

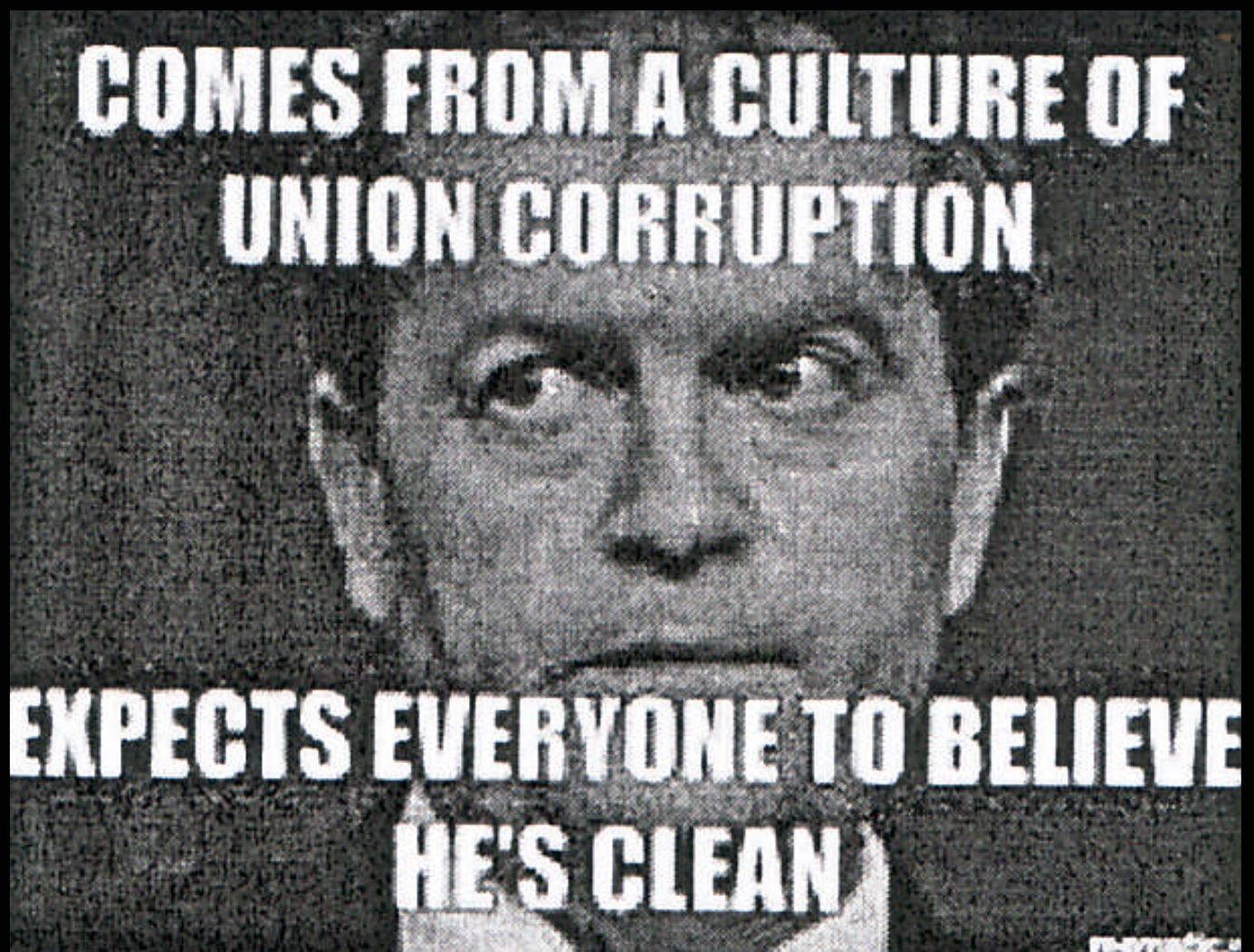
REBEL WORKER



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

BILL SHORTEN REVELATIONS DRAMATICALLY HIGHLIGHTS THE ENTANGLEMENT OF THE ALP UNION HIERARCHY IN SECRET DEALS WITH EMPLOYERS THROUGH ENTERPRISE BARGAINS. ONLY GRASSROOTS CONTROLLED UNIONS & DIRECT ACTION PROVIDES A WAY OUT OF THIS BETRAYAL OF THE GRASSROOTS!



NSW POWER INDUSTRY JOB CUTS; NSW RAILWAY NEWS; STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; QLD: BOB CARNEGIE VICTORY; LIBERALS & PUBLIC TV; BRITAIN TODAY; SPAIN TODAY; BRITISH CHANNEL FERRY WILDCAT; DEBATE ON THE GENERAL STRIKE; BOOK REVIEW CORNER; 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

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NSW: Power Job Cuts

Date: 21 April 2015

Power workers braving dangerous weather fear pending staff cuts will impact future emergency response times

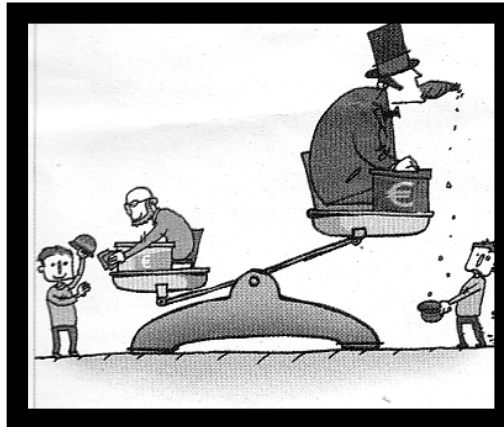
Power workers have braved treacherous conditions over the past 24 hours to restore power to thousands of homes and businesses as wild weather brought down trees and power lines across Sydney, the Illawarra, the Central Coast and Newcastle.

The Electrical Trades Union praised the efforts of thousands of its members who responded to hundreds of calls for assistance after heavy rain and strong winds cut power supplies.

ETU organiser Justin Page said that while most people in the community sheltered at home, away from the wild weather, thou-

sands of electricity workers spent the night in driving rain and strong winds to restore electricity supplies and remove dangerous power lines that had been brought down.

"While most people were in bed last night, thousands of electricity workers worked through the night in dangerous conditions to protect the public from downed power lines and to restore power to more than 130,000 homes and businesses," Mr Page



said.

"What we saw last night was nothing short of devastation, and the clean-up task — including the restoration of power — will continue for several days to come.

