with the formulation of the log of claims by the unions, which bore no resemblance to the issues that members faced on the job day in and day out, the process was flawed. From that point on there was little input from the ranks of members. Their opinions were neither sought nor heeded. On some occasions during negotiations it was a



month between bulletins, which were the preferred method of communication with members.. In the finish the negotiation committee just gave up after they could not make any ground against RailCorp management on their paltry log of claims.

The only time that members were consulted at all was for the vote to take industrial action - which was overwhelmingly endorsed by members. This was however prematurely ended as a option without any consultation at all. Therein lay the seed of failure of the negotiation. Members, if mobilised, do have the power to change the balance in their own favour. However the Union Leadership never saw this a an option at any stage.

The fact that engineers and administration staff were voting on station staff and train crew EBA's (and vice versa) is totally undemocratic. The issues for each of these groups within RailCorp are different.

What was the point of making separate sections in each of these groups EBA's if voting for these disparate grouping was lumped in together as comprehensive agreement?

Members must insist that this never happens again. All future EBA's and any other decisions which effect the entire workforce must be decided by secret ballot after a mass meeting of members where the issues are discussed and questions asked and answered. Each sector within RailCorp should be entitled to vote on their own applicable EBA. That is the nature of enterprise bargaining. However there is no compulsion for different craft groups to be voting on a raft of different agreements that don't pertain to them. If

there is a generic agreement applicable to all of the craft groups across the board then that would be a far better democratic outcome even if this is less than ideal.

If costs are quoted as excuse for not holding a secret ballot then we must complain that this is a small price to pay for democracy. These costs are paid for by RailCorp. However I suspect the cost for the briefing process with travelling expenses, hall hire, overtime, and accommodation would have cost more than any secret ballot.

A "yes" vote by members, whatever the margin, is not necessarily a ringing endorsement for the reform process proposed by management nor a ringing support of the tactics employed by the Combined Unions.

Now that the decision has been made we expect our Union Leaders to halt the worst aspects of the reform process. It is clear

that during the EBA process union members were opposed to any trade-offs for the pay rises, yet were ignored by their leadership. The new year does hold the opportu-

nity for change in this regard with the election of new worker representatives, who, with your endorsement, will be truly repre-

sentative of members aspirations. Please consider your vote carefully and help us oppose changes which worsen our working conditions or work load.

A CRITIQUE OF RAILCORP ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT 2010

We urge members to vote NO on EBA 2010 and call on the RTBU office and RailCorp to restart negotiations and formulate a new EBA that involves all union members.

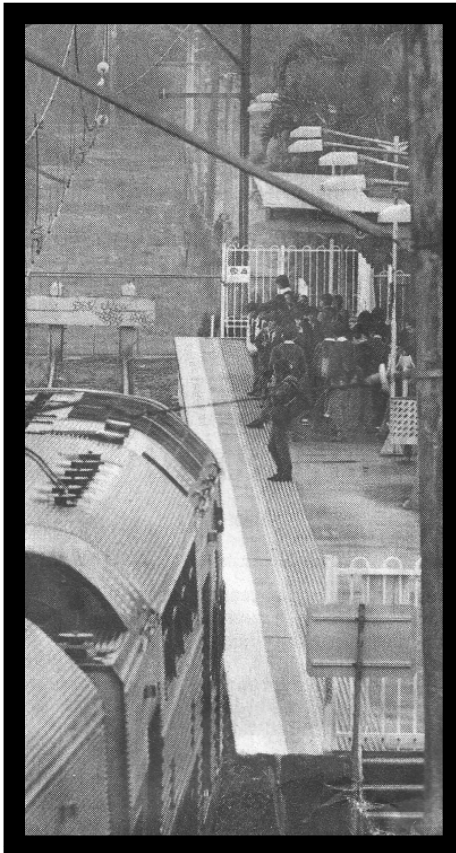
Here are some reasons for rejecting the current proposal:

1. It gives a free hand to the employer to make open-ended and unlimited "reforms" such as cuts in jobs and conditions to cover the cost of our pay rise.
2. It has taken more than 8 months to negotiate a second-rate deal yet members will get just 2 weeks to mull over the contents of a document that is 210 pages long and legally binding for the next 4 years.
3. Consultation on the EBA with union members has been poor or non-existent.
4. The campaign of industrial action, overwhelmingly endorsed by a majority of members in a recent ballot, was called off by the RTBU officials without explanation. We have enormous industrial power yet it is not being utilised by the RTBU leadership. Why not?
5. The proposed wage increases are unlikely to keep up with inflation meaning a cut in real wages. The Reserve Bank's promise to continually raise interest rates is likely to erase any benefits of a 4%/3.5% wage rise.
6. The voting process, which is across divisions, is highly undemocratic as it covers salaried employees, train controllers, station management, tradespersons, CountryLink, clerical administrative, train crews, station staff and signalers. They are covered by separate divisional agreements but have all been lumped into one agreement for the purposes of the ballot. Minority groups in smaller divisions would have less say over their own award as larger divisions such as train crew and station staff would be voting on their award as well.
7. Section 13 commits all who sign to changes in work practices likely to save RailCorp money. It includes a restructure

of the Service Delivery division. For instance the operations division containing train crewing will have their rostering conditions and work depots changed.

8. The proposed no extra claims provision means that we will not be compensated for any changes in our workload or working conditions. However this does not apply to RailCorp management who will be able to change wage rates and working conditions. Productivity improvements and work intensification means bigger bonuses for RailCorp bosses.

9. The redundancy provision for "excess" employees, i.e. those of us who get



shafted, is not spelt out in the agreement. The EBA instead states that this is now covered by the revised HR policy which is not part of the EBA. It would appear that the redundancy provisions have been watered down by HR. While such basic rights reside with RailCorp rather than being expressed in an award they can be

changed at any time without any consultation with the RTBU. One day's leave is allowed to seek other employment if you are given the boot. Good luck!

10. The EBA endorses "managerial prerogative", which gives your manager the power to make changes as he sees fit. This also extends to direct appointment as the "preferred and predominant employment option". Corruption and cronyism are likely to flourish if this EBA is endorsed by members.

11. Section 25 commits the operations division, including station staff to another round of staff reviews and their resulting job losses. According to the EBA the dates, duration and areas of operation have already been agreed upon by rail and union management.

There are numerous other changes -far too many to mention in a one page document. We suggest that you read the whole document as it replaces your award for years to come. Union management and RailCorp have failed to produce an EBA to protect rail workers' conditions or advance our cause. Instead the EBA, if endorsed, will lock us into a downward spiral of cost cutting measures and penny pinching which will further degrade our work life. Vote NO to stop this from becoming reality and demand real action from our union officials.

Members' Voice is an active and growing collection of rank and file public transport trade unionists who believe that the RTBU leadership is not fighting for workers on the job. The lack of democracy in the decision making process, the failure to consult and the lack of will by the union hierarchy to confront the employer leaves workers on the job vulnerable. Members' Voice is working to change the balance of power back in favour of workers by confronting management and weak kneed union officials. We are currently assembling a ticket to contest the union elections due in February 2011 where we hope to replace the current RTBU officials with rank and file workers off the job. To find out more about Members' Voice please visit:

Http://users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/membersvoice or email us at membersvoice2010@yahoo.com for more info.

The Waratah Public Private Partnership (PPP) Will It Succeed or Fail?

The Waratah PPP Deal would have to be one of world's most foolish crooked deals ever done in the history of any Government operated railways in the world today. In NSW all previous rolling stock was funded by Govt/Tax Payer funding. All built to strict exacting standards demanded by the then Chief Mechanical Engineer's Design Office with the exception of the Tangara which all true railwaymen know as the "Tangarbage" due to stupid design.

As is well known the NSW Govt wishes to replace all non air conditioned L,R and S sets by 2012, but due to the shonky PPP

deal signed over to Downer EDI /RELIANCE RAIL for 626 Chinese built double deck suburban cars stipulated a regular delivery schedule. At least 3, 8-car sets were to have been in service by December 2010. However, only one 4 car and one 8 car train are used and that is only for Test Purposes. None of these cars are internally fitted out.

The rather dubious quality of these Chinese-built trains with their 10% crash safety crumple design has thrown RailCorp engineers into safety mode with the Chinese manufacturer insisting its product in progress is safe.

The NSW Govt. has not paid productivity allowances to Reliance Rail resulting in a very shaky relationship between Reliance Rail and the 4 major banking corporations who are all exploring legal and political avenues to terminate the PPP deal. If they are successful, this will almost certainly see the demise of the PPP deal Downer EDI/Reliance Rail and the present NSW

State Government. The NSW tax payers will be left to fund the billions of dollars required to terminate the contract. The reparation money will be extracted from us all, by further steep hikes in Government charges for its goods and services. The NSW ALP Govt. will almost certainly self destruct at next year's election resulting in an even more draconian form of NSW Govt. in the form of a Coalition run Government. Elected by the masses, who don't stop to think that there are more alternatives, than just the ALP or the Coalition. I ask all of you, especially RailCorp employees to consider the political ramifications of either a new NSW Coalition or an already stale ALP Govt. As either party will only further decimate the NSW Government Railways.

By

The Transport Scrutinizer

STATE TRANSIT NEWS FLASH

Rebel Worker: What's the situation with the union rep at Port Botany Depot?

Waverley Busie: Complaints have been received that the union rep isn't doing his job properly. Particularly in regard to cleaners, casuals and other staff at the depot, management has been allowed to get away with bullying them. Involving following them around and putting their jobs under a microscope. The union rep has failed to take any action to curb this behaviour. A good union rep would have a finger on the pulse and be aware of such problems and stir up and encourage the grass roots to take action to curb it.

Chris Mansergh who was elected as union rep at the depot several years back and was subsequently sacked, as he was a defenceless trainee, was much more effective. He took account of the concerns of the grass roots and held numerous yard meetings to discuss issues raised by the grass roots. The bosses in their short sightedness failed to realise that an effective union rep like Chris is an asset on the job, not a liability. The current union rep at Pt Botany gives the impression of being an industrial weakling and whilst basking in cushy union shifts, allows management to throw sand at him. He is like someone wearing one of those T-Shirts which give the illusion of fake pronounced muscles at the front.

RW: What's news on the environmental front?

WB: Recycling remains a low priority of management in the STA. Higher levels of Govt appear to be failing to put pressure on their STA underlings to take effective action. In stark contrast to Governments in such countries as Germany which are very serious about recycling. Cans and bottles

cutting. Some time ago an environmental group did an environmental audit on the STA, but little notice was taken by the bosses. Most workers want to see a greater environmental concern in the STA but the bosses won't listen.

RW: What's happening on the road?

