

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia

Vol. 31 No.1 (212) Jan.-Feb. 2012

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

Don't Build The "Occupy" Cult, Organise
on the Job for Direct Action!



**N.S.W. FIRE BRIGADE UNION NEWS;
QANTAS LOCKOUT;
N.S.W. RAILWAYS DECAY;
BRITAIN TODAY;
IRISH FACTORY OCCUPATION;
BOOK REVIEW CORNER;**

**"OCCUPY" & UNIONISTS;
STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH;
VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS;
GREEK ANTI-AUSTERITY UPSURGE;
REBEL IRISH UNIONISM HISTORY;
NEWS & NOTES;**

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

P.O. BOX 92

BROADWAY 2007 NSW

E-mail:

rworke@chaos.apana.org.au

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

AUSTRALIA: \$12 a year

OVERSEAS

\$25 (Aus.) by Air

\$20 (Aus.) by Sea mail

Free to Prisoners

Supporters Subs. \$40 pa

Receives copies of RW & ASN

Pamphlets as published.

Send to the above. Postal Orders only should be made out to Rebel Worker.

N.S.W. FIRE BRIGADE UNION NEWS

Working for The Clampdown

The NSW firefighters union has now been almost completely overrun by management. Every week a new attack on wages, conditions or work practices is launched against firefighters, tying up the union's resources and stopping the union from campaigning for improvements to wages and conditions. Management's strategy to lure the union into reacting to management initiatives has been so successful that major structural change within the industry is steaming ahead with little or no resistance.

Close to 200 permanently employed firefighters have been recruited to the "volunteer" Rural Fire Service. A foothold in the creation of an alternate force of strike breakers should the Fire Brigade Employees' Union stop work. Legislation is now being drafted which will grant the

insurance industry a massive tax break and see rate payers slugged with funding firefighters wages and conditions. This will pit rate payers directly against firefighters in every claim for wages or conditions. Things are grim now and are about to get a lot worse as budgets are slashed and firefighters jobs cut.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that the current strategy isn't working and the union needs to change. Fighting a four-year battle to hang on to what you have until the next election means at best you hold the line. More likely the union will go backwards but the one certainty is that the union can't go forward. Under Jim Casey's control the union is now isolated from every other firefighters union in Australia. Public sector unions throughout NSW have been compromised by the decision to cut a deal and accept 2.5% without a fight. The union is now on the nose with most firefighters. Just months out from an election a raft of changes to union rules have been pushed through which will strip members of democratic rights and consolidate power in the hands an inner clique of mates.

A block of 24 rule changes was announced the day before Xmas Eve. The 24 changes were buried in a 55 page document - a strategy designed to ensure as few people as possible were aware and could object within the 28 days needed to force a plebiscite. By far the most undemocratic rule allows the secretary of the union to call the quarterly meeting of the state committee of management via electronic means. Under this new rule unless every member present signs to verify decisions made, these decisions will have been invalid and the four person executive will be running the union. This rule will allow the current executive and its senior industrial officer to continue running the union regardless of who is voted onto the management committee following the 2012 union election. A brazen assault on democracy which treats firefighters with utter contempt.

Rules have been created which will deny most of the 25% of firefighters working at any one time the right to vote. For many years firefighters have been organizing meetings of on shift firefighters and voting in fire stations. As this was progressively rolled out across the state more and more firefighters were attending meetings and exercising their democratic rights. This has now been rolled back and hundreds of firefighters will be disenfranchised. The number of firefighters attending meetings will collapse and the legitimacy of decisions will be undermined as the power and control of the union's inner sanctum is increased. Until more than 50% of all financial members of any union vote a question of legitimacy will always hang over union decisions.

To add insult to injury, further lock down the union and keep members away from running the show, the union leadership has doubled the number of firefighters required to object and force a vote of all members on these rule changes. Where as prior to these changes close to 100 members of the union would have to sign a petition demanding a postal vote on these rules, this has now been doubled so that 200 members of the union must sign a petition to get a vote on the rules. A big ask in any ones book when most fire brigades have between 12 and 16 firefighters.

As if this wasn't enough a further change has been made to the timing of the union's triennial election. The statewide election has now been pushed forward to February rather than March. This will mean a union election will have been kicked off prior to any vote firefighters might get on changes to these union rules. Regardless of the members' decision on these rules, an election will have been held and in all likelihood the same shadowy figure running the union will be dreaming ways to lock in his own job security and lock out member control of a once democratic union.

By Concerned Firery

Rebel Worker
Web Site -
www.rebelworker.org

What can We and the Trade Unions learn from the Occupy Movement?

By *Crimson Coconut*

Introducing the Occupation

Inspired by uprisings in the Middle East and the struggles and sacrifices involved in overthrowing despotic and corrupt regimes there, it is now the turn of people in the West to rise up against undemocratic and unrepresentative regimes to regain some self respect.

The continuous crisis of capitalism in the US, Europe and globalised consequences elsewhere are bringing into focus the extreme economic and social inequality between a small elite of bankers, politicians and businessmen (the 1%) whose combined incomes are equal to that of 99% of the rest of the population. For this reason the mass of disaffected and dispossessed in the US have called themselves the 99%.

In Australia the disparity between the elites 1% and the 99% is growing. According to the ABS, on 2009-2010 figures, the wealthiest 20% of households in Australia account for 62% of total household net worth, with an average net worth of \$2.2 million per household. While the 20% of households with the lowest net worth accounted for only 1% of total household net worth, with an average net worth of \$31,829 per household.

Globalisation of capital and of economies around the world, in trade pacts, has exacerbated the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands. Nowhere has this been more clearly illustrated than in the United States. The huge over indulgent middle class which was an essential character of the United States in the 50's and 60's no longer exists. What's left is a small wealthy class, that owns most of the wealth. This privileged capitalist class dictates and lauds it over the rest of the population which has been impoverished. Millions are unemployed, millions of people have lost their homes and millions (estimated 40 million homeless across America) more (overwhelmingly African Americans) languish in gaols. A real despair has settled over the US.

Detroit, once the showpiece of US car manufacturing, a capitalist dream on wheels, is now officially bankrupt. Garbage goes uncollected, teachers still teach in the neighbourhoods but they are often not paid. 50 million Americans don't have

any access to health care at all. This same scenario is repeated in cities across the United States from California to Seattle and New Orleans to the Great Lakes.

Out of this despair arose Occupy Wall Street aimed at the centre of all of the excesses of the super rich as an antidote to the pain and suffering that people were feeling. Occupy Wall Street protests were a new beginning, awakening ordinary people



ple to the possibilities of taking back the wealth stolen from them by the bankers, speculators and mere gamblers centred on Wall Street.

What started out as a symbolic protest and occupation changed the way ordinary people saw themselves. They connected the dots and saw that they had been swindled and cheated by a system of exploitation on behalf of the 1%. They keep being told to go along with a system in which the wealth created by the rich would "trickle down" to them providing for their every need. The truth is that the wealthy create no wealth but behave as leeches feeding on the productive capacity of workers. Instead of providing for all, the system impoverishes the majority while making the super rich wealthier beyond their dreams.

Instead of just feeling victimised though, people supporting the Occupy protests saw that, through solidarity and with expe-

rience, they might just be able to dismantle the system of exploitation. They now glimpse that another reality is possible. The creation of an economic system that takes into account the needs of the majority of the population, rather than benefiting a small group of crooks, is no longer a dream but manifests itself as a distinct objective etched into individual and collective consciousness.

The hope expressed as Occupy Wall Street caught on like wildfire, sparking the imagination of millions of ordinary people, firstly in the US, then 2720 cities and communities around the world. The Occupy Movement worldwide was born in an awakening of possibilities for those that could see they were no longer alone in dreaming about creating a future full of hope, free from exploitation. Because of the implications for working people over their collective attempts to exert power over the bosses, banks and businesses the Occupy Movement should be of interest to trade unions around the world.

So far in Australia only a handful of traditional militant trade unions have seen fit to support actions by the Occupy Movement here. There is even a group called Occupy Workplaces supporting workers struggles. Yet the Occupy Movement is treated generally by the majority of trade unions as a passing aberration. This is a mistake.

So what do the Trade Unions here and around the world have to learn from the success of the Occupiers here and around the world?

No Leaders, No Platform?

The Occupy Movement is portrayed in the press as having no leadership or of not making their demands clear. Despite this, a multitude of causes are represented from environmental, anti-nuclear, anti-war, women, labour and trade union, social justice, economic equality, anti-globalisation, socialists, anarchists etc. All of them are united by one single need. The need to fight back against the economic and social repression and lack of democracy of the Elite 1% who are against the 99%, the rest of us. This is the root cause of all suffering. This solidarity and clarity through multiple "cause" channels is what makes the movement strong and bamboozles the press lackeys of the

1%. This is class warfare and the problem is capitalism, but the press, like canaries whistling sweet tunes for their owners, cannot see outside of their feeding cages. Everyone who donates time, money or effort to the Occupy Movement is a leader. There are no limits about what a person collectively does, as long as the action adheres to an agreed collective position. All viewpoints are listened to and everyone's contribution is equal according to ability. Some will be able to make greater contributions than others, at different times, due to different skills levels and utilisation. That is a strength.

In most Australian Trade Unions, on the other hand, the only democratic act that members can take part in is the election of the leadership every few years. Even then elections are contentious with members and unelected spin jockeys are appointed as organisers even though they don't have the support of a majority of the union membership. After elections the leadership don't really want to know the rank and file. The only communication members have with the leadership is some article in the union journal which acts as a propaganda tool for the leadership to promote themselves. Suggestions, offers of help are often represented as interference.

How different would the unions be if they treated members not just as consumers of their services, but as a resource which they could use to win struggles and to add bargaining power during wage and condition negotiations?

Debates within union council or debates within the workplace over tactics is non-existent, even though workers do have strong views on many issues. In the coming period unions will have to open up to the members that they have at their disposal instead of merely acting as agents for political parties. The world has changed and people will demand that institutions such as trade unions change with them, be it voluntarily or forcefully. The great tide of class history is about to consume them.

Democratic Decision Making

Within the Occupy Movement everyone is clear about their roles. People viewing Occupy from outside of the movement have likened Occupy's proceedings to that of a cult. While this may be true there is still unity of purpose and clarity about the way people conduct themselves and about how the Movement moves forward. A whole new art and culture is emerging from within.

Across all of the Occupy communities most of the procedures and methods of operation have been standardised to enhance the democratic process. General Assemblies (GA's) are the decision making body of each of the Occupations. Anyone who is committed to the movement can put forward positions on tactics or principles. Voting and debate then takes place until consensus is reached or the motion is rejected. Once a platform or position is agreed to then everyone is obliged to follow that position until it is rescinded by a subsequent GA.



Police attack the Baida Picket Line

Compare this to the actions of some unions. Despite members voting and agreeing to industrial action it is mostly overturned by the Leadership because it might hurt their political affiliates. (In Australia this will most likely be the ALP). The Union Movement's tactics or agenda rarely involve the rank and file in consultation and advice is never sought from the ranks despite them knowing the issues better, in most cases, than the leadership. A few unions from militant traditions such as the MUA and to a lesser extent unions such as the CFMEU will mobilise the ranks when the need arises. But as far as the day to day running of union affairs and fight back planning goes, input from members is minimal.

Not driven by budgets or assets.

The Occupy Movement around the world is run on meagre resources mostly provided by people supporting the movement. All resources go into furthering the cause. The movement is driven by donations from supporters, yet food is provided to

feed anyone who turns up and the dynamics of the movement continues to accelerate using the ingenuity and labour of the participants involved.