"As always, electricity workers put the community first by working around the clock responding to emergency call outs, and the ETU believes these workers deserve recognition for their selflessness and committed service to the public in extremely dangerous conditions."

Mr Page said that power workers were fearful that proposed job cuts in the sector — which could see more than 4,000 staff axed across NSW — would have a major impact on future emergency responses.

"If the Baird Government presses ahead with cuts of more than 4,000 electricity workers — including frontline emergency response crews — the public can expect to wait much longer to be reconnected following future storm events like the one we have just experienced," he said.

"The people of NSW pay their electricity bills and expect to receive the highest levels of service during storms, bushfires and other natural disasters, however current service levels will simply not be possible with the frontline job cuts being considered by the NSW Government.

"While these workers were out in force last night, the NSW Government is continuing to refuse to sign a new workplace agreement that would provide reasonable job protections for them by ruling out forced redundancies at network businesses Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy."

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1 ETU wild weather - Page.pdf

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A.S.N. APPEAL

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Network requires, cost effective permanent premises. A\$750,000 is urgently sought to buy premises for the proposed Rebel Worker-Anarcho-Syndicalist Network Media Centre. Please make out Cheques to Black Cat Media and forward to P.O. Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW.

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

Cruel and Unusual Punishment Continues.

Rules, rules, new rules, who's rules, who rules.

I'm convinced that the N.S.W. Government and its public transport management hates it's workers. How else can you explain some of the ridiculous practices that have been implemented.

The trial of station "right of ways" has been a continuing farce with safety vests forcibly removed, then under consultation with the unions, staff were forced to wear them once more. The latest situation is that some platforms will be wearing them while others won't, depending on whether they are using a flag or the new light to safely despatch the train. Nobody can really remember a time when there was a safety issue related to the use of a flag. That does not stop management, however, from trialling heavy hand-held L.E.D. lights that look something like a small tennis racquet. Handy though, I must admit, for cuffing an unruly passenger around the scone.

These things must have cost a few dollars when you factor in the whole management implementation program that surrounds anything new. But hey, if you are a manager, that's what it is all about. Change for change sake, just so that you can justify your existence. It's a way to get noticed if you are a manager.

Another way to get noticed is to get staff to stand all day while attending "customers" needs. The ongoing punishment of staff by making them stand for 8 to 12 hrs a day is continuing. Yes, despite all of the medical literature that says that making employees to perpetually stand is a bad idea, rail management says exactly the opposite. It's "good customer service" according to them, neglecting to say that these reforms are good for their own K.P.I.'s. This disgraceful, forced, work practice says a lot about the way employees are viewed by these present crop of bean-counting managers.

There is some evidence that making staff stand for a prolonged time is having some impact on the number of sickies people are taking. Management is cracking down through their absence control measures

but it seems to me that it is having little effect. We can't really tell as we have not seen any of their updated K.P.I. graphs posted on the wall lately.

Now staff are beginning to succumb to a number of ailments, from foot and back soreness to swollen knees and headaches. Some employees have already left the job, medically retired or resigned, rather than put up with constant pain. Some staff working ticket barriers have told me that they have to have regular physiotherapy just so that they can get through each day standing.

Constant appeals to the union hierarchy have failed to bring about a reasonable approach to the treatment of employees. Our union has fallen hook line and sinker for management's line about improving cus-

bundied up to 3 minutes after your sign-on time. Likewise if you hit off 3 minutes before sign-off time you could possibly catch your transport home. Now there is no leeway despite having to be on the job, ready to start, on or before your sign-on time.

This might mean that you will have to wait up to half an hour for a train or bus to get you home. Management are under no such constraints, coming and going as they please. Often their knock-off time coincides with the time of an express ride home.

It all makes no sense, since often the people clocking off have been relieved by someone taking over their job for the next shift. There is no work for them left to do. There are no savings at all to be found in a few minutes leeway. This illustrates

clearly why these new practices are less about saving money or improving the business. Instead it's all about punishing employees and putting them in their place.

Amongst the general workforce disillusionment is widespread. Employees feel as if they are not valued at all. If there had been a union fightback some dignity may have been restored within the workforce. At least there could have been some solidarity and camaraderie built up which may have strengthened the workforce backbone against the attacks.

Alas there has been nothing but more capitulation and excuses from the union leadership who know nought about, or just don't care about, organising on the job.

Job insecurity is the main motivator for fear amongst employees. Because there has been wave after wave of reform over the last 15 years leading to massive job losses individual experience teaches them that they could be next. The attrition process continues unabated. There are staff reviews in the pipeline that are expected to bring even more cuts. In the areas of maintenance, SDM's below a certain grade, NSW Trains staff, Sydney Trains staff are all mooted for another swing of the unemployment sword to the neck. This follows the wholesale removal of Booking Clerks from ticket offices, replacement of full-time cleaners with part time cleaners, the closure of information centres with the



tomter service. Faxes sent to the union by affected employees threatening to resign has not made one iota of difference to the predicament that they find themselves in. The Customer Service General Manager that introduced these draconian measures has now quit the railways saying that she has lifted the "standard" and achieved what she set out to do. In her new position as CEO of Kennards Hire she will prove to be an effective tool for Kennards Hire stockholders. There is no expectation that the new Sydney Trains Customer Service management will roll back any of these practices any time soon.

Recently there were changes to the way that staff bundy on and off. There used to be 3 minutes leeway either way when you signed on or off. Often this meant that if your train was or bus was late you could still be regarded as being on time if you

loss of dedicated and knowledgeable staff which has been sub-contracted to the private sector, the removal of Transit Officers, the contracting of nearly all maintenance work with the loss of a skilled workforce, the removal of Station Managers to be replaced by Station Customer Managers, with little experience, but twice the salary.

Due to the high job attrition rate and the recycling of full time staff for part timers many depots no longer have an official union delegate to represent local staff issues. Having locally elected delegates is essential to containing the rabid zeal of lo-

cal managers. All workplace depots workers need to campaign to have locally elected union delegates. Delegates need to understand the implications of industrial issues impacting in their area and more generally, regionally and nationally. They also need to have the guts and ability to confront management and to campaign for better conditions for members.

What members don't need is another union head office appointed stooge that makes excuses or does not understand the issues and doesn't consult with members

before or after talking to management. That type of unionism is a dead end and one which workers have no need for any-more.