WB: We are continuing to have the problem of push bikes, scooters and taxis running in bus lanes, slowing our trips. Particularly Oxford Street at peak hour is



are still being thrown away in the depots rather than being collected and channelled for recycling. Despite the STA giving the impression of an emphasis on environmental issues with its operation of gas buses, environmental sustainability remains a low priority. There are no signs around on recycling. The STA isn't serious. There major priority remains budget

affected. You have a highly dangerous situation of apparently back packers weaving in and out of traffic on push bikes. The police are failing to address this issue. It's important to get push bikes into back streets and to ride in car lanes. Whilst taxis constantly pull up in bus lanes. We are also continuing to have problems with pedestrians walking in front of buses at intersec-

tions in Bondi Junction. The STA needs to sit down with the police to tackle these issues. One way forward on the issue would be for police to monitor the busiest intersections in Bondi Junction. So far nothing has happened. We don't want to kill anyone on the road. Already this year there have been several cases of Waverley depot buses clipping pedestrians who were listening to their mobiles or walkmans and totally unaware of buses in the Bondi Junction surrounds.

RW: What's the situation with the mechanics?

WB: The bosses are moving to outsource part of their work. On the road bus maintenance is being handed over to a private company to perform. It includes the morning peak hour maintenance van and the tow truck. As a result, the mechanics can't get out and mix with drivers and have to stay in the depot yard and the variety in their work is being diminished.

The mechanical section has also been hard hit by management corner cutting with now only one mechanic in the workshops on Sundays. Previously there were always 2 mechanics posted on a shift. How will the one mechanic cope with wiper problems on many buses during wet weather and overheated air conditioning and engines on buses during hot weather? Are we to call the Waverley Ghost mechanic?

RW: What are your thoughts on drivers' wages?

WB: An interesting fact is that in 2004, Australia had the highest per capita of overtime worked in the Western industrialised world. I've noticed in the buses that over the years we are working ever longer hours to cope with rising prices. Consequently we are often dead tired and exhausted after a day's work. We are urgently in need of a decent wage rise to cope with rising rents in Sydney. Whilst bus drivers wages are roughly the same interstate, the rents are much higher in Sydney. In this city you are looking at paying say \$500 pw for a two bedroom unit whilst in Brisbane for a hell of a lot better place the rent is only \$350pw. I believe an important explanation for the spiralling rent increases in NSW is that the Real Estate Institute is paying off both major parties to go along with their agenda. Recently the Liberal Party was caught out receiving electoral donations from a developer, despite exceeding the deadline for the banning of these donations. Latest news is that donations to the major political parties from the alcohol, tobacco and gambling sectors has been banned. The weakness of the current ALP NSW Govt. Must be seen in the context of the ALP's reliance on donations from lobby groups.

Additionally the STA is splurging its budget on the free 555 city bus service and the \$2.50 each weekend family ticket. These are good ideas in regard to encouraging patronage of public transport, but they cut into the budget monies which could provide us with a decent pay rise. Needed to meet the rising cost of living in Sydney,

RW: What's the latest in regard to management policy toward accidents?

WB: Some important news is that the bosses recently sacked a driver after having 4 accidents of which one only was caused by himself. They have breached the policy that has existed for many years that after 4 accidents a driver would only be retrained. Are the bosses selectively using drivers' accident records to sack those they are targeting? If this is the case, it's a very silly idea.

RW: What's the latest on the railways?

WB: I was recently down at Country Link at Central Station and spoke to one of the booking clerks. In the conversation, the derailment on the Sydney to Melbourne line at Albury Wodonga which had occurred two weeks earlier, came up. It involved the ripping up of 800 metres of track. According to the clerk, there had been a considerable delay in repairing the track by the privately owned track maintenance company, which has had a reputation for inefficiency. The Country Link bloke considered that if Rail Corp had been handling the repairs, the track would have been repaired within a much shorter length of time., with better ballast, I remember before I joined the buses, in South Australia, a friend of mine who worked in the Main Roads Dept, mentioned it had outsourced road maintenance to a private company which had a reputation for shoddy work in the interest of saving dollars. In one case I'm aware, the company put a thin layer of bitumen for resurfacing a main road, which eventually worsened the problem. As a result, the work had to be redone.

RW: What's the situation with traffic in Bondi?

WB: I was recently on a bus going through Bondi and noticed the huge amount of people going to see the "Sculptures by the Sea" exhibition. The buses certainly weren't coping with the influx of people. It's been reported that 2 million people have gone to see it. This fact emphasised to me, the importance of inspectors intervening and phoning in and calling for more buses on routes, as they were able to do in the past. Such action is particularly important on afternoons and weekends. So as to avoid passengers being left behind and associated delay in catching buses.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the latest with the trainee drivers?

Leichhardt Busie: They are very much taken advantage by the bosses. I have noticed certain cases recently where trainees have not been advised by the bosses to book up overtime for late running. They are very much intimidated to meet the unrealistic running times, putting them under tremendous stress. Leading them to get into more trouble via involvement in accidents. Despite one trainee recently completing his 2 year probation with a good record in regard to accidents and other criteria. He was sacked. As the bosses didn't like his attitude. Meaning he had spoken out against them. The subsidising of the trainees which the bosses receive is also an important contribution to their hard line on even experienced drivers on disciplinary matters. As there are always more trainees which the bosses can replace them with.

RW: What are your thoughts on the bus running times?

LB: There is quite a scam which the bosses are getting up to on this issue. They are particularly worried about runs being cancelled due to drivers being unwilling to do late running. As they face fines of \$1000 per run cancelled. Consequently rather than tackling the real issue of the unrealistic running times, when a driver calls in and says he can't run late. The bosses just get someone on WAD to do the run again at any other time. As a result the bosses can look good on the paperwork in regard to meeting service requirements.

RW: What's happening with the union rep?

LB: Following Marta being discovered performing management work, she was spoken to and resigned as our union rep. Austin who was the vice union rep has taken over the position. With union elections coming up in Feb. 2011, we need someone who is a bit gutsy to be elected into the position.

RW: How are things with the prepaid tickets?

LB: Despite the introduction of the prepaid tickets we still have to issue cash tickets. This just creates an additional headache for us. With the prepaid tickets being widely available at shops, why do we still have the cash tickets?

MARITIME TRANSPORT NEWS

Brisbane MUA delegate sacked

Steve Cumberlidge, an MUA delegate at Brisbane POAGS, was sacked on July 30. Local management have used the charge of an alleged safety breach in order to get rid of "Cumbo", an outspoken delegate highly committed to safety on the job.

The Queensland MUA branch is working for Cumbo's reinstatement through the new Fair Work Act. On September 2 an unsuccessful conciliation hearing between the MUA and POAGS took place. The matter has now gone to arbitration, with a meeting to be held in November.

The Queensland MUA branch has printed "I support the reinstatement of Cumbo" T-shirts to help raise funds for Cumberlidge and his family.

The sacking of MUA delegates is becoming all too common. Relying on the Fair Work Act and its complicated legal mechanisms is not good enough. The MUA needs to take whatever industrial action necessary to win the reinstatement of any sacked delegate.

Sick leave policy is crook

On September 8, wharfies at DP World Botany were advised in writing of changes to the local Absence Management Policy.

These changes include a) statutory declarations for sick leave and carer's leave will no longer be accepted; and b) wharfies "with poor absence records" will be placed on an absence management plan whenever "the Company suspects that [an] employee is not using sick leave for genuine illness (despite the production of a medical certificate)".

However, by law DP World cannot refuse to accept a form of legal document (a statutory declaration) and judge whether another (a medical certificate) is legitimate or not.

Management need to re-read the Stevedoring Industry Award (2010), in particular Clause 23.4 which reads:

"a) The employee will, if required by the employer, establish the production of a statutory declaration, that the employee was unable to work because of injury or personal illness.

b) In the case where the absence is extensive or where the employee failed to report for duty in circumstances where, in the employer's opinion, a requirement for confirmation for the reason for the absence is justified, the employer may require the employee to produce a legally qualified medical practitioner's certificate that the employee was unable, in the medical practitioner's opinion, to attend for work through personal illness or injury".

The Award spells it out. Statutory declarations and medical certificates are acceptable and adequate legal documents for proof of illness or injury. DP World has overstepped the mark with these new Absence Management Policy changes.

DPW hits record volumes

The last few weeks have seen container volumes at DP World Botany hit record highs – over 15,000 container moves a week. In the lead up to Christmas, these volumes are only likely to increase further.

In order to meet its increased labour needs, management has hired dozens of new supplementaries.

This increase in supplementary labour has pushed the permanent to casual labour ratio dangerously close to the minimum 51:49 mark.

With record volumes and a large influx of casual labour, now is the time to begin a new union push for more permanent jobs.

(Articles from "Vigilance" No.49 Sept 2010) "Vigilance" is a socialist bulletin for MUA members in Sydney produced by Shane Bentley - the "Port Botany Wharfie". See www.vigilanceBulletin.org

Victorian Railway News

In previous issues of RW mention has been made of Human Resources trying to take over the operations of V/Line. In this issue persons from Head Office, Locomotive Division, Daily Paid Section and the Salaried area have once again combined to talk about the issues. Once again names have been changed.

RW: Once again it is good to see unity amongst employees.

Clarence: You are correct in the last two months Human Resources are dictating to Service Managers that they are in charge.

Sheona: Working in Head Office you see what happens day to day. This department

is controlled by a group of women who disregard the Railways Operations such as disciplinary issues and try to impose their own rules.

Rascom : As a conductor I hate this department. It stinks!

Rastus & Roscoe: As drivers we have said in previous issues of Sparks that he Drivers Supervisor hasn't the guts to stand up to this department.

RW: It is obvious that Human Resources is trying to get the Managers to get rid of long term employees.

Bascom: I would like to make mention of an incident at a Country Depot where a conductor was given a random drug test.

Clarence: There is random drug and alcohol testing in the Railway industry.

Rastus: This has been in force since 1996.

Rascoe: Correct but we don't like the way this conductor was treated.

Bascom: You see this conductor was tested because some passenger or fellow employee alleged he was taking drugs.

Rastus: The way the test was carried out was disgraceful. The conductor was taken off the train, he was running. In front of the Regional Manager, a conductor supervisor and a person from Occupational Health and Safety Department told the conductor he was being drug tested. They did not tell him why he was being tested. They left him under observation in a room and waited for the person who held the testing equipment to arrive. The conductor was tested and the test was negative.

Bascom: The conductor was quite upset after the event and in my opinion he should sue V/Line for false imprisonment.

RW: It is obvious that management is out to get this conductor.

Sheona: You are correct. You see this conductor had the guts to stand up to Human Resources. You see one of the women in this department has taken a dislike to this conductor. The conductor applied for a conductor supervisor position years ago. He was told by this particular person that there were no avenues of appeal and that Human Resources was running the show.