Many of the Occupy sites have had their resources either destroyed or confiscated in police raids which are orchestrated to close down the movement. Despite this wilful damage on behalf of the authorities the Occupy Movement increases its momentum.

Contrast this with the Trade Union movement which has the constant threat of fines and confiscations, which are written into law, hanging over their heads. Many of the larger unions are flush with cash to the tune of millions of dollars, plus buildings and assets worth many millions more.

The Trade Union bureaucrats are reticent to put this loot, which belongs to members, on the line even when it may be necessary to spend to challenge the bosses on behalf of members. Instead they prefer to keep all the trappings of privilege inside a respectable and intact comfort zone which has the chance of being jeopardised if they challenged authority at all. At least that's the excuse that they give. They don't care that a unions strength is measured not by what capital it owns but by the success and militancy of its members. They have, in a way, usurped their reason for existing and replaced it with a concerted campaign of organised accumulation of capital. Capital which may used at some later date, or if they so decide, not at all.

Occupy and workers struggles.

The Occupy Movement is only months old, yet, it has had a profound effect on industrial struggles here and abroad. Union struggles which only months ago had a poor prospect of succeeding are suddenly being won.

Not only is this due to the direct support of the Occupy Movement, it is due in part to the changing psychology of the workers movement, especially in the US where conditions are much harsher. The Occupy Movement has won the hearts and minds of workers who have emancipation deeply imprinted within their consciousness. Recent opinion polls here and overseas point to the fact that there is majority support amongst working people for the Occupy Movement, even if those same people do not find the time or energy to be with supporters in the parks and on the streets.

Unlike in Australia, in the US where the Occupy Movement kicked off, many Trade Unions have seen fit to support and

work with the Movement. In New York the TWU was one of the first unions to offer support to Occupy Wall Street. Occupy Wall Street will now stand in solidarity with the Transport Workers Union as they begin their campaign for a fair contract. Their success in negotiations is greatly enhanced because of the support of OWS.

On the 12th December 2011 a coordinated response of the Occupy Movement was able to shut down the west coast shipping ports from Seattle to Austin in support of port workers and port transport workers. This has been the most successful action of the Occupation Movement so far. There continues to be Occupier support for poorly paid workers at Walmart and other anti union businesses.

In Australia the Occupy Movement in the cities threw their support behind locked out Qantas employees, adding some weight to their campaign which is still ongoing.

The Baida Chicken workers strike has been one of the most successful in Australia this year. Workers went on strike over poor working conditions and an attempt by management to reduce their poor wage of an hourly \$15 down to a paltry \$10 by using temporary, part time workers and contractors. This followed on from the death of a contract worker last year who was decapitated by a machine yet was not covered for workers compensation by Baida. Conditions at the chicken processing plant were extremely unsafe and bullying and intimidation was rife.

Baida workers who were on strike were harassed and there were several attempts by Baida management to use strike-breakers. One security guard drove his car headlong into striking picketers only to be set upon by workers on the picket.

The Occupy Movement not only supported the picket line but organised pickets of stores selling Baida chickens. The workers went on to win the campaign, winning a 4% pay rise over 2 years along with other improvements to conditions including an increase in redundancy pay from 20 to 42 weeks. The real heroes here are the Baida workers, but the added support of all those that took part gave immense courage to the workers who can hold their heads up high as ultimate winners.

Daring to dream - imagining the future.

An awakening spurred on by the Occupy Movement, although it in its infancy, is allowing workers to dare to dream again. The Australian Government is threatening to revise Fair Work Australia legisla-

tion as a result. If workers become emboldened enough the Fair Work Australia industrial legislation must be campaigned against and eventually dismantled. The threats to workers' rights in the Fair Work Australia legislation will become more apparent as workers grasp the metal and try to break with the restraints imposed by the world economic crisis.

The rights of workers to withdraw their labour was enshrined in legislation just a few years ago. This right is slowly being withdrawn to the point where it is outlawed altogether in some countries.

We will have to fight to have the right to strike restored as a basic human right. In the mean time that should not stop us from striking when it becomes necessary with the consent of all of the workers involved.

Trade unions must share blame

Trade Unions around the world must bear a major burden of responsibility for the predicament that workers are now finding themselves in. The issues involved are traditionally labour union bread and butter issues. The Occupy Movement is a response to the lack of action on inequality and falling living standards by the trade union movement.

Many trade union leaderships have kowtowed to businesses and governments under urgings for restraint while the same naysayers have been filling the larder, squandering the spoils and waging wars at workers expense. Bureaucrats within the trade union movement have overseen the biggest shift from wages to profits in recent history only to create the greatest inequality in the modern era.

At the same time the level of industrial dispute has slowed to a trickle. Trade union membership overall fell from 20% in August 2009 to 18% in August 2010. In the public sector there was a net loss of 5% of union members over the same period down to 41% union membership. Some of this drop is due to job losses in the public sector.

Privatisation of public assets is hardly challenged by the unions despite public sentiment to retain services in private hands. The unions have capitulated on this one as well. No wonder members don't see any reason why they should belong to unions. What for? Political allegiances have tied the hands of union leaders despite the fact that they exist totally for their members. So the NSW unions twiddle their thumbs as electricity is privatised, the ferries are "franchised" resulting in job losses and higher prices. The union leadership is left to pick up the crumbs.

The leadership of the trade unions are in denial about the causes of the crises facing their members and are bereft of ideas on how to fix it. A class based understanding of the crisis of capitalism is an essential starting point, but denial and political expediency drives them back to complacency and workers take one step backwards once again.

On the other hand the Occupy Movement is a class act. They are out there fighting a class war against the traditional enemy of workers, the bosses, the bankers, their political lackeys, and the big money men. Their language may not reflect that of the class struggles of the past, but sure enough they know who the enemy is and they are going after them.

What if the trade union movement had mobilised the same numbers as the Occupy Movement in a concerted attack against corruption and corporate greed? What if the trade unions had listened to the suffering of their members and mobilised them to lift them from their poverty in order to pay off their mortgages? All of these questions, although hypothetical, need answers.

Who, if not the trade unions, ensures that we workers get a fair share of the cake? Who, for that matter, ensures that we get the best possible leadership, one that treats workers as equals and fights the good fight as directed by the members? It all comes down to us. We must throw out this gutless and self serving union leadership which is fiddling while Rome burns.

The Occupy Movement has shown that if you fight you can win. Sure it is a beginning and there are losses as well. The alternative is to do nothing and go under without a whimper. Encouragingly there is a new optimism, especially amongst young people who see no future unless they take it for themselves.

Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on which side you are on, in the coming period the trade unions and political parties who do not take their members seriously or do not see the opportunities that the revolutionary upsurge around the world represents will be judged to be class collaborators and outlive their usefulness. New democratic organisations will arise to take their place and all that wealth, all that privilege, all that subservience will be for nought. Preferably they may change their minds and decide to join the fight back. But don't hold your breath.

QANTAS LOCKOUT

There has been comparisons between the recent Qantas lockout and the situation in Phillipines etc.

This action by Qantas management was an attempt to break our unions, our ability to be a collective, our ability to be strong. This is not an isolated case. It is part of a push by airlines in the region to drive down the wages and conditions of their workers. Philippines Airlines, Garuda Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Kuwait Airlines and Japan Airlines are all attempting to make workers work longer for less. This represents a race to the bottom. The only winners are the capitalists who will make even bigger profits. We demand equal pay for equal work, no matter what city, what state or what country it is in.

A living wage for all workers. Workers of the world, united we are strong.

Workers Change the World. Australia Asia Worker Links

My Own Comments on recent Qantas Lockout

In the Phillipines after 30 day lockout airline workers occupied their terminals and were evicted by Police, in Australia at Qantas zzzzzzzz ?

BUSINESS UNIONS QANTAS FRANCHISE

Divide and rule, demarcation feuding Officials of 15 business/craft unions at terminals and ACTU/ALP pollytricks vs the Engineers in their trade association, baggage handlers in TWU; any Pilots who survived mauling back in 1989 by Hawke

regime who busted the Pilots association with scabs and military air force. Wannabe PM Abbot hates unions and is encouraging Joyce to "reform" with old union buster from Howard regime Peter "I hate the MUA" Reith cheering him



on...fugly "choice" of sell out Laberal or sell off Labor ?

Murdoch media globally is pushing for airline "reform" agenda which means more of what Reagan did in 1980s to bust air traffic controllers. Since then cheaper flight racket with compromised safety and over worked and lower paid airline staff. like Ryan Air, Tiger etc.

Joyce plan is to lock everyone out "outsource" jobs eg engineers maintenance, cut pay and conditions, casualise all workers, use cheaper labour crews, and then give bonuses to those he sees were ruthless Managers. Joyce already gave himself a pay rise and Branson's Virgin is now cashed up carrying extra passengers ex-Qantas. This is not only Melbourne but nationwide and international dispute and the business unions with Politician wannabe Officials have baulked at direct action....

Again here recall in the Phillipines workers locked out for 30 days occupied termi-

nus and were evicted by Police but finally took direct action for themselves, here there is little or no direct action and solidarity discouraged.

HISTORY REPEATING?

Back in 1969 was last time there was general strike here in Australia. When 1 million workers stopped to free jailed tramways union official Clarrie O'Shea. Trams blockaded the City.

From the experience O'Shea argued there should be progressive amalgamated union of bus, train, tram and taxi drivers, ship and airline pilots into an industrial union of all transport workers. Alas the bureaucrats in other unions and Politicians repressed the proposal.

If that had been organised Qantas, Anset, Compass and many other transport workers might still have good jobs, we might still have tram conductors, still have railway station assistants, not had racist attacks on tax-drivers...so many problems that with worker's solidarity through worker's control could have been soon overcome. Instead we are about to have Liberal regime of Ballieu impose armed security guards on train stations at night where there is not even a public toilet any more let alone workers. New kids on the block OCCUPY Melbourne like Occupy Sydney who went to Qantas shareholders meeting to support the 99% workers against 1% Boss Joyce.

Terminal Delegates welcomed solidarity offer of showing up at midday today but Officials with careers in mind Instead have discouraged. This sort of injustice can cause unrest.

ex-Brunswick tram depot connie - V

midday drivers were on routes. Some returned, when told by the public. School special runs were completed, as a priority on diesel buses.

On the day of the stoppage, one of the union officials attended the depot and was issuing flyers to drivers to hand to the public explaining the background to the dispute. Depot management appeared to have no problem with the appearance of the union official and his action. However, when one of our union reps, Zivko who has been on long term leave but attends union meetings to help out the other reps, became involved. The bosses told him to go home. He told them, to call the police, if they wanted him to leave. The bosses, of

State Transit Newsflash

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Rebel Worker: What do you think of the background of the snap strike over the gas buses?

Leichhardt Driver: Some months ago, a driver was on his way back to Pt. Botany Depot in an empty gas bus at the end of his run. A motorist alerted him to flames coming out of the rear. He pulled over and abandoned the bus which caught fire and was burnt out. (See Photo) Subsequently, the STA hid the whole issue under the carpet at Strawberry Hills. The union offi-

cials heard about the issue and made inquiries. Whilst the STA refused to admit the problem. According to the union officials, following a member of the public providing a video of the burning gas bus, they took action on the issue by calling the snap stoppage.

RW: What happened at Leichhardt during the stoppage?