A rank and file structure with regular local meetings is preferable but not always possible. It is something that workers on the job should aim for. They need democratic, self managed local branches that invigorate and build solidarity and confidence within the workplace and in the union. Perhaps that should be our next campaign.

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: How are you finding the management onslaught?

Waverley Busie: In regard to the current EBA commencing late last year, we were told by the union officials that we would get the meagre 2 1/2% pa pay rise, without any further nasties. As the bosses, couldn't squeeze anything further from us. However, after the new EBA was up and running, we have faced a new wave of attacks. Now, there is definitely a bad smell on the premises. The bosses are pushing the new draconian discipline regime to the limit. In the Eastern Suburbs, they are imposing harsh penalties in the shape of hefty fines, which effectively reduce our wages for periods of time as punishment for infractions and engaging in "trophy hunting" with the fitting up of many for the sack. I've noticed quite a few drivers getting the sack lately over disciplinary matters. The other day I met someone who had been a driver at Waverley and had been sacked last year and was very annoyed with the STA. He is now employed by a private bus company. He mentioned that he found the job there to be definitely not as harsh in regard to the disciplinary regime and meeting timetables. The bosses are over engineering the job. It seems they are making changes to our work every fortnight and engaging in ever more manipulative control techniques on us.

One alarming new initiative commencing from 15/6/15 is a so called 10 day trial for opening all doors of buses, at four of the busiest stops in the city e.g. Kippax Street, Elizabeth Street and Wynyard for Opal Card holders to enter. On these stops, the boarding of buses at these doors is to be monitored by "marshals". In reality after this so called "trial" of opening all the

doors for entry, it's likely to become permanent. It will cause confusion amongst commuters generally and will contribute to a grave safety hazard. No doubt this short sightedness and lack of judgement of the bosses, will cause a fatality. Most likely, the driver will then be targeted as the culprit. There has been some discussion on the job about the likely cause of this latest stupidity. One theory is pressure on the CEO from the Baird Government, resulting from a push to cut the STA budget by 10% and the loss of revenue due to the Opal system malfunctioning on buses. We've got to hit this madness on the head



with direct action immediately! This latest stunt of the bosses and the Liberals, just shows how low the STA has gone and how much the job has deteriorated.

A particularly weird new initiative of these "over glorified accountants", are 6 monthly meetings with your supervisor called GPS. According to feedback from some who have attended these little chats, it's about assessing your "performance". The bosses say these interviews are re-

placing the regime of attaching sheets to your journal. This new approach maybe even more dangerous. As the bosses will be assisted in building up a case against those being targeted for a disciplinary dividend and the issuing of an E1, based on alleged complaints and mistakes. In regard to the previous regime, at least, we could immediately challenge any allegations against us. Certainly, there is absolutely no trust between us and the bosses, as a basis for participation in such cosy little chats.

Another is a "competition" for the best depot in regard to cutting late running. Whilst on average, every month you would get 7 to 10 sheets clipped to your journal regarding alleged breaches of CEO Rowley's "Code of Conduct" policy. Why isn't there a "Code of Conduct" for the bosses? By this ploy, the bosses were constantly sending the message, "you are under our control!" It's also, about the bosses putting everyone on the office processing "assembly line". These so called breaches are often just some trifle the bosses seize upon to use against us, or just brazenly "cooked up" or the result of the bosses' own slip ups.

In recent weeks, the bosses tried to seize upon a phony breach of the Code of Conduct, in regard to one of our routes. A driver was taken into the office by depot admin. over his failure to pick up passengers on a tricky route. The driver pointed out that there was no map or display showing changes made to it on the notice board. So the driver couldn't be blamed for the complaints.

The bosses want to put us through an agitator and get some to fall through the grid and get the sack. Good Heavens! Anyone's job could be on the line, even Big Jim's could be next!

Compounding the problem of the increased pressure on us from management's manipulation are the problems we are facing with the Opal system. We now have to continually check both the front and back doors due to passengers problems tapping off with the Opal Card. Over-

time is always on offer, due to missed runs. The unrealistic nature of the timetables, has even been admitted by the bosses in the Eastern Suburbs. In doing say 6 runs for a line of work, you normally can only do 5 runs. The bosses don't concern themselves with the deteriorating health of drivers caused by overwork, increased stress, and exhaustion. However, they just seize upon any of our slip ups for fitting us up for the sack. As a result of these factors, there has been a huge turnover of drivers. In recent weeks I've noticed 12 to 15 leaving.

This whole process has been power driven by the Federal Government providing subsidies for employers such as the STA to employ older and long term unemployed. Whilst, the Eastern Suburbs depots workforce need to be reduced by 200 drivers, due to the tramway extensions in the area. As a result, the bosses seize on every opportunity or create new procedures to target particularly older drivers for a disciplinary dividend. Consequently, whilst depleting the workforce, the bosses can boost the STA budget. So they are looking good, and not looking bad.

WORK TO RULE CAMPAIGN & DRAFT LOG OF CLAIMS!



The only way we can beat this onslaught is with a "work to rule" campaign involving drivers and mechanics, where we show the bosses, the Government and commuters, that "We are in Control of the Buses!" We need also to ban immediately "going into the office" and allowing entry by commuters to the bus from the middle and back door, as part of this campaign. A draft log of claims for the campaign includes the following items for consideration:

1. New "realistic" timetables for all runs determined by depot committees;
2. Improved layover breaks at the end of runs, e.g. 15 minutes;
3. A higher per hour rate of pay for drivers and mechanics, e.g. an extra \$7 per hour;
4. The immediate cessation of the use of CCTV footage for disciplinary matters and the abolition of fines for not wearing the vest on depot premises;

5. The immediate cessation of the "Late-ness Crackdown", "Optimisation", the draconian "Accidents Policy", so called GPS 6 monthly interviews and back and middle door opening for entry to the bus;
6. Improved recreation and sick leave for drivers and mechanics, e.g. an extra 2 weeks recreation leave and an extra 2 weeks sick leave, with all restrictions about taking sick leave in current and previous enterprise agreements removed;
7. A code of conduct imposed on the bosses in regard to their dealings with us, monitored by depot committees;
8. Increased staffing of workshops with mechanics and apprentices, with the current speed up in work to come to an abrupt end;
9. The completion of all required maintenance on all buses;
10. The reduction of the period of traineeship to 3 months;
11. All existing casuals and trainees to become permanents;
12. A very "hefty" bonus for our working under the trying conditions associated with the Tramway extensions and WestConnex construction, etc, e.g. \$5000 pa.
13. The restoring of "spare shifts" and the "on the road" servicing by mechanics;

14. Abolition of the existing discriminatory "Drug & Alcohol" testing regime;
15. Non discriminatory allocation of rosters, overtime and equal access to creamy runs, monitored by depot committees;
16. The restitution of any loss of facilities at depots due to punitive action by the STA CEO, monitored by depot committees. Tempe Depot requiring particular consideration;

HOW WILL WE ORGANISE THE CAMPAIGN?