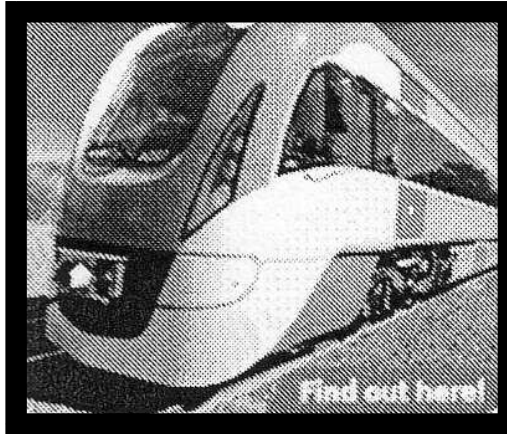
Clarence: You see why they hate this department. Regarding the drug test, they should have told him why he was being tested and a union representative or another person should have been there to witness the test.

Sheona: This conductor was victimised by these people and if it was a passenger complaint or a complaint from a fellow employee, then it was obvious management wants to sack this conductor. You see Human Resources has a hit list of names of employees who they want to terminate. These employees do not fit in with the new V/Line image. If they get rid of these employees, then it will frighten the other employees.

Bascom: In other words they want yes men. If Human Resources think they can ride rough short over employees they can forget it.

Rastus & Roscoe: If a fellow employee has dobbed in this conductor, then we drivers if we find out who he is will blacklist him.

RW: I think that under the Industrial



Relations Act, if you refuse to work with these employees, then you can be taken to Court.

Rastus & Roscoe: To hell with the Industrial Relations Act. These cretins should be driven out of the industry. In fact some drivers have said if they find out if it was a fellow employee who dobbed in this conductor, they will make it hard for them in future.

Clarence: Managers haven't the guts to solve problems and as for the women who run this department, I say that if you have

to front them don't turn up. If they suspend you for failure to turn up, then fellow employees to refuse to cover the shift they were working.

Rastus & Roscoe: Yes we drivers have a policy. If a driver is stood down, we do not cover his shifts. In other words, the train the driver was rostered on does not run.

Clarence: I wonder what Human Resources do. The worker who work in the department stay for a few months then leave.

Rastus: They use V/Line as a training centre, then go onto better paying positions. Where they further bully workers.

RW: We have wondered, but I know how you people feel about the department. The way the conductor at this country location was treated was disgusting. He was not told why he had to take the test and a union representative should have been there. If not, another conductor as a witness.

Rastus & Roscoe: In having the final say. This conductor should sue V/Line for false imprisonment. He could get a court order and obtain the names of the persons who complained and sue them as well. Finally if you have to front Human Resources. DON'T TURN UP.

Work is Bad for your Health

Chronic overwork has become a significant health problem in Australia according to a recent study by the Australia Institute. The study reveals almost half of 1360 people polled said work stopped them from exercising, while 35 per cent said it stopped them from eating healthy meals. The poll also found that 27 per cent were too busy to go to the doctor even though they needed to, and 44 per cent admitted to avoiding GP appointments because of a lack of time.

These findings have been published by the Australia Institute to coincide with the think tank's second Go Home on Time Day on 24 November, 2010. The report has prompted the Public Health Association to call for Australian workers to slow down to ward off obesity and depression as well as deal with more immediate illnesses.

Melanie Walker, the deputy chief executive of the Public Health Association, said the results were worrying: "If these things

are happening, it has an impact on people's long-term health and their ability to



prevent the onset of serious illness. We do the hard yards compared to a lot of other countries."

A study by the Australia Institute last year revealed that Australia has the longest

working hours of any country in the developed world with one third of workers failing to take a single day of their annual leave in the preceding twelve months.

"In France there are people rioting in the streets at the idea they have to work over the age of 60", Ms Walker said. She said employers could do more to help national health by encouraging workers to take sick leave to see a doctor. "Employers have to create the opportunities for people to realistically take up the conditions that are enshrined in legislation," said Ms Walker.

Australia Institute's deputy director, Josh Fear said that in Europe regulations prompted by health and safety concerns stop people from working more than an average 40 hours per week. Part of the problem of overwork in Australia was caused by a culture of unpaid overtime, he said. "A lot of workers in the typical office environment, doing the standard business work day are working unpaid overtime and it is unregulated," Mr Fear said

Increased workloads due to restructuring, reforms and non back-filling of staff are key reasons for employees feeling more pressured in their daily work life. NSW government policy currently requires any pay increase above 2.5% to be funded by savings measures, offsets and productivity increases.

More than 200,000 people took part in the first Go Home on Time Day last year. The website to register for this year's protest, can be viewed at www.gohomeontimeday.org.au/.

by Max Stirner
sourced from SMH

Austerity Protest in South Australia

Oct 30 2010 06:57

By Gabs

On Tuesday the 26th Oct. there was another demonstration against the state budget cuts in Adelaide, this time with an estimated 7000 people marching from Victoria Square to Parliament House. Fire trucks and bagpipes led the demonstration, with almost a dozen fire trucks driving down the tram track on King William street, stopping for a few minutes at every intersection along the way to block traffic, this combined with the demonstration that stretched for about 3 blocks put the whole city into gridlock. All the major CBD streets - Pirie, Waymouth, Currie and Grenfell looked like parking lots from King William St. to the edges of the city. Police at no point attempted to stop the firefighters!

The rally at parliament was enormous and loud, and there was no shortage of anger amongst the crowd. A prison warden who complained about staff cuts and overcrowding tore up the EBA (Enterprise

Bargain Agreement) which the budget had under-cut (legislating to remove service leave and conditions, instead of negotiating) and then presented a (symbolic) arrest warrant for Kevin Foley to the crowd. The union officials seemed adamant to mention that the arrest warrant was symbolic many times.

So far in the movement against austerity, we've seen the rolling back of the cuts to Mature age study (see below) and the reverse of the Parks community centre sell-off. The government is yet to budget on the public sector cuts, the (public sector) unions too are yet to budge on taking any real industrial action (the firefighters seem to be trying to lead the way, with support from tram drivers, to no avail).

As a result of the moderation of the PSA (Public Service Union) so far, and all the talk by unionists of "continuing this fight till the next election!", and the fact that it's a Labor government that the unions are fighting, a political situation has been created where the unions are clinging to any

parliamentary political presence. They are attempting to put political pressure on Labor by inviting the Greens, Family First (right-wing Christian party), and Liberal party representatives to rallies. It's bizarre. We've been attempting to respond to this through a leaflet, but it's clear that we need to make a new one for the next demonstration, which is planned to be at the upcoming ALP state conference.

Also, despite the demonstrations consistently numbering in the thousands, the media has been reporting them often as "hundreds of public sector workers have marched.." etc. when the reality is thousands are marching, some students too, with growing solidarity in other industries (for example, the tram drivers).

It's an interesting situation that's still developing, more to come from me in future

Thanks to Libcom

NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS ROUND UP

A Mini Strike Wave?

If you believe the media, there seems to be heaps of unruly workers going out on strike at the moment Oct. 2010. And yes, it appears so – the recent teachers' strike of up to 16,000 surpasses the total number of workers going out nationwide in 2008 and 2009 put together! (8,950 in 2009 and 4993 in 2008).

As well, about a thousand radiographers and hundreds of medical lab and Ministry of Education workers have been on strike, and hundreds of Housing NZ and ACC workers continue with low key industrial action, such as work-to-rules. And there is more ahead – over 4000 junior doctors ap-

pear to be set to strike, and if you count the big nationwide stop works against the new employment laws on Oct. 20 as industrial action, then this year is shaping up as involving more striking workers than for any year in the whole noughties decade of 2000–2010.

Much of this dissent is an expression of anger against the tiny wage increases workers have been offered due to the cost-cutting spree caused by the recession. But there isn't just rage against the wage. Most of these strikes are compelled by exhaustion from overwork – having to work too hard and having to do unpaid overtime (both often due to staffing shortages). It's

unsurprising that class struggle is taking this form – central to the neo-liberal deal is the attempt to speed up work to unnatural levels in return for less real pay.

While these struggles by predominantly white-collar workers in majority female workplaces are encouraging, let's not get carried away with them. They haven't blossomed into broader class wide confrontations, as they are often just narrow attempts by occupational strata to catch up with, or surpass, other occupational strata in terms of pay (i.e. they are relativity disputes). Strikes have been defensive in nature, such as the Ministry of Justice strikes against the public sector wage freeze. Recent years, including this one, still see us unfortunately experiencing some of the lowest amounts of strike activity in NZ history. The 2000s in general saw a bit less strike action than the 1950s, a decade considered to be characterized by social peace and conformity (that is, after the wharfies and sympathy strikers were crushed in 1951). Even if 25,000 strike this year, it's still only a tiny fraction of the workforce

going out on strike (1.2%), when in the 1970s and 1980s generally well over 10% of the workforce were striking. And few workers have gained major pay increases – many, including some who have been on strike, are settling for very small pay increases of 1% to 2% (less than the rate of inflation) and mere assurances high workloads will be examined by joint working parties, rather than reduced. We have a long way to go facing an aggressive, militant and united capitalist class, but these strikes and stopworks are something to build upon.

Teacher's Strike

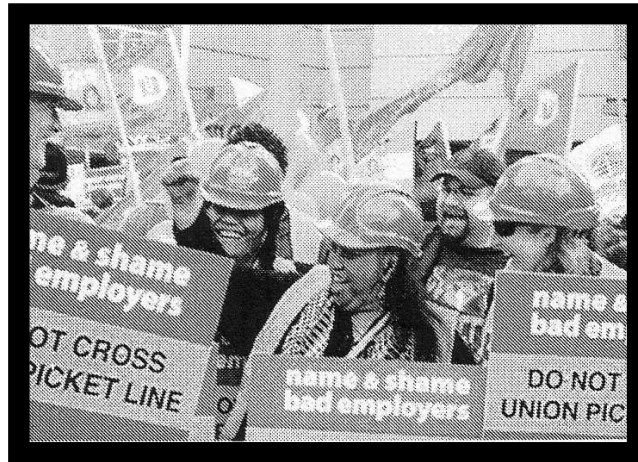
On September 15th over 1,000 teachers and supporters from Wellington, Hutt Valley and Kapiti Coast marched from Wellington High School to Parliament as part of a national one day strike action. The strike was called in support of teachers' claims for a 4% wage increase and opposition to such measures as the 90 Day Act.

The marchers were in good spirits, with a sense of purpose for their action. There was some chanting and attempts to interact with lunchtime passersby in the CBD, who were either subdued or supportive in attitude. One amusing example came when some teenagers on the pavement called out "Good one, but make sure it's a Friday next time!".

Upon reaching Parliament grounds, numbers swelled and a series of scheduled speakers addressed the crowd followed by an open mike. Although each speaker stressed slightly different aspects of the teachers' situation, a common theme was the warped sense of priorities exhibited by the Government in terms of its allocation

of money. This was a point made for example by Labour MP Trevor Mallard who put the lack of funding for teachers in the context of the recent bailing out of South Canterbury Finance investors "If they can find money for that, they can find money for education". A valid point but it is doubtful a Labour led government would have contemplated anything radically different to the action National took, given its own previous track record and shared role as a prop for the capitalist economic order.