LD: Bus services from Leichhardt were very much affected, but as by the time we heard of the ban, many early broken and

course failed to call the police. He was accused of intimidation. As was Leon, another rep, for standing near the yard door and giving advice to union members.

Enter "Mr Pinocchio"

Mark Peters, STA area manager came to the depot and in Pinocchio mode, was spreading management dis-information by telling drivers that 95% of gas buses at Pt. Botany, which has a huge fleet of these buses, were operating. In fact, overwhelmingly the gas buses at Pt. Botany were taken off the road. The STA refused to allow the Radio Room to send out messages about the ban on the gas buses to drivers. So drivers on some shifts who had not come back to the depot were still operating the gas buses. However, members of the public who had seen media reportage of the dispute alerted these drivers at bus stops. So at the completion of their runs, some returned to the depot. This attitude of the bosses to this safety issue, reminded me of a similar situation during the dispute over buses with faulty steering columns several years ago. When I was at Wynyard on this occasion, I was suddenly told by the radio room to return to the depot. When I returned, I was told the bus may have faulty steering and many other gas buses were being taken off the road to check for cracks in steering parts. What would have happened on the Anzac Bridge, if I lost control of the steering, due to the fault on the return to the depot!

Following a directive from the Industrial Relations Commission to cease the ban, the gas buses were put back on the road. However, there was no checking of these buses by mechanics to ensure there was no hazard. So the buses should have been kept off the road until the gas bus fleet was thoroughly checked. Whilst, if the drivers of the gas buses could not be issued with diesel buses and were unable to go back on the road. Despite not refusing duty, just a type of bus, they were not reissued with diesels, when these returned from school runs. Their pay should not have been docked. Also they were not paid ever and the union had to pay them!!! Further interesting information on the issue, is that the Manufacturer of the gas buses, offered to have installed on the new versions of the gas buses, gas retardant and warning systems. However, the STA bosses as part of some cost corner cutting refused to take up the option. The STA is still insisting there is no problem with the gas buses and the dispute still has not been resolved. Recently, I noticed on an XPT a sign advising that it had been fitted with a warning and retardant for fires. Newcastle (STA) Buses have warning systems, but not retardants.

The difference between the steering problem situation and the gas bus catching fire event, was that the management voluntarily withdrew the models relating to steering problems, from service immediately and some were off the road for 1-2 months. Where with the fire, management covered it up and we had to take the gas buses off the road.

Also at the time, we took them off the road, Mercedes engineers from Germany still hadn't worked out how the fire started, so obviously(!), the Industrial Relations Commissioners, who put the gas buses back on the road, are mechanical engineers???

RW: What's happening at the depot?

LB: Despite the depot being a sealed, air conditioned building, the toilets and change rooms have not the same air flow



as the rest of the building. Consequently, we have to put a block of card board under the door to keep it open to gain access to normal air conditioning. In allowing what I believe is an illegal situation to continue, the bosses are providing the lame excuse that it is an eco building! At Strawberry Hills, do the STA fat cats have to cart around card board blocks when they go to the toilet? Why do Leichhardt drivers have to be so equipped?

These cardboard chocks are used on access doors to the combined change room, shower and toilet areas. Management regularly remove these chocks. Also, as well, as substandard air, the areas are roasting in summer and freezing in winter. Even when chocked open. As air conditioning temperature control is indirect via the door not vents.

RW: What's the latest with the union rep?

Leichhardt Busie: We have a new union rep, Leon. He is a big improvement on previous union reps that we have had. Particularly, he is a good communicator. In contrast to other reps which just nod to what the bosses say on disciplinary and other issues. He expresses and pushes the driver's point of view. A few weeks ago,

an incident occurred where a driver was facing the sack. Leon sat down with the duty officer, for 3 hours and was successful in helping save the driver's job.

RW: What happening with the bosses?

LB: They are making ever more ridiculous attempts to corner cut. Recently they were wanting to stop us being issued with new boots. However due to union action, they have had to back down on this move. As a further cost cutting measure, they have abolished the operations manager position at Leichhardt and all other depots. With the formation of Transport NSW, many at STA head office are worried their positions will also be abolished.

RW: How are things with the sheddies?

LB: There has been a new re-structuring of the shed drivers. The full time shed driver is now being assisted in the job by new people now doing part normal driving and part shed driver duties. Initially there were some teething problems with the new sheddies and a certain amount of chaos. Involving buses not being where they were supposed to be and the double booking of buses. Things have now calmed down with shed operations.

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: What are your impressions of the snap bus stoppage associated with the ban imposed on the gas buses for safety reasons?

Waverley Busie: There has been some controversy on the job, regarding the action of the union officials in immediately banning the buses without union meetings being held to discuss the issue. I consider that the snap action was appropriate, given the seriousness of the health and safety issue. It was essential that the gas buses were taken off the road, until the issue was resolved. Workers have the right to know the buses they are driving are safe. You need to take a stand to ensure these buses are fixed. The STA had no right to dock pay, as no replacement buses were issued to drivers who had taken their gas buses off the road. The STA should have paid every person told to take their bus off the road. There is also the question of the responsibility of the bus manufacturer and supplier in ensuring the safe operation of the buses before they were sold to the STA. They should have dealt with the problem when the buses were manufactured.

I was recently discussing the issue of the safety of the gas buses with a former member of the South Australian Fire Department, who now operates a health business in Sydney. He considered that the STA gas buses are safe, but that a fire retardant must be installed on all gas buses. In contrast to diesel which is an inert fuel and only when compressed combusts, gas is

more volatile, requiring immediate application of a retardant. Bruce Eldridge indicated that the gas buses were safe, but didn't give a gilt edged guarantee.

Latest news on the dispute is that the union has made payments to all drivers who had pay docked, of the amount docked and is getting lawyers to pursue a case in the Industrial Relations Commission to have the STA pay them the outstanding docked sum.

RW: What's happening with the union?

WB: At a recent union meeting, we heard from the union officials about the outcome of negotiations regarding the enterprise agreement. The STA is offering a small increase in wages if we agree to a give back conditions. One of their demands is the elimination of WAD (Work As Directed). Instead of such devious cut backs to our conditions, the STA should be targeting increased productivity via stopping fare evasion. This cost cutting also often has counterproductive effects. In the case of the reduction of mechanics to say one on Sundays. This action can result in a pile up of 40 buses waiting in the yard for maintenance on Monday morning. Severely disrupting bus operations.

I've noticed on my bus, that many passengers are getting free rides. They just dip the ticket in the green machine for 2 sections but travel for much longer journeys. Also many people who catch my bus say they have been unable to buy tickets at shops. Recently I was seeking to purchase a weekly ticket in the suburb where I live, where there are 2 major stations. I went to a dozen shops which sell the metro tickets. 5-6 shops didn't have them or sold out. A

shop near a station did have them. Whilst, the tickets are available at the station. However, if you buy one at 10pm Sunday at the station, you lose one day of coverage. Why isn't the STA taking action to ensure this situation doesn't occur and all shops selling the tickets have adequate supplies on hand? The STA needs to be tackling this fare evasion and get more money from passengers. This is productivity. We are already working like dogs and there is nothing else we can give the STA to pay for a wage rise. Many people on my bus say that bus travel should be free. However, they fail to take into account that bus operations, new buses, our wages, etc, needs to be paid. Monies come from fares to meet these expenses.

Latest news is that the Enterprise Agreement has been approved by depot union meetings. Despite many drivers being unable to attend these meetings. The enterprise agreement provides overall a 3 ¼% pa rise. There have been 5 contentious aspects of the Enterprise Agreement. As I mentioned earlier, there is the WAD issue. However, there are other vicious cutbacks focusing on the trainees: They have to work for free for their first fortnight. They are paid at a lower trainee rate for the excessive 2 year trainee period. New drivers will now need a heavy vehicle licence before they can start on the job. Previously the STA provided you with training for obtaining the licence. Whilst the bosses can now use video footage for disciplinary action in regard to driving.

Everyone who gets on the job should have the right to be trained, paid and looked after by the STA and supported by the union. "Trainees" should be entitled to the same

amount of justice as long term drivers. We should be all equal on the same rate of wages. I certainly see no reason why so called "trainees" should be on a lower rate of pay for two years. Whilst in regard to the licence issue, long term drivers are not all clean skins in regard to our driving ability.

RW: What's the latest with the bosses?

WB: With the advent of the O'Farrell Government in NSW, there has been a definite sea change for the bosses. They are being put under greatly increased pressure to save their asses in regard to performing, resulting in a much more ruthless approach toward disciplinary issues and productivity. So, despite some bosses giving the impression of being considerate and friendly, as a result of requirements of their performance contracts, they can suddenly become ruthless back stabbers and put on the jackboots. They also target those who have stood up to them. Watch this space, regarding Big Jim from Kingsgrove and whether he turns up at the depot one day sporting highly polished new 3 Reich Footwear. Glistening menacingly in the yard sunlight!!!

RW: How are the toilets at Bondi Junction?

WB: On the day of the gas bus strike, I was speaking to a guy who was handing pamphlets about the issue to passengers. He mentioned to me he has been fighting the STA to clean up the toilets at Bondi Junction. Definitely the toilets block there, needs a radical refurbishment with a new colour scheme. The STA is not taking seriously the quality of the cleanliness in regard to the toilets.

caused by a country as economically poor as Australia hosting the Olympic Games. We should have just said thanks but no thanks.

Anyone that makes use of public transport realized even just a few years later that NSW was in economic trouble. Public transport requires regular and constant maintenance. Of course if you don't have the money – say you're still paying your Olympics credit card off - it's one of the things you have to put off. Of course in NSW the rail infrastructure eventually got to the stage where it had to be fixed or trains would just start derailing (dare I suggest Waterfall?). Welcome to the age of constant trackwork..

Up until the 2000 Olympics, generally work on railway lines was almost always something that was carried out regularly and during off peak times by large work forces that got the work done quickly and efficiently. In one night whole sections of track could be replaced with minimum disruption to day time services. Of course

N.S.W. RAILWAYS DECAY

“Mussolini may have done many brutal and tyrannical things; he may have destroyed human freedom in Italy; he may have murdered and tortured citizens whose only crime was to oppose Mussolini; but ‘one had to admit’ one thing about the Dictator: he ‘made the trains run on time.’”

Guardian correspondents Montagu and Darling

**“An O'Farrell NSW Liberal Government Will get the trains to run on time”
Pre-election promise 2011, electioneering materials NSW Liberal party**

It is becoming clear now to even those most disinterested in politics that NSW is still paying for the circus for the rich that the 2000 Sydney Olympics was. Despite highly publicized reservations of “cheap

seats” for us plebs at all events, the predominant attendance at the Olympic Games was statistically the upper half of Australian society and the world's idle rich.

Large cities like Barcelona, Moscow and Atlanta were paying for their Olympics for decades afterwards, yet our labour government of the time claimed that we were “in the pink” and all the bills had been paid almost immediately after the streamers and littered cans had been swept up by those of us who had only been able to “experience” it via the television.

Of course mainstream journalists are now even allowed to hint that the major problems with public transport infrastructure in NSW today were and are still being

this cost the NSW government a lot of money paying hundreds of workers to do a day's work overnight with high pay rates reflecting the anti-social hour. Enter a post-Olympics cash starved government. Trackwork post-Olympics is undertaken over much longer period of time by fewer workers. Track work is still sometimes undertaken during anti-social times but also more regularly during the week day when labour costs are lower. Both measures result in considerable cost savings to the government. Also, like everything else in State Transit, track work has suffered at the hands of privatization and its attendant cost-cutting and gross inefficiencies, that the privatization was supposed to fix in the first place.