Permanent committees away from the tentacles of the union hierarchy need to be established in depots to implement and coordinate the campaign, and network with other committees at depots throughout State Transit. Everyone in the depots needs to be encouraged to get behind it. One approach could be for certain depots

doing the "work to rule" one week, followed by other depots on the next week. A permanent STA wide "coordinating" committee consisting of delegates from these committees, should be elected for this campaign and future ones, with strict mandates, instant recall and limited tenure of office. We need to "spread the flames" via agitation in the private buses, the railways and taxis and encourage the grass roots in these sectors to pursue concurrently, similar campaigns and establish this grass roots organisation. In this way our campaign will be assisted and we can build a "bonfire" under the Baird NSW Liberal Government. It will be cashed up with Billions from the leasing of Electricity Assets and a stamp duty bonanza from the real estate boom and can provide plenty of goodies.

With this campaign we can transform the fear, many feel on the job, into dynamic offensive action. To fight back and regain all conditions lost over the years, through the smoke and mirrors of the enterprise bargaining scam, which the union officials have been complicit. This campaign will also be the best defence against privatisation.

RW: What are drivers' views of the CEO and the union hierarchy lately?

WB: CEO Peter Rowley had been touring the depots 18 months ago to sell his 10 point plan. Not surprisingly, he received very cold and hostile receptions at the depots. This was particularly the case at Tempe, where he was told to "piss off!" No one wanted anything to do with him. However, we believe Tempe has been targeted. As certain extra facilities which the locals were wanting to improve the job have been denied.

There are certain rooms at the depot, where it was to be installed, remain uncoccupied.

Drivers generally are asking, why Rowley is still on the job? Why hasn't he been paid out and sacked years ago, as the major culprit for the destruction of our jobs? We are supposed to live in a democratic society. So why can't we elect our CEO and vote Rowley out? Some years back we got rid of a very unpopular depot manager at Waverley, known as "Patrick The Bull". He left the depot, as he was made to feel very uncomfortable in his job.

Several months ago, the hopeless union officials had been in receipt of a hot reception at Waverley. At a union meeting, they were the target of some hard hitting criticism and abruptly departed the scene!

RW: How is the mechanical section faring?

WB: Like the drivers, the mechanics have a graph on their window as part of a competition with mechanical sections at other depots. If their section doesn't pull its wait, mechanical sections at other depots beat them. No doubt as part of this throat cutting mania, I've recently noticed that the standard of maintenance has dropped considerably. It has been highlighted most dramatically in Mid May, when a Burwood gas bus burst into flames. There was a report about the incident on TV where some union reps were interviewed. Whilst in recent weeks I personally had 2-3 buses which had electronic problems, affecting power to the engine. In one case, after getting a bus from the workshop bay, it took me 5 minutes to get the bus started and I had continuing problems with it. Constantly cutting out during trips. In one incident, I was driving through the underground section of the Eastern Distributor where the bus lost power. The other day a driver mentioned to me, that he had booked off a bus to the workshops due to the engine continually back firing. When he picked up the bus, the problem remained. There needs to be "black boxes" installed on buses to report such malfunctioning.

Whilst the radio room has been covering up for faulty buses. Recently, a driver reported a faulty blinker on his bus. He was told by the radio room to drive the bus really slow back to the shed. The driver advised that the blinkers were like an extension of his body and he needed the blinkers to communicate to other motorists, and so he couldn't continue operating this bus. In previous years, before the major cutbacks to the STA, there were drivers

on spare shifts who would have taken a replacement bus from the shed and the driver would have continued on his runs on this bus. Alternatively a mechanic would have accompanied the driver on this bus and fixed the problem on the road.

Recently when I was in the workshops, it looked like a "ghost town". It was in stark contrast to years ago, when there were much more mechanics and apprentices around. How is it possible to expect proper work to get done on the buses, with such a deplorable situation? It wouldn't be tolerated in a private company!

RW: What's happening with recycling at the depot?

WB: There has been talk among a lot of drivers that there is no proper recycling service, except in the case of cardboard. The bosses are using the excuse of "security" to stop bins being allocated for other types of recycling such as cans and bottles. They claim NSW is at the highest level of security. More likely the bosses are just making it up, as an excuse for their neglect of recycling and to save money.

Recently I was shocked to read in the STA journal "In Transit" claims that the STA is adhering to "environmental best practice", given their appalling record on recycling.

RW: What are the latest developments with tramway extensions construction and the WestConnex?

WB: A recent Channel 7 story reported on the likely high levels of traffic chaos, which the extensions along George Street, will cause for the next few years. Luke Foley, Leader of the Opposition has also raised some significant points. The Tramway extensions construction will create a

type of "East-West" "Berlin Wall" style divide in the city. Whilst, shop keepers whose business will be adversely affected, won't be compensated. It seems to me, that George Street and the Eastern Suburbs, particularly Anzac Parade, already have very adequate bus services. There is absolutely no need for tramways in these areas.

Another Liberal initiative which will be a money spinner for Liberal corporate donors and will cause traffic chaos is the WestConnex. The major investors in this project are Leightons Lend Lease, Evans and Peak, Transurban and MacQuarie Bank. The WestConnex will create massive congestion in St. Peters and Newtown, where traffic will be discharged. Whilst the cross city tunnel also is likely to be choked with traffic. Recently, a Haberfield home owner, who criticised the project on talk back radio, subsequently had several project people fronting up at his home, demanding that he soft pedal his complaints. It just goes to show, how fearful the project consortium is of a groundswell of opposition from locals. Recently, I was upstairs at Westfields, Parramatta, where I noticed WestConnex had a stall. Whilst, on the next level down, News Limited, also had one. In the tunnel connecting Westfields to the station, I had a coffee and cake at a cafe. I asked the store keeper, whether it was also owned by Westfields. He concurred and complained about the rents being put to the max. Whilst, the WestConnex consortium will be gouging large profits from motorists with high tolls. It struck me, here was a great trio of voracious corporate cowboys.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In a previous issue of RW we spoke about the termination of a long serving Conductor. In this issue, we will talk about current developments in this case and other issues. Once again names have been changed.