Following the speeches, remaining marchers moved up the road to the Ministry of Education building. A short but noisy expression of dissatisfaction occurred as the teachers formed a semicircle in the courtyard immediately in front of the Ministry



entrance, before dispersing.

In other centers, similar marches were held. The Auckland march of about 2,500 ground Queen St to a halt. The one-day strike was the first in eight years for the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) and it affected about 280,000 students from more than 450 secondary and intermediate schools. Peter Beyer, an Eng-

lish teacher at Otahuhu College, said students were being disadvantaged because of teachers' huge workloads. "The Government will say we're greedy, we're after money, but we asked for very little money - we asked for a realistic settlement - and we're marching mainly for the students and for the conditions we work in," he said.

In summary, the turnout on the day was good given the current low level of strike action nationally across both public and private sectors. However, more concerted action is required if teachers and other workers are to make real progress. With the PPTA leadership pushing a line in its literature of wanting "cooperation from government - not conflict" and the ultimately puny nature of a one

day strike, teachers at the chalk face and their allies will need to take more direct action themselves. The PPTA has already pulled back from one-day strikes, and instead said they will go out on eight partial strikes each week from October 14. During each partial strike, teachers will refuse to teach students from a particular year (say year 11) but still continue to teach all other students. There is also a need to link the conditions of workers in one sector or form of em-

ployment with others and to include the unemployed and non-unionized, to avoid the government isolating and picking off weak targets. Such a goal will not be easy to achieve in reality, but it is one worth working towards if any substantial improvements are to be won.

Thanks to Solidarity Oct. 2010

BRITAIN TODAY

Notes from an FBU picket line

Nov 2 2010

Joe Thorne reports back from the front lines of the London fire fighters strike against mass sackings and shift pattern changes.

The FBU (Fire Brigade Union) has held two eight hour strikes in the past fortnight. The cause? The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) has threatened to unilaterally impose new terms and conditions, specifically a new

shift pattern, and has said that any of the 5,500 London fire fighters not willing to sign up to them will be sacked. The 90 day consultation period, which they are entitled to under law, expires on 26 November. The LFEPA board meets for the last time before this on 18 November, and will decide whether to press ahead. The FBU is therefore seeking to put the pressure on before this date. If the changes are forced through regardless, it does not necessarily mean the fight is over – but it's clear that the coming weeks are important. A 47 hour strike will therefore be held beginning on Friday, 5 November, at 10am. Bonfire night. The pickets I talked to said

that they accepted that there should be changes to shifts, but that they ought to be negotiated. They believe that the proposed shift changes are an attempt to introduce a system under which, later, it will be easier to reduce the number of fire fighters, particularly at night.

Amongst those I talked to, there was strong approval of the union. The pressure is certainly on. Many have had 20% pay docked from this month, on top of the money lost from strike days. The employer is alleging technical breaches of working regulations. Apparently these are entirely spurious, with no basis in written policy or established procedure (and is being challenged by the FBU through grievances), but this sort of step will be a blow to many, especially in the run up to Christmas. In this report, however, I want to fo-

cus mostly on the dynamics of the strike, and the role of the scab company, Assetco. For background, see previous articles here:

<http://libcom.org/tags/fire-service>

Assetco

Assetco was originally proposing to run one fire engine each out of 27 stations. The strength of picketing has evidently made either the scabs or their employer feel uncomfortable, so they've changed the plan. Instead, three engines are being run out of each of nine stations: Shoreditch (Old St), Wembley, East Ham, Wandsworth, Old Kent Road, Croydon, Hillingdon and Hammersmith. Assetco was not successful in getting engines into all these stations. For example, at Shoreditch yesterday, they made three attempts, each blocked by an FBU picket line. There were approximately 150 pickets there, according to one witness. This was despite the presence of five security guards, including one with a Rottweiler, and a van load of police – who made some threats but decided against using force. When scab engines cannot enter fire stations, they are being parked on a roadside nearby. In Shoreditch yesterday, for example, three fire engines with Assetco scabs were parked on Dunloe Road, near the junction with Queensbridge Road – i.e. behind the Mecca bingo on Hackney Road. Obviously, this is public property, and no one should be able to prevent anyone going to talk to the scabs. The other important locations are Southwark Bridge Road, the London Fire Brigade Training Centre where scabs are being dispatched from, and Ruislip, where there is an Assetco depot which stores the 27 engines used by scabs.

On the first strike day, Saturday 23rd November, there were minor clashes at 5.30pm at Southwark Bridge Road, as hundreds of FBU members tried to stop scab engines re-entering the complex at the end of their shift. Police eventually managed to intervene. Yesterday, 1 November, at the same time of day, police outnumbered FBU. Fire fighters believe that scabs are not, in general, trained fire fighters, but security staff looking to make a few quid on the side. There are some fire fighters and ex-fire fighters working, which explains the balaclavas worn by scabs being ferried in and out of Southwark Bridge Road – but this is not universally the case, according to FBU pickets who have talked to scabs. Popular myths One popular misconception is that FBU strikers are putting others at risk of death. In fact, pickets I spoke to reaffirmed that they were would instantly respond if life was at risk. "If there's a fire, we're go-

ing to go and have a look. If it's a warehouse with no one inside, we'll let it burn down. If there's a life at risk, you'd have a job to do to stop everyone here going to sort it out. That's why we joined." This is not merely hypothetical. According to the FBU:1. In Dagenham, after several calls from a block of flats, the private contractors turned up, but did not know how to connect the hose to the fire engine, or where the water hydrants were. Local fire fighters saw their problem, and despite being on strike, showed the contractors how to use the equipment. They then entered the building to ensure that no lives were at risk, before leaving the private contractors to cope with any damage to property.² In a Hackney block of flats, striking fire

penalties on drivers. Under the scheme, drivers will be hit with point-based penalties if they break one of 34 rules. Drivers who accrue more than 20 points in a year will have to re-sit their test or have their licence revoked. For example, sounding a horn to announce arrival at an address will result in four points. The decision was taken at a mass meeting of 150 cabbies. At the time of writing, the Taxi drivers have voted to strike within the next fortnight.

Sellafield workers in strike over pay

Oct. 2010

Workers employed by Babcock, a con-



fighters saw private contractors trying, and failing, to break down an outside door with a sledgehammer. Concerned that there may have been a risk to members of the public they decided to help, and by using the sledgehammer properly, were able quickly to gain entrance and establish that there was no danger to life. Then they told the private contractors to go in and do their job. Elsewhere, apparently, a number of scabs working for Assetco were arrested by police for turning on the blue flashing lights in order to go to McDonalds.

These things have not been widely reported by the media. The fact that a Fire Brigade Station manager ran over and seriously injured a picket with his car yesterday, in Croydon, will probably not receive a Daily Mail front page.

Taxi Strike

Oct. 2010

Taxi drivers in Rossendale, Lancashire, have voted for strike action in protest against the council's plans to implement

tractor at Sellafield nuclear plant, have struck and held up traffic at the entrance to the site. The workers, who are members of the Unite union, are owed back pay relating to a promised annual pay rise which never materialised. They have been taking regular strike action and have imposed an overtime ban. They held up traffic at all four entrances to the site leafleting other workers.

Strikes at Swindon Leisure Centres

September saw two strikes at Swindon's leisure centres, parks and car parks after the Tory-run council moved to withdraw shift allowances for compulsory overtime at antisocial hours. The ballot was organised by Unison, which backed the strikes. The cut represents a significant drop in pay for many workers, resulting in the loss of as much as £300 a month. The strike has led to the closure of car parks and the

winding down of leisure centre activities. The hardship fund set up for the strike is reported to have received £1500 in donations so far.

AstraZeneca workers fight on

The strike by workers at AstraZeneca in Macclesfield has continued into October. The dispute began last month after the company, which reported pre-tax profits of £1.8 in the three months to June this year, implemented cuts to staff pensions (whilst Chief Executive David Brennan

boosted his pension entitlement to £17,500 a week). The strike vote saw a 70% backing for action being given by GMB members, with the Macclesfield drug factory seeing the first strike in its history. A GMB-organised demonstration marched from the AstraZeneca site to Macclesfield town centre on the 6th of October before returning back to the site, on what was the sixth day of strike action.

Coca-Cola Workers' Strike

Oct. 2010

Workers at Coca-Cola manufacturing and bottling plant at Edmonton, London, N18, have been on strike for a month. They have been offered a below inflation 2 per cent while conditions have steadily worsened in the factory. The pension scheme is now crap and there are redundancies going on throughout company sites, including 19 at Nobel Road itself. The company made £620m last year! One worker commented " We are bitter about the non negotiating management, this is a dictatorship ". In this context, the management complaint about workers voting procedure is a sick joke. *Thanks to Libcom*

CANADA: POSTAL WILDCAT IN WINNIPEG

Nov 22 2010

Workers in Canada are currently undergoing the most massive technological change in forty years. Winnipeg is the testing ground for the entire new postal model and so it is the front lines for all of us at Canada Post.

The entire process was started by CEO Moya Greene who is now the CEO of Royal Mail and is working on gutting service, slashing jobs and destroying communities in the UK- just like she did in

ing in touch about this and watching Canada Post's next move closely. This is the opening shot of a period of extended struggle.

COMMENT:

The wildcat is half through the union, half not through the union. Mostly we are texting each other, some short phone calls and face book.

Basically there is a network of anarchists in CUPW, many of whom are officers, like myself and many of whom are not officers. The union had nothing to do with the wildcat in any official capacity but I know for a fact that there has been lots of agitation by some union officers to act outside the grievance procedure and for workers to plan actions themselves. The downtown station was off the

job for half an hour and are back at work since the CBC article. Now the Wilkes St. depot has had its second shift walk off indefinitely and the Trascona depot is out indefinitely now too. Apparently the Winnipeg local has called a mass meeting to coordinate the actions and discuss what to do about retaliation from the boss.

FURTHER COMMENT:

The official rationale is one the workers and Canada Post both agree with. A lot of our equipment is archaic and needs to be updated and there are some changes that will make our lives easier. The union's line is that modernisation should be used to improve service to the public and work-

ers should benefit from it. So we are putting forward demands of reduced work hours, more vacation increased pay that come with increased profits. Of course Canada Post is using it to take a hatchet to us and a lot of the Canadian Bourgeoisie has their back in this fight. CUPW is widely seen as a bad example to the rest of the country, the union has a history of being extremely militant (though various leftist groups have done an admirable job of destroying what CUPW once was). Our national president makes exactly the same wage as a letter carrier, when we go on strike our president does as well. Our union reps are elected not appointed (we are the only union in North America that does this) the preamble to our constitution paraphrases much of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World – Syndicalist group) preamble line by line. Officially the union is for workers control of industry. I think it is a text book case of the erosion that militant unions must inevitably face. The regional director has washed his hands of this walkout and the national office is completely silent. Almost all of the vocal support is coming from local initiatives, in Edmonton we started a black arm band campaign for the week to support them, we are also circulating statements from the local on the floor. The only local to put out a statement in favour of the walkout officially is Toronto. A lot of the Canadian public is coming around to the idea of militantly fighting back, the CBC is a good barometer of where the average progressive minded person in Canada sits. CUPW also has a lot of allies in the progressive left because our union pushes the envelope on a lot of social issues. The howls of outrage from the non public media will be coming soon though, I'm sure their sharpening their hatchets right now.