A lot of money has been spent on a slick propaganda machine to assure us that the current debacle that Trackwork has become for public transport users, is all unavoidable, a public transport norm and the "way it has always been" in some form of Orwellian distortion of the past. Some of us however have memories of public transport prior to the year 2000 and are not subject to this Y2K brain bug!

There has been another impact of these funding cuts to public transport. Campaigns have been conducted by public transport user groups to make the government accountable to have trains run on time. From it we have had fare-free days and lots of promises from politicians. This however at the expense as always of the rail workers themselves and the lower end of society.

The thrust of the campaign was as always middle class people whining about middle class things. Not getting to their high paying jobs on time, so losing a few dollars, having to spend more than the absolute minimum necessary amount of time with the "riff raff" on public transport in order to save a few kilometres on the BMW in the garage at home. Also most of these people lived around the major train stations where property or rent is far too expensive for the rest of us.

The knee-jerk response of the previous labour government (and now the O'Farrell government) was to simply keep amending timetables to the point where trains simply do not stop in working class areas other than perhaps in absolute peak times. The quality of services to people living away from major railway stations in areas they can actually afford to live has gradually been eroded over the last five years.

The response of the government to this question is to suggest people use buses or infrequent local train services to reach the major railway stations and connect with trains there, sometimes waiting up to 2

hours for the connecting service to come through. Not an issue if you live around the corner in your two storey house, 2 hours added to the work day if you don't.

The justification of course is that there are always sufficient services during the peak times and lesser services outside them for "non-workers". However this is just an exercise in spin doctoring by the NSW government to save money. They like everyone else are fully aware of the changing nature of work. The days of 9-5 are long gone for most Australian workers. Yes the majority of the middle class do still work 9-5 that's true, but the rest of us cleaners, security guards, process workers etc. work all types of shifts -all types of hours. Public transport is increasingly



only there for us during the "peak" (read middle class friendly) times.

The only result I can see from the previous "grass roots" rail users' campaign ("Shitty rail..better late than never") is that an unequal proportion of the already under-funded train services available have just been handed wholesale to those per-

sons in our society who can best afford not to use them. Somewhere the "public" in transport has come to mean "middle class" first.

The future of trains in NSW is somewhat bleak. If you travel in rural NSW you will see a countryside littered with disused railway stations. Yes Australia did become a car-based society (every house a three car family) after the flood of smaller cheap mainly Japanese cars in the 1970's. Yes trains did become somewhat of an anachronism and it was somewhat justified to close these smaller stations. The Country link XPT service however is suffering from a similar lack of maintenance from successive cash starved NSW governments and simply does not stop regularly enough to be even considered a partial replacement for standard train services that ran along these lines and stopped at these communities decades ago.

Regardless let's face it, as anyone that "feeds" a car nowadays will confirm, the days when Australia is a car-based society are fast declining. Certainly if you exist in the upper half of society you will always be able to keep a car running, but the days when people on for example the old age pension or even low incomes can support a motor vehicle are on the way out. At a time when the NSW government should be planning for and phasing in an increase in public transport services, regular timetable changes are slashing services to those people who most need them and handing them to those who will always be able to afford to do without them.

Indeed the strategy of public transport through successive governments is one of constant downgrading of every type of service. How many times have we seen stations "upgraded" to the point where they are little more than a glorified bus shelter in place of heated waiting rooms, toilets and station attendants? I know it's a modern world and whilst a ticket machine does a man or woman out of a job, that's just the world technology has made (well when the machines work); but this is no justification for removing other station infrastructure.

As regular public transport users have seen, rail services never return. In NSW there is not one single rail service or train station that, once closed, has ever been re-opened due to renewed demand; in the whole history of NSW Rail. The message is that once you lose a service or a station it is gone forever.

Yes Mr. O'Farrell the trains are starting to run on time for you and all your liberal party voting mates.

Sean

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In the previous edition of Rebel Worker, issues have been raised about the way Human Resources selects staff for V/Line. In this issue once again Drivers, Conductors, Station Staff and Staff from Head Office have combined to talk about these issues. Once again names have been changed.

RW: What is the current method of recruiting staff?

Sheona: Adverts are placed in the papers advertising job vacancies as well as notices for internal being placed on staff notice boards.

Clarence: I observe all notices being placed on the notice boards. In some instances people applying for internal jobs do not know that these jobs have been advertised externally. Human Resources look at the various resumes then say the internal applicants are not up to standard and thus give an outsider the position.

Jethro: You are correct. This happened when jobs were called for Conductors. A number of Station Staff applied for the jobs and Human Resources said they were not up to standard.

Sheona: They had no intentions of employing these people internally.

Clarence: Another grievance the employees have is having to apply for the positions on line. A number of our employees are computer illiterate. They have no experience in computers at all. The union have told

Human Resources to let employees to apply by mail. Human Resources will not compromise.

RW: They think they are a law of their own.

RW: Can you define the Talent Pool. I see this in adds placed in media outlets for Conductors?

Sheona: This pool has been in existence for a couple of years. This is where V/Line advertises for Conductors. These people apply for the positions. Many applicants apply for the positions and after various tests the successful applicants are placed in a pool and wait for selection. If you are not successful after a certain period, then you have to reapply for the position again.

RW: This pool gives people false hopes.

Rastus: It certainly does. A friend of one of our drivers applied for the position of Conductor. He applied through an Employment Agency. After being inter-

viewed by the agency, he was referred to V/Line. He was interviewed by V/Line, he was told by the Employment Agency he was successful and he had to wait for selection.

Roscoe: As the driver told myself, his friend thought he had a job and waited for selection. In the meantime, there had already been a Conductors' Class. A few months later another class was to commence and someone who was to be in the class withdrew. The driver heard this and contacted the instructor to the new class, mentioning his friend. The instructor contacted Human Resources about this person in the pool.

RW: What happened?

Rastus: This person was told he was unsuccessful. This was after ten months.

Sheona: This person missed out. I do not know what happens, but the applicants maybe were told not to talk to people about



the method of selections.

Clarence: A number of new Conductors have to myself how they had to wait up to twelve months before they know whether they were successful. What if they are offered another position in another industry, knock is back waiting for the Conductor Position. They find out, they are not successful and missed on the other position?

Rastus: I would not like to be someone who is unemployed as this Talent Pool would give a person false hopes.

Sheona: This Talent Pool could be used as a way to frighten Conductors to accept certain employment conditions by saying that they have hundreds of people after Conductors Positions. There you can leave if you don't like your terms of employment.

RW: What about fixed term contracts for employees?

Sheona: This where staff currently Conductors are seconded to other positions. For example staff in the Booking Office

are on Maternity Leave and a Conductor is seconded to the position, then another Conductor is seconded on a fixed term contract of up to twelve months, then after this period, they are redeployed or terminated.

Clarence: Recently a notice was placed on the notice board for a position of Conductor at a Country location. A number of employees applied for the position from other depots. These employees did not know that the vacancy was for a person who was successful for seconded position and that there was an employee who was on a fixed term contract applying for the position.

Rastus: One of the drivers at this particular depot told myself that a Conductor on a contract covering this position applied for the position. Whilst waiting for an interview, he was sent a letter from Human Resources saying that his contract was about to be terminated and would he return his uniform and equipment.

Sheona: This was a disgraceful thing to happen. On side of Human Resources does not know what the other half is doing.

Roscoe: You can say that. The Conductor was distressed. He should not have to be placed in that position. If this Conductor had been terminated, we drivers were going to the local media and expose this sham.

Clarence: If a person from another depot had obtained the position and this Conductor was terminated, it would have been on the successful applicant's

conscience.

Sheona: Years ago, if a person was employed on a Contract after the Contract expired, then the person would be called in by the Manager and asked if they wanted to stay with V/Line.

Clarence: Not, now.

RW: In concluding, people should not have to wait up to twelve months to whether they have a job. Also people on fixed contracts, if they are competent, should be given the position.

Rastus and Roscoe: Once again in having the final say, we Drivers say that the talent pool is a sham. The Conductor at the Country Location treatment was disgusting. As for Human Resources, most drivers think they are bludgers and they STINK.

BRITAIN TODAY

ELECTRICIANS WILDCAT STRIKE!

After Balfour Beatty forced the cancellation of an official strike ballot, electricians walk out anyway.

This morning 7/12/11 was supposed to mark the beginning of an official strike after a ballot recently organised by the Unite union returned an 82% vote in favour of strike action. However, the walkout was called off by the union after Balfour Beatty threatened legal action to stop the strike in the high court - the latest employer to do so after a number of strikes were banned on the basis of technicalities in the last two years.

Regardless, Sparks struck and protested across the country today. Pickets were organised at the Balfour Beatty site at Blackfriars, London, and attempts were made to stop lorries entering the site, before a heavy police presence cleared the road. Other action has been seen in Cardiff, Central Library in Manchester, St Catherine's hospital in Merseyside, Glasgow, Kelvin Hall school in Hull and North East Lincolnshire.

Electricians at Balfour Beatty in London have appealed for people to come to Blackfriars station from 5.30pm today, for the arrival of the night shift.

A Hartlepool spark wrote online:

Quote:

"Wed. 7th Dec.2011, Hartlepool; sparks hit Heerema again. A massive site with two main gates, well over a mile apart.

We start at the Headland gate, about 150 of us; we briefly blockade the gate & somebody causes a loud bang. Lots of people masked up, (well, it's bloody cold innit?). Then off to the Greenlands gate in a proper march down the road led by the Unite construction workers' branch banner. Six bizzie vans & three cars at the second gate & they stop us totally blockading the gate, but there's a couple more bangs, everyone is in a good mood and when they try to make the usual announcement about obstruction and being arrested we make a lot of noise and drown them out. The bizzies also have a cameraperson for the first time. About 8.30am we decide to march back to the Headland:

"Quote of the day by a police man as we walked back to the headland in Hartlepool. Right lads the protest is over now so if you stay on the footpath as you walk back we can go. Yeah ok mate straight over the roundabout for us."

The police made several other half hearted attempts to get us onto the pavement on the way back, but we held the road. And then, only a few hundred yards from our final destination, they stupidly block the road with one of their vans and a line of cops. After a brief hesitation, we push through and there's a ruck which looks like getting out of hand until Sergeant Sensible calls off his troops. Wise move. We win & everyone's got that buzz.

Thing is, the sparks' dispute is with Balfours and the other six construction companies, so how come we end up in conflict with the cops? Partly its because they 'uphold the law', and the law says that



anything we might do to effectively win the dispute is illegal. But its also because they are trained to 'be in control'. Mostly they get away with it only because people do what the bizzies tell them to do; when people stop doing that it changes everything. You're not in control Mr. Plod, we are - just stand on the pavement yourselves and keep out of our way. At the end, one of them tried to make an announcement to anyone who would listen that the march was illegal because we hadn't informed the police about it. Yes mate, got it in one.

Meanwhile in other parts of the UK today:

"Sparks in Manchester have entered council chambers and are addressing councillors."

"BBES St Cath's Birkenhead Merseyside.

A good morning's work by the hardy souls who braved the Arctic conditions !

Great support from the workers who took our points onboard over these attacks on conditions and we advised management and security to get the local constabulary down after "heated discussions" They duly turned up and were very sympathetic to our plight and peaceful demonstration

NHS Estates were sought and given a brief insight into why their Hospital had been chosen for Industrial Action

They too , took literature and again, were most sympathetic to our plight stating "we're in the same boat!"