RW: In a previous issue, mention was made about Union Officials blocking a train.

Clarence: May we introduce you to Ichabod and Isabel, who will speak about this issue.

RW: What part of V/Line do you work?

Ichabod and Isabel: We work in a Customer Service Area.

Clarence: In issue 150, we said the sacked Conductor was reinstated in another area of V/Line.

RW: Why?

Ichabod: You see, because of Industrial Action and a proposed rally to support the Conductor, V/Line did not want its dirty linen exposed.

Isabel: The reason, the Conductor accepted the new job offer, was if he had taken his case to FAIR WORK AUSTRALIA, and was successful, then V/line would have said, there was no Conductor position available and paid Compensation.

Clarence: This was another case of a sacked Conductor, who won his case and was paid compensation.

Rastus and Roscoe: At this point, may we join the discussion. Most of the Drivers at V/Line, say the Conductor should be reinstated, as a Conductor.

Ichabod: As regards industrial action on the evening of July 2nd last year, Union Officials occupied the track on Platform 15 at Southern Cross and delayed a Geelong Train for half an hour.

Rastus: The Union Officials stood in front of the train and with assistance of M/Train and Tram Division employees, who were on the platform held placards denouncing the sacking of the conductor.

Roscoe: Some of the drivers were on other platforms saw the Conductor Manager walking around. An organiser of the RTBU said to him to give the Conductor his job back. The manager walked away.

Isabel: Passengers on the Geelong Train were given leaflets explaining why the train was delayed and after half an hour the train departed.

RW: What was the aftermath?

Rastus and Roscoe: The next day the Melbourne Age ran a story about the industrial action. The feedback, the drivers received was most passengers on the Geelong Train supported the action.

Ichabod: The Chief Executive of V/Line sent a circular to all employees condemning the industrial action. In the circular, he said the Conductor received a fair hearing.

Isabel: What fair hearing? We had support from most of the members and no support from most of the Conductor Service Managers. That is why Conductors have no respect for CSM's.

Rastus and Roscoe: These circulars just make the majority of drivers sick particularly when the Chief Executive's picture appears on the circular.

Ichabod: The only reason the sacked conductor was offered another position was because the Chinese Community had contacted V/Line and told them, what they thought of the treatment of the Conductor.

Rastus: We drivers heard rumours V/Line had planned to go to Court to get an injunction to stop the Rally.

Clarence: Correct, but the injunction would have been defied.

RW: I have heard a rumour, that the Conductor was to return to the trains.

Ichabod: It was to have happened, but the Chief Executive changed his mind.

RW: Why?

Ichabod: It is alleged that HUMAN RESOURCES objected, saying their authority would be undermined. You see, one of the females in Human Resources does not like the Conductor being reinstated.

Isabel: Not only Human Resources, but one of the Conductors has stated certain Managers do not want him to return.

Rastus and Roscoe: One of the Drivers heard a Conductor bad mouthing the Conductor in the common meal room at Southern Cross.

Clarence: What do you expect?

RW: I hear there has been a restructure in V/Line Management.

Ichabod: The Conductor Manager has not had his contract renewed.

Rastus and Roscoe: There has also been a management reshuffle with the drivers.

Ichabod: The Conductor Manager finished in December. It is rumoured the V/Line Board was not satisfied with his performance. The Conductors cheered when they heard he was going.

Rastus: I wonder if the way he handled the sacking of the long term Conductor led to his demise.

Roscoe: Maybe.

Ichabod: The reason most of the Conductors hated him, was because he did not have the guts to stand up to Human Resources. Also he was one of the persons responsible for removing a popular Manager

around V/Line and say an existing station has ten positions and needs only seven, then the ten people scramble for the seven positions.

Ichabod: This is not new, it happens in other industries.

Rastus and Roscoe: CSM's haven't the guts to stand up to Human Resources. You see with the sacked Conductor, the CSM's should have helped him, not fence sit.

RW: What about the Drivers?

Rastus: The Driver manager has retired.

Roscoe: We do not know whether he was shoved. You see this restructure is a result of the new chief executive. A new position was created over the Driver Manager.

Rastus: It is rumoured, another new Position will be created and it will be on a contract.

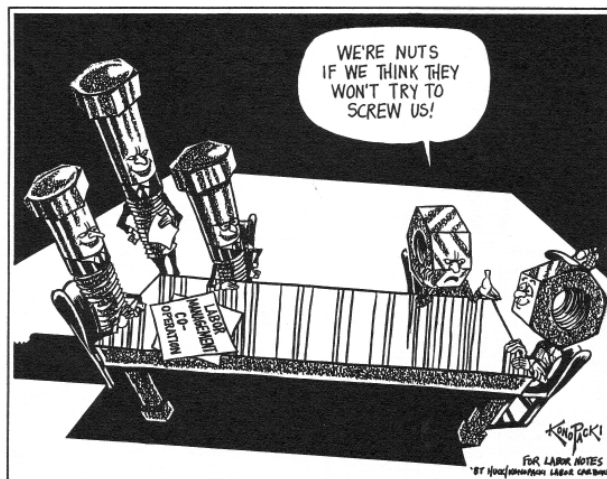
RW: What is this rumour of Fly in, Fly out?

Rastus: You see, some of the new CEO's team have come from interstate and at the end of the working week, they fly back to their respective place of abode. We wonder, if it is at tax payer expense? Whilst in Melbourne, it is alleged that they reside at a five star hotel.

Ichabod and Isabel: One thing Conductors and Station Staff have noticed is that since the Conductor Manager has departed, the number of Crawlers on the job, have gone quiet.

RW: In concluding, we have once again run out of space, and thank you Ichabod and Isabel for coming forward.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the sacked conductor should be re-instated as a Conductor. As for the Conductor Manager, GOOD RIDDANCE, you know what we Drivers think of you. Finally, if you are stood down, tell your workmates.



at Southern Cross.

RW: A previous issue gave an excellent description of how this Manager was removed.

Ichabod: The CSM's are now under their respective area managers.

Rastus and Roscoe: I wonder what future there is for CSM's?

Isabel: No future! If a future restructure occurs, they may create a new position, which covers the duties of CSM's and the positions will be advertised.