Thanks to Libcom



Canada. The technological change has been a disaster with lots of injuries on duty, many workers working late into the night to get the mail delivered and harsh discipline against anyone who speaks up. On top of this Canada Post is currently negotiating with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers for a new contract. Those of us in CUPW will be in a legal position to strike this spring, with our contract running out January 31s 2011. As of now there are about 140 workers on strike by my count, this is not a temporary work stoppage like the last wildcats in Edmonton, workers are packing their things and going home to spend time with their families. Everyone across the country is keep-

SYNDICALISM IN BRAZIL

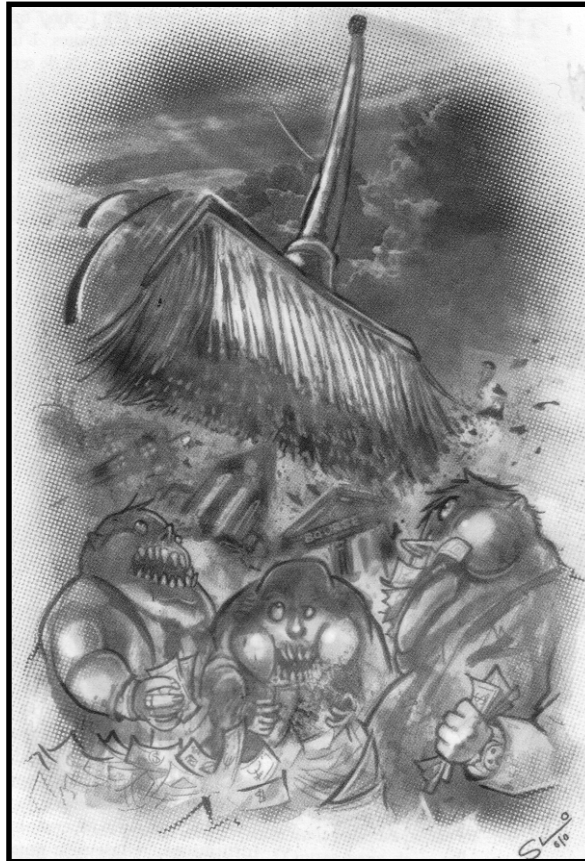
Hey, fellows, I'm from COB (Brazilian syndicalist organisation). I'm new at the organization and I'm still learning it's functioning and history, but I'll try to pass ahead some of the info I picked up until now. I don't speak for COB, these are my personal impressions.

After slavery was officially abolished in Brazil (1888), the Brazilian government started bringing immigrant workers instead of employing the former slaves. Among the immigrants who came to work in Brazil, there was a lot of anarcho-syndicalists who started agitating among their fellow workers and managed to build organizations. Before COB, there was in Rio de Janeiro the Federação Operária Regional Brasileira (inspired by FORA – Argentine Syndicalist union federation), which became the Federação Operária do Rio de Janeiro after the first Brazilian Workers Congress, COB's foundational congress, in 1906. In less than 3 decades, COB conquered a lot of impressive stuff, so the dominant classes got really scared. They started persecuting syndicalists, and the workers were either imprisoned, killed or sent to concentration camps, and a huge number of the immigrants (the most militant workers) were deported. But even with this repression, the movement kept going. COB's struggle implemented the 8-hour work day, increased salaries, fought against children's work, started partial and general strikes and the Rio de Janeiro government almost was taken down by an anarchist insurrection planned by members of FORJ. COB also founded rational schools and anticlerical leagues, published newspapers, magazines and books, engaged in antimilitarism and antifascism and acted in international solidarity with Ferrer i Guàrdia and Sacco and Vanzetti.

But after the Russian Revolution, some former anarcho-syndicalists became bolsheviks and started persecuting anarcho-syndicalists. Marxist-Leninist historians call the 1920's the beginning of "the overcoming of anarchism", which at that time was by far the main political philosophy guiding the labour movement because of COB's strength. The Brazilian bolsheviks founded the Brazilian Workers Party (PCB) and went on a hunting season. They did everything they could to try to destroy anarchism, even planning on murdering respected anarcho-syndicalists (at a gathering, the anarchists Antonino

Dominguez and Damião da Silva were shot by PCB members who had José Oiticica and Fábio Luz as their main targets).

The other major blow to COB was in the 1930's with the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas. His government prohibited free unions, pushing COB to illegality, and implemented the corporatist unions, based on Mussolini's Carta del Lavoro, a model which is held by the government up to this day, designed to control the workers and to



not allow them to organize in any way close to COB's way, revolutionary syndicalism. The Law of Unionization also obligated every worker to join a state union. Unions in this model are attached to the state, participate in elections, have centralized bodies, receive subsidies from the government and today are integrated with political parties, every single one of them. In illegality, COB's members engaged in the struggle against fascism while trying to keep the organization alive in the face of extreme repression.

Vargas ruled from 1930 until 1945, and from 1951 until 1954, when he shot himself. This fascist is idolized in Brazil almost like Perón is on Argentina because he turned in laws worker rights which were already widespread because of COB's

struggle. During this time, the movement went really underground and became smaller and smaller, but it kept going, always waiting for the moment to reemerge. In 1964, another dictatorship took the government in Brazil. In the 1970's anarcho-syndicalists got excited when workers started talking about building a national union, but this turned out to be Central Única dos Trabalhadores, which was taken over by trotskyites. In 1977, anarchists from all over Brazil founded the paper "O Inimigo do Rei" (The Enemy of the King) to fight dictatorship. Militaries were in power until 1985. In 1986 the groups around O Inimigo do Rei, from 13 states, held a national congress and launched the project for the reconstruction of COB, also starting relations with the IWA. But this time the groups were sabotaged from the inside - a guy named Leonardo Morelli became secretary and started stealing money from the IWA and traveling to create groups against COB. After that, FORGS was the only section of COB until 2000, when pro-FOSP was started. Three more federations were accepted in this year of 2010.

Today COB has four Sindivários in Rio Grande do Sul, three in São Paulo, two in Minas Gerais and one in both Goiás and Sergipe. There is a pro-COB group in Bahia and I heard there is individuals in Piauí, Espírito Santo, Paraná and Amazonas trying to form groups.

So, the situation today is the result of decades of repression against revolutionary syndicalism in Brazil. Because of left and right totalitarianism, the movement went on several hiatus and became weakened. The

Vargas/Mussolini union model is today embraced by everyone except us. Technically, COB is not illegal, but unions which are not attached to the state are not recognized and become suppressed. Marxist, fascist and even "anarchist" repression keeps on going against COB, often with physical aggression.

The best source for COB's history are Edgar Rodrigues' writings. Next year I'll have more time, so I'll try to translate some of his articles.

By Dano

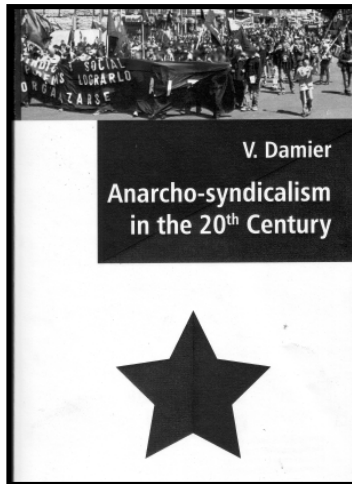
Thanks to Libcom

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Anarcho-Syndicalism in the 20th Century By Vadim Damier. Black Cat, Alberta Canada 2009. Review Brief by Graham Purchase.

This first English translation of Vadim Damier's succinct little book is a longer revised version of the Russian Original. I am not sufficiently read in anarcho-syndicalist history to assess the veracity of this book in a detailed way but believe it is worth taking the trouble to make a few general comments about this excellent and very well produced introductory study.

The author is the first to admit that His book isn't a comprehensive historical account of anarcho-syndicalism (p.224). But, he must be warmly congratulated for this very welcome and sorely



needed basic, simple, brief and readable historical overview in English of the origin, theory and practice of global anarcho-syndicalism written in a modern scholarly format and style.

I've always found books full of facts and figures about organizations represented as acronyms really hard to read. Unfortunately Labour history is replete with such literature. This book is no exception and contains a three-page ref-

erence index of acronyms to assist the reader through a text that is crammed with them. But, the author manages to present the history of the ideas and actions of the various organizations with great economy and a comprehensible sense of purpose. This isn't an easy feat. Black Flame, another recently published and very much longer scholarly history of anarcho-syndicalism fails to achieve the unity, clarity and simple analytical dexterity of this work.

For the serious researcher with some basic knowledge of anarchism and syndicalism this book is very useful indeed as it combines first-rate scholarship with a consistent ability to summarize the ideological differences and varying historical conditions that shaped the history and relationships between the various anarcho syndicalist groupings around the world in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Three Post Anarchist Anthologies A Review Essay by Graham Purchase. Contemporary Anarchist Studies, Routledge, 2009. [CAS] Anarchist Studies #2, 2008, Lawrence & Wisart. [AS] Constituent Imagination, AK Press, 2007. [CI]

The "Once Marxist now Post-modernist leftist" Anglo-American academic intelligentsia felt inspired and compelled to interpret and analyze the largely forgotten anti-globalist/capitalist demonstrations held around the turn of the 21st century. Very briefly, leftist post-modern misanthropy was replaced by the "post-Seattle-new-anarchist euphoria" (CASp.20).

The post-modern intellectual elite decided that anarchism best described the genesis, organization and practice of anti-capitalist demonstrators, a percentage of whom, according to the Guardian Newspaper, consciously or prominently identified themselves as anarchists. But, these academic converts of Foucault regarded "classical anarchism" as old-fashioned. The disciples discovered "Traditional anarchism" seemed to be founded upon scientific and rationalist worldviews. Ideas the French postmodern gospel fundamentally opposes as an act of faith. "Outmoded teleological ideas of revolution" and fusty old class struggle stuff also had to be rejected because postmodernism has

revealed how power is diffuse, everyone dominates someone else and the working class no longer exists, if indeed, it could ever have existed at all (CASp.272). The post moderns are dismissive of "faith in the miracle of the event of revolt which is coupled with the inevitable defeat of such revolts by power. The result is that we are left in the situation of fighting (losing) an endless war alternating between the eruption of revolt out of nothing and then its inevitable return to nothing" (ASp.114). There's a traditional response to the abject defeatism and pessimism expressed in the misanthropy of post-modernism: The Revolution Is Dead. Long Live The Revolution!