"Now outside a Grattes job. Some bugger has pushed the fire alarm. Job closed. everyone off"

"Flying Pickets shut down Harvey Nic's building site (Gratte Bothers) - 200 workers refuse to cross picket line"

"Occupying Lend Lease site office at Cambuslang."

"Over 100 workers demonstrate outside Balfour Beatty HQ in Glasgow."

"Good show at Kelvin hall school in Hull. TUC members on the line in support"

"Good stuff at Immingham - big turnout and blocking of entrances"

"Am very proud to be part of today - biggest nationally coordinated unofficial strike in decades. See you back at Blackfriars at 5.30pm to get the nite shift

The strikes follow an escalating campaign of action by electricians this year, and could indicate the direction industrial action could take if

the government follows through on its threats to make the UK's strike laws - already among Europe's toughest - more restrictive.

The protests began following the announcement in May by Balfour Beatty and another seven of the UK's 14 major electrical contractors (Crown House, NG Baileys, T. Clarkes, MJN Colston, Gratte Brothers, Shepherds Engineering, Matthew Hall) that they would impose new contracts upon their electricians, and in doing so scrapping the Joint Industry Board (JIB) agreement which has for the past 40 years been the basis for setting pay and working conditions. The firms have drawn up a replacement, the Building and Engineering Services National Agreement (BESNA), and issued notice to employees in August that their current contracts will be terminated on December 7, leaving them with the option of taking up the new contracts or accepting unemployment.

According to Unite, BESNA will have a number of negative effects on the trade. Contractors will be able to continually raise and lower hourly pay according to specific tasks workers undertake at any

point in time, rather than maintaining a standard wage for skilled work. For some electricians this will entail a lowering of the hourly rate from £16.25 to £10 – a 35 per cent pay cut.

Unite say that both travel and overtime pay will be cut and made payable only at the employer's discretion, the ability to claim for unfair dismissal will be reduced, while employers will simultaneously be enabled to make redundancies while agency temp workers are still engaged on projects. As one electrician analysing the agreement put it: "People are going to be losing a lot. Every single term in BESNA gives all the power to the employer. They get final say on everything."

The JIB agreement has been in place for over 40 years, and part of the reason for its creation was the avoidance of labour unrest. The prospect of its removal is now fuelling some of the most potent labour militancy of recent years.

Protests by rank and file union members have shut down building sites across the country. In September a group of around 1,500 electricians workers at the Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire walked out to join demonstrating electricians and Unite officials, while sites in London have been blockaded and occupied by workers several times in recent weeks.

"We've got to have mass walkouts, whether it's official or not, it's our very futures at stake," explained Steve Acheson, Branch secretary for Unite from Manchester.

He said in view of the fast-approaching December deadline, electricians "aren't

prepared to wait for the union to decide what they're going to do. Time is not permitting. The rank and file are saying we haven't got enough time and they're taking action."

Acheson, himself a victim of Balfour Beatty's past union blacklisting activity, accused building firms of lacking commitment to negotiations with their workforces.

"They're just moving the goalposts so they can get the rate down by £3. This is a 43 year agreement they're walking away from. The root cause of everything is insatiable greed for greater profit.

"The only language these companies seem to understand is industrial action. There's no dialogue, they don't want dialogue."

One of the original eight companies proposing to scrap the JIB, MJN Colston, has already backed down in response to the protests, and the workers are confident that others can be forced into the same decision.

Balfour Beatty, a firm with a recent history of illegal union blacklisting, is viewed as the driving force behind BESNA and as such was targeted by Unite for the first wave of official strike action. While Balfour Beatty have claimed that the scrapping of the JIB is a response to competitive pressures, Unite point out that the companies orders have risen 6 per cent this year, with £15.5bn worth of projects underway since last year, yielding pre-tax profits of £50.5m. Ian Tyler, the company's chief executive, received a total pay package of £979,994.

Partly adapted from an article in Manchester Mule by Andy Bowman

Update from Union-news.co.uk

BREAKING NEWS:

Rank and file organisers of the unofficial day of action of electricians across the UK are saying it is the biggest demonstration of its kind in decades.

Estimates of between 300 and 500 sparks walked off one single site at Blackfriars in London, with scores more walking off sites on Merseyside, in North East England, in Scotland and in Wales. They joined a string of demonstrations around the UK on the day when seven rogue employers were due to enforce 'sign or be sacked' contracts, de-skilling and undermining safety levels in the industry, and forcing electricians to take a 35% pay cut.

Under pressure from Unite, the companies have now postponed the deadline for introducing the contracts but the union insists the employers must begin serious negotiations or expect actions such as today's will escalate.

Sparks from the Grangemouth oil refinery invaded and occupied site offices at a fire station being built Balfour Beatty, seen as the ringleader of the employers. Many sparks walked off the job in solidarity.

Thanks to Libcom

Greek Resistance to Austerity

Power to the People: Electricity Workers Say no to Austerity

Greek electricity company workers have taken a militant stand against the government's latest wave of austerity measures. Members of GENOP-DEI, the union of the Public Power Corporation, occupied the building issuing electricity disconnection orders for households that have failed to pay their bills.

As of a few weeks ago (early November 2011), the latest bills now include the latest property tax imposed by the government, typically including hundreds of Euros per property, making payment for thousands a non-option. This is in addition to the spiralling energy costs, job losses

and declining wages since the crisis, leading many to rely on wood burners for their heat over the winter months. Members of the union had already cut power to the Health Ministry during the preceding week.

The response of the newly formed national unity government was swift, with riot police raiding the offices and arresting fifteen workers. The struggle, however, continues and in response GENOP-DEI has called a 48-hour strike. Workers also occupied a power station in Northern Greece.

These actions are a part of escalating resistance to the newest austerity deal. Transport workers have been holding stoppages against staff cuts while pharmacies were

also closed in Athens this past month to protest the failure of health insurers to settle debts. Struggles are ongoing amongst students and education workers..

The November 17th commemoration march, an event that has traditionally been a display of anarchist influence, involved over fifty thousand people this year with many marching behind both a new slogan, "then with tanks, now with banks" (in reference to the tanks that were used to crush the student uprising during the military Junta) as well as the resurrection of an old one (from the Civil War), "when the people are confronted with the threat of tyranny, they either chose the chains or guns". Unions are expected to hold another general strike at the beginning of this month.

Down with the Stalinists and Bureaucrats!

This article is about the 48-hour general strike demonstrations of 19-20 October in Greece. It comments on the change of the police doctrine towards a “softer management of demonstrations” and the role of the Stalinists in “self-policing” the protests. This is a translation of an article written by TPTG (Ta Paidia Tis Galarias – “The children of the gallery”). TPTG are an anti-authoritarian communist group from Athens who see communism not as a political ideology or dogma, but as a practical necessity stemming from the concrete, daily struggles of the proletariat within and against it.

We all experienced the nightmare that the Greek Stalinists in co-operation with other leftist trade unionists and the cops created during the 48-hour strike in Greece on October 19 and 20 and some comrades in the anti-authoritarian milieu are badly wounded. We refer to the policing role of the KKE members: they were stationed in military formation in the area around the parliament, armed with helmets and sticks, facing the demonstrators with the riot squads behind them, preventing anyone from approaching, even asking for reporters' identities and attacking fiercely later those in the crowd who defied their cordons.

As the clashes started, the riot squads came for their protection attacking people with chemicals and flash-bang grenades evacuating the area. It was revealed later that the Stalinists had made an agreement with the police so as to be allowed to police the demo themselves. According to our information, similar agreements were made between the KKE and other left parties' or groupuscules' unionists so that each was allotted a special place near the parliament accepting KKE's hegemony. They later supported fully KKE in its denunciation of the 'anarcho-fascists', 'parastatals' etc, namely all those who were not part of the deal, not willing to accept it and tried to break their cordons.

As the capitalist attack deepens, this Greek style of 'self-policing' of 'problematic' crowd events has signalled the comeback with a vengeance of the left political parties and the left unionist bureaucracy against a proletarian crowd that had managed to escape their mortal embrace last June in the squares movement (albeit in a very contradictory way). We can't say whether this concerted public-order policing by the KKE and the professional police with the approval of most of the left and leftist organisations and unions is the visi-

ble part (in the streets) of a deal for a national unity government, but it certainly revealed very dramatically that the capitalist state has a lot of left-wing reserves as well as alternative police methods against us, as we argued in our two letters* on the progress of our enemies. Have a look at this extract we translated from an article in yesterday's Eleftherotypia, a liberal newspaper of wide circulation:

“It is obvious that attempts are being made at readapting the doctrine of the security forces' involvement in the social reactions, which will escalate continuously. A society that suffers badly from the economic measures cannot be beaten up by the forces of repression which have not found or do not want to find a way to iso-



late those who regard violence as an end in itself.

The events of recent days, if not marked by the death of the 53-year-old PAME trade unionist, could be seen as a sign of an effective change of the police doctrine towards a softer management of demonstrations.

Indeed, in those two days that police were fully in a transitory phase in terms of its leadership team, the risk was double. Initially, the apparatus was led for two days by those available since changes in leadership were announced simultaneously with the big demonstrations. And even with the participation of Christofareizis C., who was recalled from retirement, the designer of the MAT [TN: the riot squad] in the '90s, whose name was associated with the attack against pensioners out of Maximou [TN: the Presidential Mansion] in 1995. The other change observed was the return of the doctrine of self-control and inconspicuous granting of power to organized unions to self-guard the demonstrations.

What happened on Thursday with PAME guarding its demo not only in a defensive but also in an offensive way at the Unknown Soldier monument was the beginning of a new tactic which gives room for

self-regulation to the demonstrators that will have the first say in the prevention of the intrusion of troublemakers in the body of the mobilizations. And this is risky, because the incredible violence between protesters, while the police was discreetly absent, could have had more serious consequences. Although any police involvement might have had even worse consequences. In any case this tactic is likely to be applied again after consultations have been made.

In this critical period it was clear that Chr. Papoutsis [TN: Minister of Public Order, or in the neo-Orwellian language of PASOK government, Minister of Citizen Protection] wished for a softer administration at all levels of the Staff and not only at the leadership. That is why he transferred hardline officers that he thought they were damaging the image of the police due to the behaviour of policemen who had seriously injured protesters and professional journalists in recent months, during demonstrations. Obviously, for reasons of balance, the minister also hired an experienced veteran and put him in the position of the operation consultant.

For over a year, the minister has been talking about a lack of democracy in the security forces and has threatened that he will not hesitate to attack some structures, units and commanders. Certainly these commanders were appointed by the

same government two years ago, when the offensive doctrine was applied for the regaining of the streets, according to the official announcement that had been made then.

The murder of student Al. Grigoropoulos had repercussions on the police as they were delegitimised in huge parts of the society, i.e. they were marginalized socially and professionally. There is an attempt now by the Ministry of Citizen Protection to reverse this disturbance of professional self-image and behaviour, in the worst period in decades, as the economic crisis is ruining people and cracks in social cohesion are increasing.” [TN: It is not surprising then that some riot squads were telling the demonstrators that they were there for their protection!] (Greek Police: softly-softly is the new doctrine, Eleftherotypia, 23/11/2011)

However, the struggle against the cops of all colours and their diverse methods as well as against the capitalist attack on the working class goes on!