Clarence: Yes, create a new Customer Service Managers position readvertised it

Qld: Bob Carnegie Victory

Congratulations to Bob Carnegie and his Team

Bob Carnegie was recently elected to Secretary of the Queensland Branch of the Maritime Union (MUA). Bob had a history of struggle and grass roots activism within the union movement.

Bob Carnegie's election to the MUA Queensland Branch Secretary's position is

a stark reminder that rank and file activists can still win union elections. However, it takes a lifetime of commitment and solidarity building to do it.

Bob has a long commitment to helping his fellow workers. In 2013 Bob found himself in court after being pursued by construc-

tion company Abigroup for organising a picket, which stood for a number of weeks, at the construction site of the new Brisbane Children's Hospital.

"We're not going to let them get away with slave labour." Bob chanted outside the construction site. The courts later issued an order forbidding him to attend or take part in industrial action related to the building site. This he rightly disobeyed and was further charged with 18 counts of Contempt of Court and various other charges.

Abigroup even hired a cameraman to document Bobs exploits on the picket line. This was presented to the court as evidence against him.

Bob arrived at the court to defend his contempt charges surrounded by 150 or so other union members who formed a guard of honour which cheered him on. This type of solidarity is essential to win such a case.

"Mr Carnegie raised his fist in the air and led a chant of: "The workers united will never be defeated", before he walked into the Federal Court building."

"Earlier, hundreds of union members rallied outside the Federal Court building this morning to support Mr Carnegie."

"Unionists chanted "Hands off Bob"." - Brisbane's Courier Mail.

To cut a long story short, Bob was found not guilty of 34 charges, after building firm Abigroup Contractors decided not to proceed with them in the Federal Magistrates Court.

Bob's election to State Secretary of the MUA should embolden us all to continue to fight the good fight alongside our members while having every faith in their decisions and actions.

Surely his promise to back up ordinary members on the job and empowering them to work together for the good of all was a major selling point in Bob's campaign.

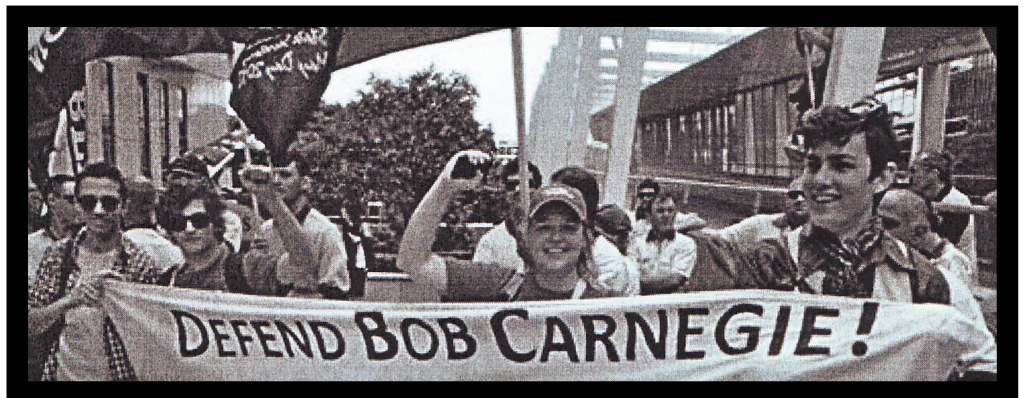
"I want to do two things: improve participation in the union and defend conditions. We need to re-engage the members - by campaigning, through organisation and by

education, both industrial and political. I want to develop democratic structures on the ground. There has to be a levelling of the hierarchy; workers have to feel that they can participate in the decision-making process." says Bob in an interview recently in Red Flag.

I know that in other unions the membership is calling out for a say on the day to day running of their union campaigns and are sick of not being consulted by union leaderships that excuse their sell-out deals as being in the too hard basket.

"Through struggle. I have huge faith in the membership and the delegates. We need to build confidence that their leadership will stand by them, no matter what. And we need politics. We look at things not from a narrow trade union perspective but from a working class perspective and that's fundamental - not just the workers directly affected but the broad working class movement."

"I believe that workers will respond to fearless, class conscious representatives who are acting in their interests and the



Bob has injected a ray of hope into a workforce cowered by the old leadership. Let's see them move forward together to inspire other workers into taking up the cudgel.

When asked,

"How will you foster members' involvement in their union given the decline in participation over years?"

Bob replies,

working class movement. Hopefully, that will get them to see that there are bigger questions at stake in terms of what is happening in this society."

Good luck to Bob Carnegie and all of your members in Queensland. If anyone can do it, you can. - MV

THE LIBERAL PARTY KILL FREE TO AIR TO PROTECT PAY TV INTERESTS

If you've channel surfed around free to air TV lately you'll know that its piled thick with non-stop infomercials and fairly old stale entertainment. Of course you can still catch the latest reality show, but that's only because their cheap to make and turn out.

The problem with free to air TV goes right back to the introduction of digital TV. The Howard government at the time decided to protect the interests of a few corporations in Australia (prime, nine, ten etc. and Foxtel) by preventing which TV stations could be on the digital spectrum. This despite offers by channels such as comedy central, MTV, various movie channels etc. (previously forced onto the Foxtel platform) to provide ad supported free to air services.

This was the beginning of the liberal government's protection of Foxtel, a company

owned by News Corp an American corporation sending its profits overseas and Telstra a company owned by the rich in this country.

But wait wasn't Telstra bought by Mom and Pop investors? You show me one person on a basic wage who owns Telstra shares and I'll believe that! Telstra was an asset owned by everyone in this country, sold out from under us by the Howard government to the upper middle class and the rich.

Pay TV did not always have adverts, this was something that was allowed by the liberal government. Not satisfied with subscription fees greedy Foxtel wanted its share of the advertising cherry. This was resisted by the free to air stations at the time, but their protests fell on deaf ears.

So now suddenly there was less advertising revenue available to the free to air sta-

tions, less revenue with which to buy quality first run entertainment. Foxtel of course had a bonanza cherry-picking the available advertising on the basis that they did have first run shows - shows they now have a virtual monopoly on.

Foxtel should never have been allowed to have advertising as you already pay to access it, that is you have already paid for the content - instead Foxtel is allowed to charge you twice for the same programs. Free to air TVá only charges you once, how is this a fair and competitive situation?