The Purging of Science and Reason:

It is tempting to dismiss post-modern drivel as sophistry if it wasn't for the missionary zeal with which these elite university professors aggressively announce their intent to "purge traditional anarchism of its 19th century naturalist and

essentialist philosophy with its many epistemological shortcomings" (ASp.109 & CASp.20). This roughly translates into a desire to debunk the idea that anarchism has any rational or material basis in scientific knowledge, nature or human behaviour. The "poststructuralist salvage operation" will also "infuse anarchism with new analytical and theoretical vigour" (CASp.20) by rejecting any "rational and future orientated schema" (CIp.258). The apparently discredited notion of rational or scientific argument and truth is to be rejected along with any attempt to construct universally applicable or commonly agreed aims and agendas. But, a political movement that seeks no program and fails to justify its reasonableness or reasons for its existence will clearly not be infused by anything much at all. The assertion that scientific and cultural knowledge is often "partial", "local" and "contingent" doesn't equate with the idea that nothing can be known about nature or human behaviour and that we shouldn't ever attempt general agreement about how social and political life might be organized better.

Networks and the Movement of Movements:

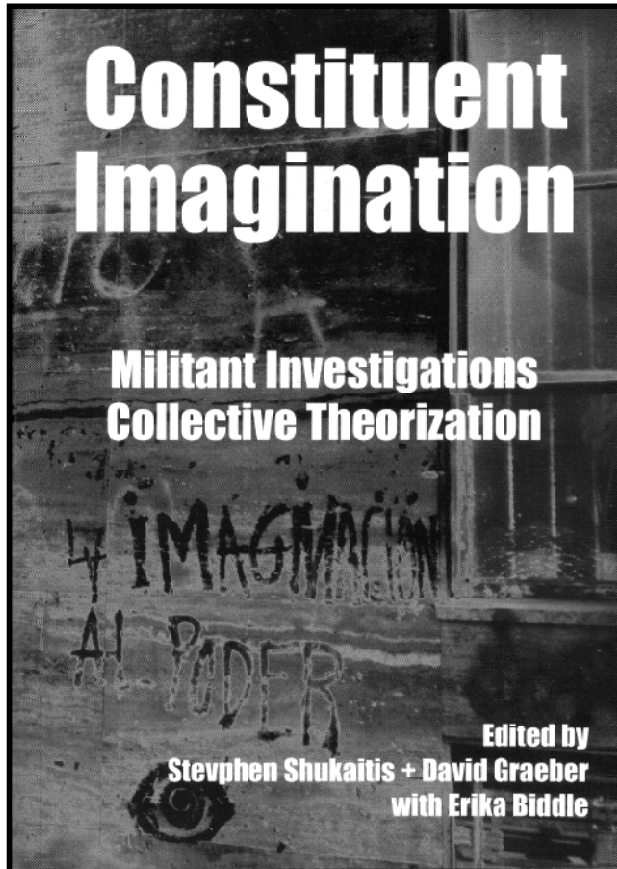
All of the authors are very impressed that anti-capitalist demonstrations in 1999 were autonomously self-organized in cyber-space by a leaderless

non-hierarchical non-linear globally active network of individuals and an assortment of “affinity” groups including knitting clubs, urban gardeners, AIDS support, soup kitchens, pacifist-Christians, animal rightists, anti-road-campaigners etc. The web created “movement of movements” was the first time in history that such a globally scattered and diverse mixture of activist or interest groups could exchange ideas and collaborate together in cyber space. Post anarchists regard the formation of the movement of movements as a momentous break with all previous history of radical opposition to capitalism.

But, the ‘movement of movements’ is anarchic only in the derogatory or negative sense of lacking any ideology, common program or unified political affiliation. The interaction or gathering of a large number and wide variety of ideologically non-descript left-liberal groupings in cyberspace and at periodic demonstrations is directionless and hence anarchic (CIp.257-8). Moreover, a decade after the historic emergence of the ‘movement of movements’ it is clear that diffusion, disparity and difference hasn’t translated into anything very much. Capitalism was bankrupt in 2008 but the anti-capitalist movement is hardly anywhere to be seen. During the most recent global power fest (2010) hosted by Canada the anti-capitalist circus only managed to scare shoppers in downtown Toronto when a few ‘extreme radicals became violent’. But Toronto is some 200 miles from the actual meet venue such that the activists were completely excluded and wholly unsuccessful in achieving anything useful or memorable.

The rising number of jobless and homeless people and the declining pay and pensions for the average working stiff is testament to the resilience of capitalism and the inability of the ‘movement of movements’ to concretely challenge it. These failures also partly result from an unhealthy preoccupation with process, pacifism and political correctness. The inward focus upon the internal processes or means by which the movements or groups conduct their affairs eclipses the aim of effecting change in society. The festival experience and inclusion within collective processes results in the “self-revolutions” of the participating individuals and the “union of separateness” in the mass orgasm of carnivalistic abandon during the protest festival. Actions are viewed as successful because they provide positive “subjective experiences” of collective organizing and the mass euphoria gained

from participating in the carnival against capitalism (CIp.83-99). But clearly similar experiences can be found in following a football team or seen at “Hitler’s” rallies (CIp. 98). “Non-hierarchical, non-linear tactics such as the swarming mode of military intervention interests Israeli defense force theorists” (ASp.118). “Distributed networks can be used for divergent ends including finance, production, policing, war and terror. There is nothing inherently anarchist or even progressive about network forms and practices” (CASp.215).



Anarchism, Essentialism & Academic Scholarship:

An unappetizing ingredient in these compendiums of post-anarchist writing is continual bellyaching by elite intellectuals concerning their role and the practice of ‘radical’ university research. But, it is the poor standard of (anarchist) scholarship and philosophical rigor that concerns me most about post-anarchy in the academy. Kropotkin suffers the most appalling misrepresentation and is continually singled out and then summarily dismissed for his allegedly naïve scientific or ethical essentialism. According to the post-modernist gospel committing the sin of essentialism places one’s ideas at the pre-dawn of human intellectual thought. Kropotkin practiced and preached ethical relativism through his robust revolutionary rejection of bourgeois morality. It was

only following the horrors of World War I (that, he strongly supported) and the Russian Revolution; in the dwindling twilight of Kropotkin’s very long life that, he seriously and unsuccessfully focused upon ethical enquiry. He only partially completed one Volume upon the History of Ethics and died before he could even begin to write his own moral theory (which was to be the second Vol. of his Ethics). It is ridiculous to suggest that a philosopher is an ethical essentialist when they never lived to write one single word of their proposed theory of Ethics.

In his youth, Kropotkin was a close associate and out-spoken supporter of Sophie Peroskovaya whom with her co-assassins killed Tsar Alexander II. Kropotkin’s pamphlets and articles justifying the tsaricide resulted in his expulsion from Switzerland and his inevitable imprisonment in France. In consequence of his earlier unqualified support for terrorist violence Kropotkin struggled to articulate a coherent moral viewpoint upon a series of outrages committed later around the turn of the 19th century. Kropotkin’s moral ambivalence or relativism with respect to terrorism and violence has been widely discussed in the scholarly literature (For in-depth analysis consult the relevant chapters in Martin Miller, Kropotkin 1976 and Brian Morris, Kropotkin, 2003). The American anarchist Emma Goldman in her autobiography (Living My Life, 2 Vols.) described herself as a disciple of both Sophie Peroskovaya and Kropotkin. She also in both theory and practice (through supporting her husband, Alexander Berkman’s assassination attempt) rejected bourgeois moral condemnation of individual acts of

politically motivated terrorist violence. Why turn to Foucault for moral and philosophical guidance when Kropotkin and Goldman’s relativism is so abundantly self-evident? (I do not personally entirely agree with Kropotkin’s, Goldman’s or the post-modern approach to the question of ethical relativism and political violence)

There are elements of naturalism (a form of essentialism) in Kropotkin’s ideas upon the evolutionary sources or origin of morality. This is very obviously because Kropotkin opposed metaphysical or religious forces that proclaim that all that is good in the world is god given (ASp.140). In different historical periods, places, contexts and societies morality is culturally expressed in many different and often contradictory ways. But, clearly if one is looking for a non-religious or evolutionary account of the origin of morality then a study of the evolution of social, collective and co-operative behaviour in nature is the

only starting point (as Darwin and then Kropotkin suggested) regardless of whether it conforms with post modern strictures:

“The swarming of bees offers a lesson in complex non-hierarchical decision making. Multi-species aggregations at water-holes often offer lessons in peace-keeping. And, of course, as Kropotkin demonstrated so many years ago, many, many species of animals offer tutelage in mutual aid both within and across species. Such lessons can help us in our efforts to devise a theory and practice of natural anarchism.” (CASp.242)

The extremely romantic conception of nature as essentially or naturally good or co-operative is continually and falsely attributed to Kropotkin. One of the authors rues how he: “can’t adopt either the positive essentialism of Kropotkin (human nature as good) or the negative essentialism of Hobbes (human nature as bad). On the streets you see both, often in quick succession. So-called human nature as I have experienced it is in conflict with itself” (CIp.237).

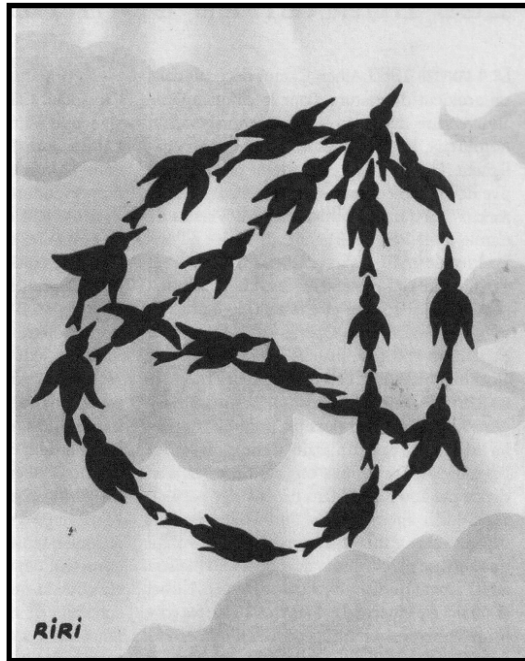
Kropotkin when introducing Mutual Aid to reader admits that it is biased, subjective and, on no account to be considered as an objective scientific description of nature. Moreover, Kropotkin also notes how mutual aid and group psychology have equally frequently led to inter-group conflict and international warfare.