TPTG

www.tptg.gr

Thanks to Resistance Nov/Dec 2011

IRELAND: CORTEX PLANT OCCUPATION

Workers want 'justice and fair play'

The Workers in Vita Cortex (a plant which manufactures foam products for building manufacture, Aircraft, beds and furniture) have gone on strike as they have been laid-off by their employer, who in turn refused to pay redundancy to its workers. Under the law here in Ireland the workers are entitled to 2 weeks wages for every year they have worked. Between them, the Vita Cortex workers have over 850 years experience. This is all in spite of the company already offering (after negotiations with Unions) 2.9 weeks per year.

They have decided to occupy the old plant in Cork City and are refusing to leave until their demands are met. They, as of today, have received no contact from their employers and are all of the belief that this will last throughout the Christmas period. Today members of the Cork Fire Brigade brought down hot meals in solidarity with the workers. Members of the public are constantly in and out of the plant offering various items as a show of solidarity.

Friday, December 16, 2011

"WE'RE not giving up without a fight."

That was the warning last night from defiant factory workers who face the dole queues today, without redundancy payments, when their jobs are axed.

The group of 35 workers at the Vita Cortex plant in Cork are caught in a stand-off between their employers and NAMA. The money for the redundancies has been frozen in the accounts of a sister company which is controlled by NAMA.

Local Labour party TD Ciaran Lynch, who has described the position the workers find themselves in as "intolerable" has called on NAMA to carry out an extensive financial examination of the wider Vita Cortex company structure. He believes that would clarify the interconnectivity between different operations within the wider company.

SIPTU (Irish ACTU) official Anne Eager, who spent yesterday with the workers, said, whether the money was controlled by Vita Cortex or by NAMA, it should pay for the workers' redundancy.

The workers called for "justice and fair play" and pleaded with political leaders to bring pressure to bear to ensure funds are released to pay their €1.2 million redundancy package — 2.9 weeks per year of service for each worker.

They were still clinging to hope last night that last-ditch talks in Dublin between Vita Cortex managing director Ian Kirby and NAMA officials would bring a breakthrough.

Sean Kelleher, who also has 47 years of service, said staff were 100% dedicated and loyal to the company.

"People were happy at their work. It was a good place to work at one stage," he said. "I'm hoping that something will be done — by the politicians and everybody involved. We're not looking for a huge amount of money."

Their colleagues — Helen Crowley, who has worked at Vita for 26 years; Martina Anderson, 22; Regina Hickey, 21; and Lillian O'Donoghue, 34 — sat on foam



blocks nearby.

"We're just shocked," said Lillian. Catherine McCabe summed up their mood: "The politicians don't give a shit about us."

They will join long-serving colleagues, including John Power (42 years), Denis Ryan (40), Alan Walsh (43), Mick O'Brien (40), Greg Marshall (37), Tim Burke (43) and Tom Ronan (43), in a meeting with Ms Eager today.

NAMA 'legally cannot' pay cash to staff

VITA Cortex (Ind), the foam packaging manufacturing company based on the Kinsale Road in Cork city, is a subsidiary of holding company Vita Five Five Ltd, chaired by Tipperary businessman Jack Ronan.

He secured a €10m loan from AIB five years ago to buy Vita Cortex from its previous shareholders.

But it was announced on September 16 last that the manufacturing operation was closing and transferring to Athlone.

In a statement yesterday, Mr Ronan said the Cork plant had been making substantial losses since 2009 with no prospect of a return to profitability.

"The level of ongoing losses at the Cork site would ultimately have forced the whole of the Vita Cortex group into liquidation in 2012," he said.

In the meantime, the original AIB loan was transferred to NAMA in late 2010.

Mr Ronan said the Vita Cortex group has three major assets — industrial properties in Cork, Belfast and Dublin, and €2.5m of Vita Cortex cash on deposit — which are pledged as security against the loan facility in the name of Vita Five Five Ltd.

The cash is in an AIB account in the name of Vita Cortex (Dublin) Ltd — another subsidiary of the holding company.

Mr Ronan said the group cannot access this money because NAMA has a lien over the deposit account.

He said Vita Cortex (Ind) requested on October 10 that NAMA release €1.22m from the account to pay redundancy to the workers.

But on Wednesday, NAMA refused to release the money, stating that the loan is not linked to the Cork business.

NAMA says the money must be used to pay the parent company's multimillion-euro debts.

A spokesman for NAMA said the company with the cash and the company making the workers redundant were two separate legal entities and it legally cannot pay out the money to the workers.

He said NAMA has no financial relationship with the company which is ceasing production, and had no involvement in the decision to make the workers redundant.

But yesterday, Mr Ronan said as far as he is concerned, the money was earned by the Vita Cortex (Ind) workers and the company, and the workers facing the axe today are entitled to it.

"The Vita Cortex group is unable to secure funding from other sources as all the assets of the group are already pledged to NAMA and so the only way the company will be in a position to pay the redundancies is if NAMA agrees to release the company's funds," he said.

Thanks to Revleft

IRISH REBEL UNIONISM: THE I.W.U. & THE BREAKAWAY LOCOMOTIVE DRIVERS' UNION

The story of the origins of the IWU (Independent Workers Union) is a little contorted, but here are some pointers.

Originally there was a small Cork-based craft union of butchers, called the Cork Operative Butchers Society. By the 1990s independent butchers were dying out due to the expansion of the supermarkets and older master butchers retiring etc, so the remaining union thought they'd better hitch themselves to a larger, more general union. They looked around and of the largest unions they thought that the ATGWU (the Irish section of the UK's TGWU) looked the best of a bad bunch. This was partly due to the influence of a few old commies in the COBS who preferred the line of Mick O'Reilly, then head of the ATGWU, who was a vocal critic of the social partnership that the unions had collectively signed up to through ICTU.

The criteria for being a legally-recognised union in the Republic is to hold a thing called a negotiating licence. The conditions of how to acquire such a licence (and, more importantly, the penalties for taking industrial action without one) had been totally changed by the Industrial Relations Act of 1990, a combination of every evil anti-union idea Thatcher & co had come up with, plus a few suggestions from the yanks and the Germans. Although it had not yet been proved in battle just how evil this particular "crowning glory" of social partnership was, nonetheless some of the old commies in the COBS decided that rather than surrender their negotiating licence when they entered the ATGWU, they'd keep hold of it for a rainy day.

Then the whole Irish Locomotive Driver's Association thing came to a head in 2000. I'll crib from a freely available book review of Brendan Ogle's (ILDA leader) book on the events, to save typing.

Quote:

Off the Rails: The Story of the ILDA. By Brendan Ogle. Dublin: Curragh Press, 2003. 352 pp. ISBN 1-85607-906-6, \$29.95 (paper).

Brendan Ogle, the leader and founder of the Irish Locomotive Drivers' Association (ILDA), recounts the turbulent events that led to the three-month lockout by Iarnród Éireann, Ireland's national rail system. The story is reminiscent of the great Dublin lockout of 1913, when the controversial but charismatic union leader James Larkin led workers in a titanic struggle against employers who sought to destroy Larkin and his union.

But the story of the ILDA does not take place during the rough and tumble days of early industrialization in Ireland. Indeed, by the summer of 2000, when the rail dispute erupted on the national scene, Ireland had navigated thirteen years of Social Partnership agreements and enjoyed unprecedented economic growth. All of the powerful actors in the Irish industrial relations system, unions, employers, and government, fully supported the national-level negotiations process and the agreements it produced.

In the summer of 2000, when Ogle and his band of fellow ILDA members fought against changes to the working conditions for train drivers, they faced stiff resistance from Iarnród Éireann. Such an industrial dispute was hardly new to labor relations in Ireland. However, the protest by this small, independent group of workers became a symbol of resistance, reflecting an undercurrent among rank-and-file workers who felt that the national agreements had resulted in years of wage constraints and work intensification, with few benefits to workers and their unions. Conversely, the institutions and regulatory bodies that formed the new industrial relations landscape under partnership closed ranks against the dissidents. As a result, although the industrial action involved just 118 drivers, the dispute grew very bitter and had much broader implications than simply a disruption of rail service.

The ILDA story begins, like so many episodes in Irish history, with betrayal. In 1994, two unions represented the train drivers at Iarnród Éireann, the Services Industrial Professional & Technical Union (SIPTU) and the National Bus and Rail Union (NBRU). In negotiations that year, Iarnród Éireann proposed changes to long-standing practices among locomotive drivers. Train drivers in both unions were adamantly opposed to management's proposal, rejecting the offer by 98%. The company announced it would implement the terms without agreement, and both unions prepared for industrial action. Shortly before the strike was set to begin, the Labor Court intervened to mediate the dis-

pute and recommended a settlement. The train drivers had not yet realized how much the bargaining environment had changed in Ireland, particularly since the Industrial Relations Act of 1990. They would soon find out.

The Labor Court issued a recommendation that Ogle describes as worse than the original proposal that the drivers rejected. More important, the court advised that all employees of Iarnród Éireann, not just the drivers, vote on the proposed changes to drivers' mileage pay formula. SIPTU followed the court's recommendation and the changes were approved.

The outcome, which became known as the "1994 productivity agreement," set in motion a chain of events that led to the breakaway union effort and the three-month lockout in 2000.

Train drivers spent months and years challenging the conduct of the vote and attempting to persuade Iarnród Éireann and SIPTU to reverse the mileage pay changes. Members of SIPTU and NBRU formed the National Locomotive Drivers' Committee (NLDC), an internal reform organization dedicated to preventing a repeat of the 1994 balloting process and protecting the interests of locomotive drivers. Ogle himself became shop steward for the SIPTU drivers at the Athlone station and was involved in national bargaining. The drivers never overcame their sense of betrayal, and by 1998 internal reform efforts were abandoned in favour of a breakaway, independent union for locomotive drivers.

Members of the newly formed ILDA quickly found that all of the institutions of Ireland's industrial relations system were aligned against them. Regulations created by the Industrial Relations Act of 1990 made it impossible for the ILDA to gain official certification as a negotiating agent for the drivers. Management used the new regulations to their full advantage, suing the national executive committee for illegal strikes and excluding the ILDA from negotiations. In 2000, ILDA members were not allowed to vote on management's proposals unless they quit the breakaway union and



BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Rebel Rank & File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970's Edited by Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner & Cal Winslow. Published by Verso.

Recent months have seen the dramatic emergence of the "Occupy" movement, particularly amongst a core of mainly students, middle class and unemployed elements associated with the fallacious populist notion of the "ordinary" 99% versus the rich 1% globally. That such a simplistic notion is so widespread amongst this milieu certainly reflects the down turn in the class struggle in recent decades in many western countries and the disarray or absence of grass roots movements amongst workers in many industries in these countries.