Governments have been asking the question recently, why Australia is one of the worst pirating nations in the world. The answer is fairly simple: when you allow one company to monopolize what people see locked behind extortionist subscription fees, rather than legislating so that free to air TV must run a program first, people are likely to rebel against the higher cost of accessing entertainment.

Not surprisingly the loudest voice against piracy in a recent forum organized by the federal government was Foxtel. The other parties suggested a wide range of reason-

able solutions but Foxtel stood out as wanting piracy sites outright banned. It is therefore strange that just precisely what Foxtel alone wanted to happen indeed did happen through recent legislation.

Of course when we look at political donations to the Liberal party its fairly clear why Foxtel is allowed such a free reign. It

was revealed recently that The Australian Screen Association which represents 20th Century Fox who are owned by News Corp who also own ...you guessed it Foxtel, donated \$4 million in political donations since 1988.

The Liberal governments of Howard and Abbott have done nothing but pander to Foxtels interests and the free to air TV we are all supposed to enjoy has suffered accordingly.

Sean

BRITAIN TODAY

NEW TORY STRIKE LAWS

The Queen's Speech recently confirmed that the Tory government's intent to bring in new laws further restricting strikes. The unions have reacted with fury - but will they really do anything about it?

After years of threatening to do so, the Tories are finally set to bring in even tighter restrictions on strikes. They are introducing the requirement for 50% of balloted members to take part in any vote for it to be legal, and in 'essential public services' no strike can take place unless 40% of all those eligible to vote in the ballot support action, regardless of actual turnout.

The UK already has "the most restrictive trade union laws anywhere in the western world", as Tony Blair once boasted, and these new measures are only set to make things worse.

The official bullshit is that this is simply about making sure strikes are democratic, and a handful of rabble rousers can't use the whole workforce as pawns to hold the poor bosses to ransom. Because, dear me, what is freedom if not the right to pay your workers piss all in exchange for making you obscenely rich without them having any means to complain about it? Nobody wants to strike, certainly not for trifling things like fair wages or safety, it's only that the union barons make them do it.

This rhetoric quickly falls apart on even a cursory inspection. If it's about democracy, why not allow workplace balloting to guarantee high turnouts? If it's about legitimacy, why not apply the same standards to parliamentary elections, removing most of the Tory cabinet at a stroke? But of course it isn't about those things. The fact that restrictions on scab labour are to be lifted only underlines that the point here is explicitly to restrict strikes as far as they can get away with short of making them illegal altogether.

In addition, it's worth noting that these laws aren't a response to overly belligerent trade unions. They're the act of a ruling class on the offensive. They can enact the

new legislation without worry for the same reason they can roll back all the concessions of social democracy - because the movement that won them is in retreat.

No answer from the union tops

Most people opposed to these new laws will know instinctively how to challenge them. Sure, there'll be a naive soul here who really thinks a petition can sort it out, and a blind fool there who believes Labour will repeal them in five years time. But in general, people who want to defeat these new laws will realise that the way to do that is by defying them.

But it would be a mistake to look for that defiance to come from the union leaderships.

to bring in 50% turnout thresholds in industrial action ballots and worse for the public sector, this has to be widened out to an emergency TUC General Council.

It should be a 'council of war' to seriously prepare the whole union movement for a 24 hour general strike, as a warning to the Tories. More importantly, it would raise the sights and lift the spirits of millions of workers and all those lined up to be on the receiving end of the Tories' eye-watering £12 billion welfare cuts. The left executives should work out a strategy to put pressure on the TUC. But if the TUC refuses to organise, then the left-led unions should get together to call action.

To their credit, SPEW concede the likelihood of the TUC refusing to organise such defiance. This is amply demonstrated by both the TUC sell-out of the 1926 general strike, and its retreat in the face of Thatcher's anti-strike laws. But it is more



Such an idea is typified by the Socialist Party of England and Wales.

The Socialist Party wrote:

At the FBU conference, just days after the election, TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady announced that there will be a special meeting of the TUC Executive in the aftermath of the Queen's Speech. But if Cameron (elected on 24% of the electorate!) announces the threatened new laws

than just reticence or cowardice. Even were the TUC not merely an umbrella organisation with no power in itself to call a strike or instruct its member unions, calling a general strike (even in the tokenistic single-day protest form) simply isn't in its material interests.

I referred to both the existing legislation and that coming in as "anti-strike" rather than "anti-union" because it actually serves business trade unionism. In restricting the ability of workers to strike, the law also reinforces the union's representative

function - in mediating between workers and capital and providing individual case work support rather than organising collective disputes. In other words, it helps the union bureaucracies curb militancy while reinforcing their role in defusing anger for a seat at the bargaining table.

Of course, militancy has already been curbed to such an extent that the incentive for bosses to offer a seat to the bureaucrats is ever diminishing. While the majority of unions remain in denial of this, some keep up a show of combativeness in order to present some level of threat if they're not listened to. These are the 'left'-led unions SPEW refers to.

But their combativeness, no matter how sharply it contrasts with the TUC as a whole, is still largely for show. Supposed fighting unions like PCS still ultimately exist to moderate class struggle and how far they will go is still limited by their need to secure a position in negotiations by selling industrial peace. Not to mention that as businesses the unions have everything to lose and nothing to gain by defying the law and risking the sequestration of their funds.

In short, even if the TUC general council talks the talk of a 'war council,' it will always be a pantomime.

What then?

We're not going to see a general strike any time soon - even a token one for a single day. Lobbying the TUC to 'get off their knees' in ignorance of both how it works and its material interests is a dead end. As is looking to the Labour Party who were responsible for a document called *In Place of Strife* and would have had us today referring to the 'Wilson anti-strike laws' instead of the Thatcher anti-strike laws had they not been defeated.

Instead, we need to look to ourselves. Enough has been written elsewhere, including by myself, about the need to build a movement from the ground up based on self-organisation and direct action that I don't need to repeat myself here. But the point remains that the answer lies with our class rather than those who proclaim themselves our leaders or representatives.

So let's not sloganise about a general strike, especially not a one-day shadow puppet version of it. Let's not 'call on' the TUC or the Labour Party for a single thing since they can offer us nothing.

Let's take matters into our own hands so that we can start to advance instead of re-treating.

Thanks to Phil's Blog

An analysis of the Civil Service Rank & File Network, which emerged in late 2012, and its impact during its brief existence.