Mutual Aid, Infanticide and Ethical Relativism:

Apparently cruel measures for dealing with surplus babies, the old and infirm were practiced in many hunter-gatherer societies in the past as a method of conserving scarce resources in times of hardship. [1] Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid* in his attempt to counter Victorian ignorance, racism and Christian moralism provided a long, detailed social and ecologically rationalized explanation of infanticide. Kropotkin argues that economic and ecological constraints favored group or cultural regulation of their populations according to the carrying capacity of their environment. Kropotkin observes how our ancestors did not seek to reproduce their genes at the expense of their group or environment (As Huxley and now Dawkins’ would have us believe). Although nowadays infanticide is hard to understand it must be appreciated that in times of famine a mother may not produce enough milk to sustain her child. In the absence of modern surgical techniques abortion is dangerous and likely to kill the mother, who may already have dependant babies and children. Nomadic hunter-gatherers were unable to

travel with too many very young babies, especially in harsh, changeable environments. Repugnant practices were a brutal, but necessary, means of ensuring the survival of the band and their environmental resources. Kropotkin viewed such practices as an adaptive group response to regulate population and food supply that couldn’t be judged by the ‘standards’ of contemporary European society, which, Kropotkin believed was certainly not without its own horrors and hypocrisies.

“When we see that these same loving parents practice infanticide, we are bound to recognise that the habit (whatever its ulterior transformations may be) took its origin under the sheer pressure of necessity,



as an obligation towards the tribe, and a means of rearing the already growing children. The savages, as a rule, do not “multiply without stint”, as some English writers put it. On the contrary, they take all kinds of measures for diminishing the birthrate. A whole series of restrictions, which Europeans certainly would find extravagant, are imposed to that effect, and they are strictly obeyed. But notwithstanding that, primitive folk cannot rear all their children. However, it has been remarked that as soon as they succeed in increasing their regular means of subsistence, they at once begin to abandon the practice of infanticide.”[2]

“But if our scientist had lived amidst a half-starving tribe which does not possess among them all one man’s food for so much as a few days to come, he probably might have understood their motive. So also the savage, if he had stayed among us, and received our education, may be, would

understand our European indifference towards our neighbours, and our Royal Commissions for prevention of “baby farming”.”[3]

Kropotkin’s discussion of infanticide in *Mutual Aid* reveals he did not believe human’s to be essentially good and that he viewed morality, human nature and behaviour as contingent and situational, varying with or relative to environmental, social and historical conditions.

Conclusion:

Post-modernism embalms the Marxist corpse. French academic post-Marxists “never openly embraced the anarchist tradition” (CASp.11). But they universally plundered it when the collapse of their beloved Marxist-communist party left them with no useful or credible ideas to call their own. Post-modernism is the road-side debris left after the communist party truck-wreck was towed to the junk-yard of political history. The flag of the marxist intelligensia after passing through the consumer capitalist and neo-liberal washing machine resulted in the faded threadbare ideology of post whateverism. Post-anarchism is a new variant of this laundry fluff whose recipe comprises of random slices of libertarian Marxism, assorted cubes of communications theory, a dash of academic cyber-babble, “generous evocations of Nietzsche” (CASp.19), all dressed with lashings of French post-modern vinaigrette.

Some essays in these 3 recent collections of post-anarchist writings are possibly the least enjoyable reading material on Earth. They are jargonauts of arcana; avalanches of freshly invented confusing, long or foreign words that pile up on top of one another in quick succession. The unnecessary and unhelpful terminology intimidates and irritates rather than invigorating, informing or impressing. It really depresses me that such philosophical pretentiousness and incompetence is invoked in the name of anarchism and funded by public universities.

[1] See for example, Birdsell, J. B., *Spacing Mechanism and Adaptive Behaviour of Australian Aborigines*. in F.J. Ebling and D.M. Stoddart (eds.) *Population Control by Social Behavior*, London, Institute of Biology, 1978, pages 213-44. Infanticide, cannibalism etc are very common methods of population control observable in animals see the fascinating discussion in V. C. Wynne-Edwards, *Evolution Through Group Selection*, Oxford Blackwell Scientific Pubs. 1986.

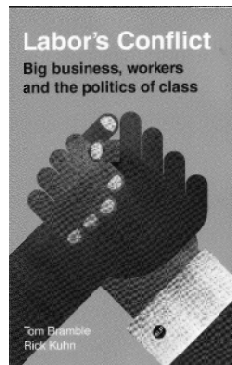
[2] *Mutual Aid*, 1915 Popular Edition, page 81.

[3] *Mutual Aid*, page 83

Labor's Conflict: Big Business, workers and the politics of class By Tom Bramble & Rick Kuhn, Published by Cambridge University Press.

Both authors of this volume come from a Trotskyist and vanguard Leftist sect background. The general outlook of this milieu informs their analysis of the development of the ALP (Australian Labor party) which comprises the core of this book. They accept the notion that the ALP is a capitalist workers' party and examine various key phases in its history showing how it fits the bill.

Particularly they demonstrate how it has always been supportive of the capitalist setup and with its base in the working class and distance from various capitalist factions, was able to pursue reforms which benefit the capitalist class as a whole. However, these moves can go off the rails such as the hostile reaction of mining companies to Rudd's plans for a mining tax, forcing a back down in the policy and the successful coup by rightwing elements in the ALP, resulting in Gillard becoming Prime Minister. The authors outline how in phases of upsurge in the class struggle, ALP Govts have introduced reforms such as the Whitlam Govt's introduction of Medicare which benefit the working class but don't fundamentally challenge the capitalist setup. With the growing crisis in profitability of capitalism since the mid 1970's and the Fall of the Berlin Wall and associated collapse of the State Socialist Bloc, the authors outline how the ALP has gone further rightward, adopting neo liberal policies such as privatisation, which make it in policy terms, little different



from the Liberals and demoralising its working class base. Contributing to this trajectory has been the union hierarchy, which the authors show still plays an important role in the party and sabotages workers resistance to employer attacks and Govt. neo liberal policies.

A deficiency in the book is the authors inadequate discussion of the mass Stalinism in the shape of the CPA (Communist Party of Australia) in its heyday and how it has influenced the ALP and the general left subculture. On page 65, the authors discuss the role of the rightwing "industrial groups" in ousting the CPA from control of various unions. However, the "industrial groups" copied Stalinist style organising techniques from the CPA, which has become very much the

stock in trade of the NSW Rightwing ALP faction. With the dissolution of the CPA in the early 1990's, many cogs in its industrial machine heavily informed by Stalinist ways have hooked up with the Rightwing ALP machine in the unions, and as advisors in ALP Govt. Ministries and corporations. In the authors' discussion of perspectives for countering the ALP and building a mass vanguard party, they hark back to the success of the CPA in recruiting thousands in the 1930's and the possibility for a future vanguard party doing the same. However, the ability of the CPA to obtain this mass recruitment must

of 1917. The detention of a minor caused a scandal and made the newspapers at the time. He joined the Communist Party in Tarragona in 1927, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, while completing his military service. In 1932 he was a militant, and one of the founders, of the Bloc Obrer i Comperol (BOC - The Workers and Peasants Bloc) in Tarrasa. After effective work in the press of that organization he participated in the founding of the POUM [The Workers' Party of Marxist Unification - a fusion of the BOC with the Izquierda Comunista de España, The Spanish Communist Left] in Las Planas in September 1935. Josep Rebull affirms that the foundation of the POUM took place in September 1935 in Las Planas (a popular picnic site close to Barcelona). Francisco De Cabo presents a different version. The versions are not contradictory but refer to two different and complimentary foundational acts of the POUM, one of a mass character, in which the militants of the

be seen in regard to the unique features of Stalinism. Particularly, the illusions many workers still had in the Soviet Union, the role of the Comintern, Moscow Gold and other carrots and sticks in preventing major splits in the CPA and placing it in a better position in terms of resources to rivals in the workers movement in obtaining recruits and launching campaigns. The existing leftist sects which wave flags with the hammer and sickle or red and black or circle a's, are crippled by the Stalinist legacy in terms of adopting underhanded Stalinist style ways, but lack the unique advantages of the CPA in its Stalinist years. As a result, such groupings become largely opportunities for a slim layer of uni students to have an unwholesome social life and the party gurus to develop swell heads. A more realistic perspective for countering the ALP and its malevolent influence would be the building of a syndicalist style direct action movement in industry and the creation of the transitional steps such as a bloc of grass roots friendly direct action oriented unions leading to the crystallisation of a confederation of mass syndicalist industrial unions. Such developments would be crucial to countering the employer offensive and the ALP apparatus on the job in the shape of bureaucratic unionism. It is in such a scenario that a major turn would occur in the class struggle and the "whirlwind" of the employer offensive stopped. Important moves in this direction would be long range organisational work and the associated publication of work place papers in strategic industries. Facilitating the networking of militants, raising workers' morale and countering management and union hierarchy propaganda.

A biographical sketch of Josep Rebull, 1906/1999 - Agustín Guillamón

Josep Rebull Cabré was born in Tivissa (Tarragona) in 1906. His entry into social struggles followed the example of his older brother, the well known POUM militant Daniel Rebull ("David Rey")

Daniel Rebull participated in all the social struggles from 1915 to franquismo, in the CNT, BOC and the POUM (revolutionary forces). He spent long periods in jail, 19 years throughout his life. Condemned to death under Franco, his sentence was later commuted. He was 11 when arrested for the first time, in his brother's house in Barcelona, as a result of the general strike

BOC approved the foundation of the POUM, as narrated by Rebull, and the other more restricted and informal, in which militants of the BOC and ICE met, as related by De Cabo. In February 1936 he appeared on the electoral lists of the POUM in Tarragona.

During the revolutionary events of July 19th 1936, Rebull took part in the street fighting in Barcelona's Plaza de Catalunya with a group of a hundred militants, among whom were Carmel Rosa ('Roc'), Rovira, Algemir, Vidal etc. Despite finding himself next to Germinal Vidal, secretary of the Communist Youth (JCI) who was killed in a confrontation with a military squad with whom they were parleying in the Plaza de Universidad, Rebull escaped unharmed.

Taking over the administration of the requisitioned press of the Catalan El Correo, Rebull organised the press of the POUM and the output of the Editorial Marxista. Gaston Davoust, leader of the French

group 'Union Communiste', spent three weeks in Barcelona, in the months of August and September 1936, during which time he carried out various interviews with anarchist leaders and the POUM, and began his friendship with Josep Rebull.

On 21st July the CNT and the POUM supported the formation in Cataluña of the Central Committee of Antifascist Militias (CCMA) in which representatives of the bourgeois parties also participated. On 26th September Andreu Nin, political secretary of the POUM, without consulting the party membership, accepted the charge of the Ministry of Justice in the government of the Generalitat, retaining the position until his expulsion on 13th December as a result of Stalinist pressure. 1st October 1936 produced the self-dissolution of the CCMA, on 9th October the Generalitat, with the participation of the POUM and the CNT, decreed the dissolution of the local committees that were to be substituted by Popular Front local governments. On 13th October a decree elaborated and signed by Nin himself swept away the revolutionary work of Barriobero in the justice tribunals, on 24th October he approved the decrees of militarization of the Peoples' Militias and the control of public order by a Council of Internal Security.