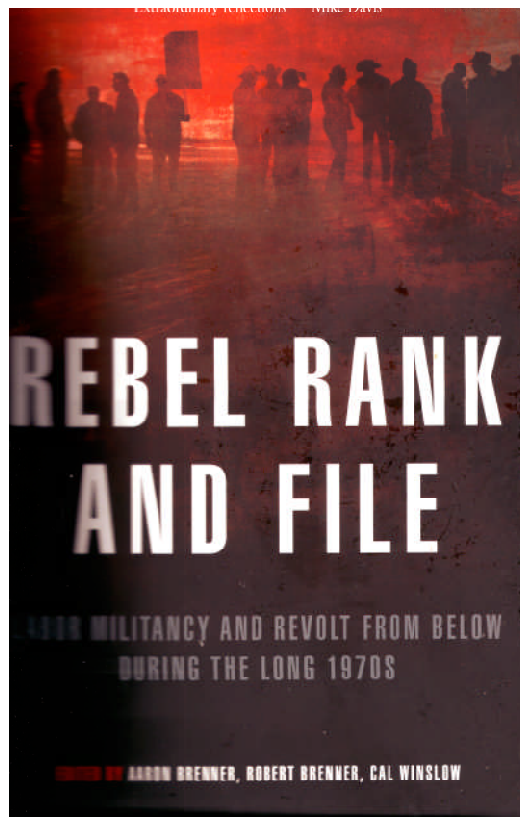
Its epicenter has been in New York with the "Anti-Wall Street" protest which occupied Zuccotti Park, until driven out by the police. It has oscillated between spectacular protests such as rallies, marches and camps in parks and public spaces, and tail ending various work place struggles characteristic of leftist sects with their normally unsuccessful "party recruitment" agendas and activoids via community pickets and boycotts such as in the case of Baiada Poultry factory workers in Melbourne. This activity also gets the union hierarchy off the hook in regard to defying repressive industrial legislation such as Gillard's Fair Work Laws in Australia and avoids the officials mobilising grass roots union members to take solidarity action. In the recent case of Baiada, company workers have spontaneously taken solidarity action in Adelaide by refusing to unload chickens. The workers have gone on to win the dispute. In the US, Occupy has been involved in the community sphere in regard to resistance to mortgage foreclosures.

Don't Build An "Occupy" Cult! – Organise on the Job for Direct Action!

A more strategic approach than spectacular antics and aimless activism involving just responding to employer attacks and union officials sell outs, which tackles the roots of the problem – lack of workers' self organisation and low morale and creates the basis for workers' direct action to turn the tide against the employer offensive is support for the long range strategic organising on the job. It can also create the tran-

sitional steps in the shape of a bloc of grass roots controlled unions toward the creating a mass syndicalist union confederation. Its task would be conducting coordinated direct action and the long term task of establishing workers control of industry and community control of communities and the elimination of wage labour relations which is integral to capitalism.

The book under review is particularly relevant in the light it throws on the problems of grass roots organising in the difficult



conditions of the USA, dominated by Business Unionism of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.-C.I.A., union busting corporation managements and very restrictive industrial legislation. It provides a discussion of the political economy of the upsurge in the class struggle associated with the emergence of various rank and file movements in the 1970s in the USA. It looks at the long post WWII economic boom in the USA and rising wages and improving conditions of workers during this period and in the mid 70's a crisis of

profitability. It led to an employer offensive which these movements were largely unable to counter effectively, despite achieving some gains for workers in various ways.

In "Understanding the Rank-and-File Rebellion in the Long 1970's" by Kim Moody, the author does a good job looking at the origins of the bureaucratization of the C.I.O., particularly in the context of WWII and the formation of the W.L.B. (War Labour Board) comprising corporate, government and union representatives which centralized contract bargaining and grievances procedures at the national level away from local unions and workplaces. The McCarthy era/Cold War further supercharged this process with the purging of leftwing militants from unions and workplaces. The author makes the good point that the rank and file upsurge was unable to develop a grass roots controlled unionism in place of the business unionism of the AFL-CIO, due to a lack of cooperation/mutual aid between different rank and file movements and the development of a common identity. Preserving the isolation and lack of inter union solidarity which is such a salient feature of business unionism.

C.I.A. "Social Movement Engineering" & The New Left

The contributors to the volume, also see the emergence of these rank and file movements in the context of the various social movements which erupted in USA during the 60's and 70's, such as the civil rights, anti-war movement, various identity politics movements, the New Left, etc.

The authors seem oblivious to the role of such agencies of U.S.A. and international capitalism, as the C.I.A. and various corporate sponsored foundations in engineering some of these social movements such as the so-called women's movement, the LSD drug sub culture and "identity politics" generally via corporate foundation sponsorship of educational institution courses and research on these lines.(1) This phenomena together with such state repression as the F.B.I.'s "COINTELPO" programs played an important role in the disruption and disintegration of New Leftist groups and the

associated student radical milieu, which during these years played an important role in assisting the workers' militant upsurge. The S.D.S. (Students for a Democratic Society) which was the largest and most dynamic of these new left formations and very active in assisting the workers movement. It's revived version today, is a shadow of its 60's, 70's ancestor. Hopelessly absorbed in navel gazing, political correctness displays and divisive identity politics and alienating militant workers.

The volume goes on to look at the development of rank and file movements in the US labour movement in the 20th Century. Then proceeds to provide a survey of different key rank and file movements in various unions and industries.

One of the most important and relatively successful movements focused upon is Teamsters for a Democratic Union (T.D.U.) in "The Tumultuous Teamsters of the 1970's" by Dan La Botz. The essay looks at the origins of T.D.U. in the party building plans of the Trotskyist group "International Socialists" I.S. In the early 1970s, its members who became Teamsters and were involved in the establishment of a network of regional grass roots newspapers for Teamsters: "The Seattle Semi", "The Grapevine" in Los Angeles, and "The Horse's Mouth" in Pittsburgh, etc. Certainly, this is the kind of long range serious crucial work involving the publishing of grass roots industrial papers, the following up contacts and their networking amongst long shore militants which will assist grass roots self activity and direct action, rather than the "vanguardist" interventions by "Occupy" in the USA such as the picketing of ports on the West Coast by activists on 13th December 2011. The I.S. initiated groupings linked up with other opposition groups in the Teamsters and became an important force for pushing for industrial action to improve conditions and wages. The author is insufficiently critical of how the T.D.U. has moved away from a force for rank and file militant activity into an administration caucus.

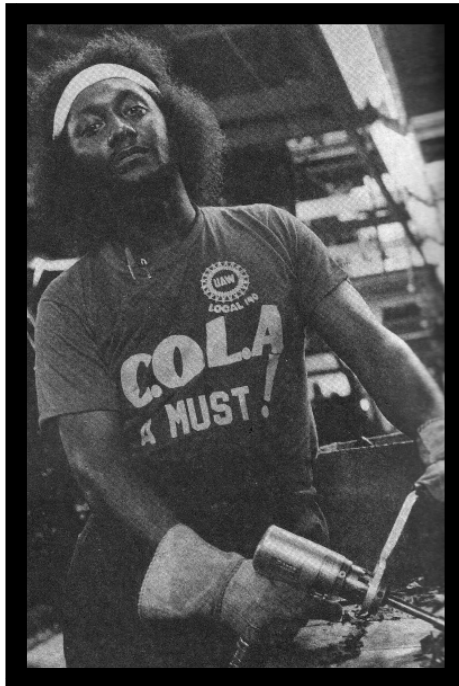
The T.D.U. played a critical role in the successful campaign to become Teamster President of Ron Carey who took office from 1992. He had been an independent candidate and a career union bureaucrat. Subsequently, the T.D.U. was supportive of the constitutional changes made by Carey to centralise power in the hands of the President and was uncritical of his nationalist rhetoric and outlawed discussion and articles advocating direct action in its paper "Convoy Express".(2)

The author has little to say about this degeneration of the T.D.U. Carey later be-

came embroiled in a scandal involving rorting of union finances, lost his position and was expelled from the union as of July 1998.

Two interesting contributions in the volume about the auto industry are "Rank-and-File Opposition in the UAW During the Long 1979's" by A.C.Jones and "American Petrograd: Detroit and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers" by Kieran Taylor.

Both contributions focus on two rank and file movements which emerged in the U.A.W. (United Auto Workers) – the more militant League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the United National Caucus. The contributors in discussing the more militant L.R.B.W. which played a key role in waves of wildcat strikes in Detroit auto plants in the late 1960's over speed ups and sackings, see its emergence



in the context of black identity politics and vanguardism informed by Marxist-Leninist politics, which influenced many key activists and the grass roots. The authors show that this orientation of many of its militants also contributed to its downfall, particularly due to alienating many white workers and older black workers, in the context of a management and union hierarchy counter attack.

Another less militant rank and file movement, but more long lived and organizing on the national level which is focused upon was the United National Caucus. It was based particularly amongst skilled, "white" workers.

In regard to "rebel unions" which formed in the 1970's, the volume focuses on the U.F.W. in "The United Farm Workers from the Ground Up" by Frank Bardacke. This essay which is the most interesting in

the volume, focuses on how Cesar Chavez and his family suppressed grass roots opposition and militancy in the union and transformed it into a combination family business and farm workers advocacy group. The author does a good job exploding the myth of the lack of militancy amongst farm workers via a discussion of how their militant action is very much connected to harvest time, when the workers have high levels of industrial leverage. It rapidly diminishes after this period. The author then proceeds to review farm worker campaigns in the 1965-70 and how a union structure was established particularly via consumer boycotts. These boycotts in which Cesar Chavez, together with the support of religious and student groups played an important role, helped achieve important victories. However, due to the highly centralised nature of the union organization, characterised by a bureaucracy dominated by the Chavez family, severe infighting broke out in the union. It resulted in the defeat of grass roots activists and the entrenching of Chavez family and middle class radical staffer control. With the transformation of the U.F.W. into a combination of lobby group and family business.

In conclusion, the volume provides an uneven discussion of the rank and file upsurge of the "Long" 1970's in the USA. It certainly fails to look deeply enough concerning the nature of the social movements and youth culture of the 1960's and 70's which played such an important role in the militant upsurge and its decline and the hidden hand of the CIA and corporate agencies in key aspects. The contribution about the Teamsters is insufficiently critical of T.D.U.'s move away from a catalyst for rank and file militant activity and control of the union into more of an opposition party. Entangled in the vices of business unionism. Other contributions such as in regard to the U.F.W. provide a much critical analysis, but don't entail consideration of a clear grass roots controlled alternative unionism committed to direct action on the job and how to achieve it.

Mark McGuire

NOTES:

(1) See "Gloria Steinem: the CIA & the Women's Movement" on the Internet; "Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD & the Sixties Revolution" by Martin Lee & Bruce Shlain; and "Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and Cultural Cold War" by Frances Stonor Saunders regarding CIA "social/cultural engineering".

(2) See "Reforming" The Teamsters by Jon Bekken, in *Libertarian Labor Review* No.15 Summer 1993;

A FEATURE REVIEW by Graham Purchase

Part 1 Anarchism, Anthropology and Asia
The Art of Not Being Governed
An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia
By James Scott
Yale University Press/Orient Black Swan 2009

Continued From Last Edition

This scheme was based upon their own sense of space, place and racial categorization. Ethnic identities weren't imposed in any strong sense or overall way by the British through some process of ethnicization and ethnogenesis initiated by administrative authorities as (Scott persuasively claims) occurred in all other parts of the ancient and modern World.

Cosmopolitan Culture and Multiple Identities:

Scott emphasizes the cosmopolitan nature of both the state and barbarian societies of the region. The sparse population that encouraged slaving also led both hill tribes and states to continuously absorb and adopt a wide variety of peoples. The Barbarians of upland S.E. Asia are often well-travelled multiethnic polyglots like many inhabitants of modern Europe today:

"In the jumble of repeated migrations and cultural collision, group after group was reshuffled and transformed so frequently that there is no reason whatever to assume any long-run genealogical or linguistic continuity to such peoples." (p.137)

"The large group (7.5 million in China alone) known as Miao and the related Hmong in Thailand and Laos speak 3 major languages, and within each of those languages there are dialects that are mutually unintelligible. Beyond that, most Miao men and many Miao women can speak 3 languages or more. At the micro level of an individual village, the same cultural sprawl is evident. Inter-marriage between Miao and other groups is common as is adoption from other groups. The diversity of the Karen is no less daunting." (p.240)

The S.E Asian Massif is the size of America and its "crazy-quilt pattern" of history and topography make it just as ethnically and linguistically diverse and confusing as modern European life is today. Here, for example, it is common for somebody to reside in Sth. France but come from Norway and be married to an Italian whom speaks with her Polish-Italian

mother in Frulano (Language of the Nth. Italian region of Friuli). Scott argues that hill peoples display similar multi ethnic inclusiveness where individual identities are "plural, porous, ambiguous, unstable, fluid, changeable and intentional". Rather than being the necessary, passive or automatic transmission of a single mother culture or language (like inheriting the family photo album) "ethnic identity" is often a matter of individual and group choices and as such is in some sense a "political" act or "project". (p.242-3). "Someone with, say, a broad Karen-Thai repertoire will dress, speak and behave differently in the Thai marketplace than in the context of the Karen village festival. There is of course, no reason at all to suppose one part of the repertoire is more authentic or 'real' than any other" (p.255).

Against Tribalism: The Genesis of Ethnic Identity:

Scott somewhat overstates the case against the tribe because it seems clear to me as an Australian that the Aborigines conceived themselves in terms of "distinct, bounded social units" inhabiting precisely defined territories. A condition that Scott claims has "never existed". But as a general observation of human cultural evolution Scott is correct to emphasize the idea of the tribe as we encounter it today is certainly a "secondary form" of social organization "created in the context of a state or empire" and "the antonym or binary to the peasantry". "The 'tribe' might be called a 'module of rule'. "Designating tribes was an artefact of the imperial imagination. A technique for classifying and, if possible, administering the non- or not-yet-peasants." The State "created, however arbitrarily, a named people and their supposed location for purpose of bureaucratic order precisely to cut through the flux and formlessness that characterize vernacular social relations" (p.257 & 269). "Once invented, however, the tribe took on a life of its own" as "the recognized idiom for claims outside state space" (p.259).

Scott observes that "the assertion" and "crafting" of a "new tribal identity" by egalitarian stateless people in order to function within the colonial framework" was in almost all cases completely "fabricated". But, it often "succeeded admirably" in "controlling resources" and defining territories by "reciprocally ethnicizing" neighbours they wished to exclude from "exclusive claims to those same resources. The more successful the identity is in wining resources and pres-

tige the more such an identity, however fabricated its origin, will take on essentialist features and many will inspire passionate loyalty" (p.263-5).

Anarchism, Capitalism and Stateless Societies:

Statelessness cannot straightforwardly or simplistically be equated with Anarchism. Pakistan's Tribal Agencies bordering Afghanistan have successfully resisted all attempts to incorporate or colonize them in the modern period. This doesn't make the Waziris anarchists! Like capitalism, rejecting the social oppression of authoritarian religious mindsets and practices typically observed within Waziri culture is an integral component of anarchism as classically conceived.

Anarchism is a form of socialism that is opposed to god capital and state and believes in the possibility and desirability of a future egalitarian stateless society self-organized through federations of mutual aid organizations coordinating every conceivable human interest and economic necessity. I'm not altogether sure how much sense it makes to describe rapidly disappearing stateless hill societies as anarchist. Scott uses the technical term for statelessness—acephalous societies—on a number of occasions. But, statelessness only becomes anarchism when it is opposed to capitalism combined with a belief that non-state socialism can be created right now in the modern world. Ethnogenesis of Acephalous Peoples of Indo-China is a far less catchy and provocative title for Scott's book but is the more correct one. Many of the tribes Scott examined were involved in slaving and the international trade in luxury goods such that some sort of critical anthropology of capitalism would also be necessary to make Scott's book a truly anarchist account. In the 20th century some of these peoples were involved in the opium trade and a deeper consideration of the black or criminal capitalist economy of non-state space might also have been included. In the post 1945 world (which Scott does not cover) corporate capitalism has become as much a threat to traditional societies and their ecosystems as that of imperialism and the "internal colonization" (p. 12) of post-colonial independent states. Tyranny logically and actually results from corporate culture or rather the lack of it. Corporatism involves the heightening of hierarchy, tightening of control and an assault upon political accountability through the cultural corrosiveness of money centred mismanagement of the social and natural environment.

To be continued

News & Notes

Some of the most important news in recent months was the emergence of the "Occupy" movement, which has mushroomed in many cities globally.

In this edition of RW, we provide a sympathetic assessment of "Occupy" and its relevance to the grass roots of the workers' movement. (See article page 3.)

Additionally, we also provide a much more critical view of "Occupy" focusing on its simplistic populism, vanguardism and attraction of student/middle class "left subcultural activists". (See article page 16.)

In the last edition of RW, our probing analysis of the machinations of the hierarchy of the NSW Fire Brigade Union, caused outrage in these quarters. Our expose' of its fake militant and leftwing posturing, even propelled the officials to initiate a "wildcat" ban on a fire truck.

However, this action got out of hand. With management taking the initiative to lockout fires at several fire stations. Shades of the Qantas lockout of its workforce! Consequently, the "wildcat" stunt had to come to an abrupt halt.

In this edition of RW, we continue to examine further shady practices of the union officials, particularly aimed at entrenching their power and frustrating grass roots control. Whilst caving into the bosses' attacks, but presenting an image of fake militancy in the leftist milieu. (See article page 2.)

What would the transitional steps look like from existing bureaucratic unionism to a syndicalist mass union centre? What circumstances would contribute to it? The article on "Rebel Irish Unionism" throws some important light on these questions. (See article page 15.)

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

A.S.N. DIRECTORY

ASN Sydney Local

PO Box 92
Broadway 2007 NSW

ASN Melbourne:

J.Dixon
Jeremytrewindixon@yahoo.com.au

ASN Newcastle

PO Box 532
Newcastle 2300 NSW

The Anarchist Age

PO Box 20
Parkville Vic. 3052

SPARKS

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

JURA BOOKS

440 Parramatta Rd
Petersham 2049 NSW
Ph. (02) 95509931

SPARX

DIRECT ACTION
FIRE FIGHTERS' PAPER
Sparx@firehousemail.com

WORKING CLASS UNITED

[Http://workingclassunited](http://workingclassunited)
Googlepages.com/home

MEMBERS' VOICE

Grassroots NSW Public Transport
Workers Organisation
[Http://](http://Users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/membersvoice)
Users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/membersvoice

Grassland Infoshop

207B Nicholson St.
Footscray
3011 Vic.

Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name

Address.....

General Secretary

PO Box 532 Newcastle 2300 NSW.

**REBEL WORKER
WEB SITE:**

www.rebelworker.org

If undeliverable, return to
PO Box 92, Broadway NSW 2007

Continued From Page 15

rejoined
SIPTU or
NBRU.

Mediation services through the Labor Courts appeared more concerned with containing the breakaway union than with settling the issues in dispute.

Ogle sharply criticizes every sector in the new Irish industrial relations system. Not surprisingly, Iarnród Éireann's managers, the courts, and the media are all targets of Ogle's ire. However, he reserves his harshest criticism for his fellow trade unionists and, in particular, for his former union, SIPTU. Ogle and his colleagues in the ILDA may have expected conflicts with management and unflattering newspaper reports of passengers stranded as a result of industrial action. But the sense that their former union had betrayed them, abetting the deterioration of working conditions and the use of undemocratic procedures, instilled deep bitterness in the internecine conflict.

In desperation the ILDA negotiated with Mick O'Reilly to be accepted into the ATGWU, which was agreed. At this stage both SIPTU and NBRU went mental. To carry on quoting rather than typing, this, from an old story on the Struggle.ws site - Why Mick O'Reilly was victimised:

Quote: Late on the afternoon of Tuesday 26th June, the Irish Regional secretary (Michael O'Reilly) and Regional organiser (Eugene McGlone) of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union were suspended from office by Bill Morris, general secretary of the T&GWU in London.

Michael was handed a letter telling him ..he was suspended while an 'administrative audit' was being carried out - no charge of wrongdoing was levelled against him. ..he was to leave the office immediately and not to enter any T&GWU building.

..he was not to discuss the case with any T&GWU member, officer or any third party.

By using the word 'audit', T&GWU leaders in London probably hoped to give the impression that there was some kind of fi-

nancial trickery going on. In these days of Tribunals what else are folk supposed to think when they hear that word? Of course there has never been any evidence that Michael had ever helped himself to as much as the price of pint.

He was suspended because he has been a thorn in the side of the Irish government and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) bosses, being the only member of the ICTU executive to consistently oppose the 'social partnership' deals.

He further annoyed the ICTU leaders when his union took into membership the 100 train drivers who resigned from SIPTU and the NBRU three years ago. Their old unions had collaborated with government and management to crush the Irish Locomotive Drivers Association. The T&GWU accepted them into membership. Their old unions then demanded they be "handed back", as if they were property.

It is widely believed that the leadership of SIPTU and Bertie Ahern contacted Tony Blair about this, and Blair got on to Bill Morris asking that O'Reilly be brought to heel.

Michael enjoys the support of the Irish Regional Executive of the union. Membership meetings throughout the country have demanded that the suspensions be lifted. Not one single meeting has backed Bill Morris. [...]

The terms of O'Reilly's suspension were Kafka-esque. Not only was no one allowed to know what the charges against him were (although the sneaky inference of the 'audit' was accompanied by a whispering campaign in the media, natch). What's more, O'Reilly was not only suspended, but subject to a gagging order which forbade him from talking to not only the press and media, but also his own members and anyone involved in trade unionism in Ireland. Which meant, effectively, he couldn't talk to anyone he knew.

The ructions this caused amongst the membership and left-leaning folks in general, made the possibility of a coordinated revolt, not only against Bill Morris and the London TGWU, but against ICTU and so-

cial partnership, with the possibility of taking between 20,000 - 40,000 people out of the ATGWU and into a breakaway, anti-partnership union. But how to overcome the hoops of the 1990 Industrial Relations Act, which as the ILDA had just proved, made it practically impossible to get recognition for a new union?

Enter our old commie Cork butchers who retrieved their negotiating license from under the mattress, dusted it down and registered a name change to the Cork Operative Butchers Society & General Workers Union in preparation for, what turned out to be, the split that never was.

As it turned out the TGWU was able to do some kind of deal with Mick O'Reilly to put up and shut up (presumably in return for his pension) accept his sacking without comment and shuffle off into semi-retirement. So the split never happened. Brendan Ogle's ILDA (iirc who took the case?) took a case to the Irish Supreme court against being handed back (by the ATGWU) to SIPTU and NBRU like escaped cattle, on the constitutional grounds of the right to form a union (article 40, Section 6, iii), but the Supreme court ruled in favour of ICTU and the "non-poaching" agreement between ICTU members which means that no union can accept refugee members from another ICTU union without being expelled from ICTU. Social partnership now comes with added serfdom, it would seem.

So that left the IWU a tiny micro-union, outside ICTU and social partnership, having earned the undying enmity of the latter, with not much to show for it, other than the freedom to run a union in whatever manner they fancied. It regrouped a number of old commies and various renegade lefties (naturally the CPI itself, and all the trot parties are solid defenders of SIPTU and the ICTU unions), some socialist republicans and a number of anarchists. Given the history of its formation, it is not strongly shaped or defined by any particular political or syndicalist ideology other than being broadly in favour of membership participation and democracy and being anti-partnership. *Thanks to Libcom*