In January of 1937 Nin wrote to the Central Executive of the Socialist Party (PSOE) proposing the participation of the POUM in the conferences of unification between the PSOE and the PSE. Andreu Nin: "To the Executive Commission of the Socialist Party. (Barcelona, 22nd January 1937)". Only a few days later the Stalinist repression against the poumistas began in Madrid. The Stalinist repression against the POUM starts in Madrid" in *La Batalla* (9th February 1937).

Tarradellas promulgated a battery of economic and financial decrees, known as the Decrees of S'Agaró, that began the Generalitat's offensive to take control of the collectivized companies. At the beginning of March the decree on Public Order, and the dissolution of the 'Control Patrols', rejected by the CNT, sparked a long and serious crisis in the Generalitat. The day to day life of the workers was affected by the rising cost of living, the ration queues and the scarcity of basic products. March and April 1937 saw multiple confrontations in various parts of Cataluña between anarchist militants and the forces of the Generalitat and the PSUC; among the most notable occurred in Bellver de Cardaña. A struggle began between militants of the CNT, partisans of collectiviza-

tion and workers' control, and the interventionism of the Generalitat, precipitated by the decrees of S'Agaró. Monjo Omedes, Anna, 'La CNT durant la II República a Barcelona: Líders, militants, afiliats' doctoral thesis, Barcelona, 1994. Workers assemblies in the factories were frequent, albeit limited by the presence of the forces of public order. Vega, Carme and Monjo, Anna; Vilanova, Mercedes: "Socialización y Hechos de Mayo: una nueva aportación a partir del proceso a Mauricio Stevens (2 de junio 1937)". *Historia y fuente oral* n° 3 (1990).

In March 1937 a wide section of POUM militants protested at the lack of internal discussion and the most recent postponement of their congress, which had been put off in December 1936, February '37, and again in March. In March and April the



weekly meetings of the political secretaries and the organization of the district committees, in which the cells of the party were organized, expressed the discontent of the rank and file. Thus the local committee (CL) of Barcelona became a strong body of opposition to the POUM leadership, calling for the congress and beginning a debate about political work at the front, which went against the

rules about the formation of cells in the militia, and also about the participation of the party in a bourgeois government, supposedly against the strategy hitherto followed by the Central Executive (CE). Correspondence between "Negrete" [Russell Blackwell] and "Oehler, 1936-37 [exact photocopies of the letters written by "Negrete", the majority to "Oehler", dated Barcelona between 26/11/36 and 4/11/37. Access to documentation facilitated by Andy Durgan, for whose generosity we are grateful. On 13th April, as the culmination of these acts of protest, the product of widespread unrest at the militant base of the party, a meeting was held between the CL of Barcelona and the Central Committee, at which Josep Martí, secretary of the CL, and Josep Rebull achieved approval for and wide distribution of the manifesto of the Barcelona CL, published in *La Batalla* on 15th April. This manifesto is reproduced in *Balance*, n° 19. This contained reference to the crisis of the Generalitat, criticizing the collaboration of the POUM with that government, and calling for the formation of a Workers'

Revolutionary Front that would enshrine workers' councils as organs of power. It also announced the new convocation of the 2nd Congress of the party for 8th May, to give plenty of opportunity for the publication and distribution in the internal bulletins of the counter-theses of the different cells to the official thesis of the CE.

On 16th April Nin attended a meeting of the Barcelona CL at which he managed to prevent the publication of a leaflet against the official line of the party. According to Nin they should not have been speaking of soviets but of syndical government. See the positions defended by Nin in the article reproduced as an annexe to *Balance*, n° 20.

Josep Rebull was the secretary of Cell 72 in Barcelona. The counter argument signed by Cell 72 (some 12 militants) that was published in the discussion bulletin of the 2nd Congress, edited by the Barcelona CL, was his work and did not originate but pick up on, deepen and theorise the contradictions and protests of the POUM's militant base against the political strategy of the CE. That it was signed "Cell 72" rather than Josep Rebull was due simply to the requirements of the congress rules.

During the May days Rebull was taken hostage by a Stalinist squad. He made three chief interventions in the events of those days, but he never called for the comrades of the CNT to take power, as affirmed in 'The Spanish Civil War. The View from the Left' Revolutionary History, vol. 4, nos. but limited himself to posing this question to the CE of his own party.

These three interventions were:

An interview between Cell 72 and the Friends of Durruti Group (FOD) on the night of May 4th, at which it was decided not to take any initiative given the minority character of both organizations, and because they considered that the action the CNT were to take would be decisive.

An interview with the CE of the POUM: Nin, Andrade and Gorkin, at which, with a map of Barcelona in his hand, he demonstrated the certainty of a military victory if the POUM decided to attack the government buildings in the centre of the city, to which the CE responded that they were dealing with a political rather than a military question: the taking of power would mean breaking anti-fascist unity and precipitate a rapid victory for Franco's army.

Ceding the POUM printing press to the FOD on 8th May so that they, no longer authorized by the CNT, could put out a manifesto that drew a balance sheet of the recent events.

The serious events of these days, from 3rd to 7th May, made it impossible to convoke the POUM congress, again postponed until 19th June, in time for the international *See Page 20*

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news in this edition of RW is the brazen roting of the approval of RailCorp Enterprise 2010 by the union hierarchy and the rail bosses. Rather than the agreement being referred to mass union meetings for approval, the agreement was voted upon at RailCorp management organised events, so called "Briefings". These gatherings were oozing with slick salesmanship and intimidation by the bosses. RailCorp EA 2010 will have wide ramifications within the NSW public transport and other parts of the public sector. As associated with the EA are major cut backs to sick leave and redundancy entitlements. The reduction in redundancy packages to a maximum of 26 weeks or 2 weeks pay for each year of service up to 13 years, will obviously play a key role in facilitating large scale job losses associated with privatisation moves. (See article Page 3)

The new grass roots public transport workers' organisation "Members' Voice" has been very active in the fight back against the RailCorp EA 2010 sellout, with its issuing of a series of flyers which were distributed on the job and at the "Briefings". Another important ramification of the emergence of "Members' Voice" has been the major networking of militants throughout the railways and buses. Certainly, we are seeing the most important development of workers' organisation in this sector in over 30 years. This resurgence of grassroots organisation has so concerned the Rightwing ALP machine which runs the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) that its has tried to disrupt Members' Voice organising by sending along various cogs in their machine to Members' Voice meetings to cause havoc.

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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.

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Continued From Page 18 conference which was to be meeting on 19th July. The political tactics of the CE were widely criticized by a wide sector of its militants and Andreu Nin was probably on the point of being dismissed from his post as secretary. With the repression against the POUM, triggered on 16th June, the party closed ranks and the critics of the collaborationist policy, given the impossibility of convening the 2nd Congress, were provisionally silent.

Rebull found himself isolated as the rest of the members of Cell 72 failed to stick by their positions. Consequently, with the possibility of convening a congress definitively ruled out, the so called Left of the POUM in Barcelona had only one militant at the beginning of 1938: Josep Rebull. In number 3 of *La Voz Leninista* (Feb 38) Munis strongly criticised the political action of Rebull because, while acknowledging the correctness of his political positions and his critique of the CE of the POUM, he never broke with the organisation. In Munis's opinion Rebull lacked the decisiveness to follow his ideas to their logical conclusion, the courage to break with the POUM and join the 4th International. For one year he lived clandestinely in Barcelona, occupying alternately Joaquín Maurín's flat on Calle Padua or a rented room on Calle Llibretaria. Until April he was continuously active in the editing and distribution of the POUM's clandestine press; as well as in giving solidarity and help to prisoners through assiduous visits to Irujo, the Minister of Justice, to achieve the transfer of POUM militants from the Stalinist Cheka prisons (where they could disappear without trace) to republican prisons. But with the omnipresent Stalinist repression against POUM militants, and the growing difficulty in avoiding military enrolment, he was enlisted in the army under a false name at the end of 1938.

Josep Rebull was never won to Trotskyism. Proof is to be found in his un-

interrupted militancy in the POUM and his membership of the CE in exile until 1953, when he tendered his resignation. Rebull always claimed to third parties to have had health problems, to justify a resignation that had an exclusively political character, albeit with a shade of "personalized" struggle with other comrades of the party, which he wanted to hide or minimize for reasons of modesty typical of his personality.

The episode of the Committee of Defence of the 2nd Congress of the POUM, in July 1939, halfway between the end of the civil war and the beginning of World War 2, although it involved the cropping up of a Bolshevik-Leninist group in the POUM, and a certain collaboration of this group with Rebull, was neither profound nor prolonged enough as to win Rebull to the Fourth International.

The thesis defended by Cell 72, that cannot be categorized as either Trotskyist or Councilist, highlighted the contradiction in the CE of the POUM between theory and practice, as, according to Rebull, it theorized the formation of a workers' government while at the same time sustaining and strengthening the bourgeois government of the Generalitat.

On 27th September 1985, at the seminar on historical studies commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the POUM, in Ca l'Ardiaca in Barcelona, Rebull intervened in the heated debate where the majority of POUM militants accused Pierre Broué. There is a written critique of Broué's intervention in *Iglesias*, Ignacio: "Some notes on the paper presented by Professor Pierre Broué in the study seminar organized for the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the POUM". This article was published in *Fundació Andreu Nin: Notes for the History of the POUM* (Barcelona, 1989).fn (I believe unfairly) of giving a Trotskyist vision of the POUM: "Broué has not come to flatter anybody but to point out the failure of the POUM as a revolutionary organization, that was born with so many hopes, that

through the years became blurred, shedding parts of its program at each corner of its history. There is nothing more stubborn than the facts, and the POUM did fail as a revolutionary party. I agree with the analysis that a revolutionary organization cannot go beyond what is allowed by the revolutionary situation and the revolutionary spirit of the masses. But the POUM, as Cell 72 analysed at the time, failed as a revolutionary vanguard." The words of Rebull were like a bell ringing, inviting a revolutionary critique of the mistakes made by the POUM in the civil war; however they were barely heard in the uncomradely mess of personalized conflict between the old militant poumistas, in favour or against entryism to the PSOE, and indeed sounded a little 'eccentric' in the midst of so much point missing. The person of Josep Rebull, who never renounced his critiques of 1937-9, and the great political value of his thought are reflected in a sentence uttered at the above event, that sum up his militant trajectory and his (personally painful) valuation of the POUM never having been a revolutionary party: "It would have been better for us militants of the POUM to have been executed as revolutionaries before a firing squad, than have been judged as traitors to the Republic."

Having crossed the French border in February 1939, Rebull spent some months in Paris in the house of Gaston Davoust ("H. Chazé"). For some months he worked, like so many other exiles of the extreme left of all nationalities, in the confiture factory *Croque-Fruit*, managed by Trotskyists. While in Marseilles he became friends with the writer Jean Malaquais, his neighbor in Air-Bel. In the summer of 1943 he intervened in the French Resistance, until his arrest by the Gestapo and his eventual liberation in 1944..

Long since retired in the beautiful Rosellón village of Banyuls-sur-mer, he died in his 90s on 22nd May 1999.

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