Not too long ago, I read former PCS (UK Public Service Union) and current IWW member Jon Bigger's dissertation (PDF) on the rank and file versus bureaucracy debate within trade unions. Being a dissertation for an MA in International Labour and Trade Union Studies at Ruskin College, it is necessarily an academic piece. However, it contains some interesting research related to rank and file movements.

It also got me thinking about the Civil Service Rank & File Network. The CSRF no longer exists as a group, as the dissertation makes clear. However, the experience of organising within it is instructive for future attempts at rank and file organising within PCS and within the Civil Service.

Background

CSRF wasn't the first rank-and-file initiative in the civil service. However, it is arguably the first one which has been effectively documented.

Asking around, it is easy enough to find out that groups such as Redder Tape and Workhouse existed, and even to stumble upon people still in the job who were part of them. But their actual history is fuzzy; when they emerged, what struggles they influenced, what tactics they employed, and so on, aren't laid down anywhere. The pamphlet by Workhouse, *Servants No More*, is extremely useful but gives only a snapshot of that group.

By contrast, CSRF emerged in the age of social media. Its blog is still standing, its bulletins are easily found, and its Facebook and Twitter accounts still remain for posterity. So even if I knew nobody involved in it, it would be easy enough to plot out where it came from and where it went.

This isn't just important for the sake of history buffs - we document our struggles so that we can learn from them, successes and failures alike, adapting and evolving rather than following formulas and repeating mistakes.

At any rate, CSRF came into existence as a result of a walkout in October 2012. Days after a document from the Cabinet Office instructing government departments to look at watering down terms and conditions of civil servants was leaked, Francis Maude visited Sherbourne House in Coventry. When he went in, two hundred workers filed out.

Shortly after, the instigators of the walkout along with others from different parts of

the country declared the formation of the CSRF. Its first action made an impact: walkouts at a wide number of civil service workplaces on 14 November to coincide with a general strike across Europe, and what the Daily Star called a "communication meltdown" targeted at Francis Maude.

This happened at a time when a number of activists were frustrated with the seeming inertia of PCS, which was officially in dispute with the government over pensions in particular (as the front issue for a general opposition to cuts) but hadn't taken any action since 10 May.

However, the union responded very quickly to these actions, calling its own day of action on 30 November to mirror the earlier CSRF one. This was followed up with the issuing of key demands to the Cabinet Office and the announcement of a fresh ballot to renew the dispute.

Once it won a YES vote for further action, PCS then launched three months of concerted strike action. A national one day strike on budget day 2013 was followed by walkouts in different departments in a variety of forms including rolling strikes by section (in the Home Office) and by region (in HMRC and the DWP- Dept. of Work & Pensions) as well as half day and full day strikes in smaller offices. The effect was that pretty much every week over the course of those three months some part of PCS was on strike.

Unfortunately, with the official union now taking action again interest in rank-and-file organisation declined. The momentum it had largely washed away, so that when PCS decided to halt action for a "summer of consultation" (which would in practice bring the campaign to a grinding halt for almost twelve months), it couldn't mobilise as it had back in 2012 to lever the union back into action.

By the time summer was over, and it became clear that PCS wasn't going to spring back into action any time soon, CSRF no longer existed.

Impact

It's important not to overstate what CSRF was. In terms of organisation, it amounted to a small number of people in a number of different locations sharing ideas by email. An even smaller number turned up for its first (and, in practice, only) physical meeting in Coventry. It's also probably fair to say, especially beyond the activist layer, that the vast majority of PCS members weren't even aware of its existence.

So how did it make an impact at all?

I have previously documented my own efforts to organise on a rank-and-file level in my branch, such as the peaks of activity around the 2011 pension strikes and the abortive attempt to establish a CSRF workplace committee. However, I'm un-

der no illusions that such efforts (with all the difficulties and potential conflicts that they represent) will have been repeated elsewhere.

Rather, those who supported what the Network was trying to do would have organised in the more traditional way – that is, by getting the sign-off from the Branch Executive Committee and calling members out.

In the immediate term, this was useful in that the initial aim of widespread walkouts to put pressure both on the Cabinet Office and on PCS was met. However, the lack of a greater level of underlying organisation was clearly one of the reasons why CSRF couldn't achieve greater longevity and why the aim it achieved – pushing PCS back into action – also had the effect of side-lining it so that it couldn't pull off the same trick twice.

It also has to be said that the impact of the CSRF in its infancy was something of a unique situation. As PCS General Secretary Mark Serwotka put it when interviewed by Jon Bigger:

Mark Serwotka wrote:

I wouldn't say that day-to-day that I or the NEC are feeling that we've got the hot breath of thousands of people breathing down our neck, I've actually found my role and I hope this doesn't come out the wrong way but it has actually been to try and encourage and inspire people to do something rather than me feeling constantly pushed to do more.

The fact that there isn't constant pressure from below and the fact that such pressure, from a relatively small grouping, had such an immediate impact are down to the fact that the leadership of the union is seen as and sees itself as left wing.

PCS's left-wing identity is important, because those who have been running the union for the past decade or so took control from a right-wing group which was incredibly hostile to the rank-and-file and in many cases in bed with the state. As such, the threat of the right re-asserting itself is the main selling point for keeping those currently in charge.

Were that not the case, then it is unlikely PCS would have budged. But independent action due to the union's inactivity challenged the narrative of a fighting left-wing union at the forefront of the fight against austerity. So there was a very rapid shift.

At the same time, once PCS called a day of action and announced a fresh ballot, many argued that the job was done and that now we had to fall in line behind the leadership. This is the same attitude as those who will whisper criticisms of the leadership's actions through the year but then defend it to the hilt come election time. It is why the likes of Vice President John McNally assert that a rank-and-file movement should

never criticise the leadership, purely on the basis of its self-professed "left-ness." If we don't fall into line, then the spectre of what the union once was can reassert itself. However, the right has all but completely collapsed as an organised force in PCS. And while it trades on its past, the dominant Left Unity faction is simply an electoral vehicle and those in the top positions are fully bureaucratised and wedded to power. They are resistant to change, hostile to criticism, unwilling to adopt ideas that aren't their own. As McNally is reported to have told the HMRC Left Unity Conference in 2013: "power is everything."

That reality is why we need a rank-and-file movement. Not one that exists merely to prop up a left-bureaucracy, as suggested by senior PCS officials interviewed by Jon. One that can act independently of the

rank-and-file organising to fall back on. Those involved were and are organising, of course, but for the most part this is as trade union reps and within the structures of PCS.

As such, once PCS was levered into action it was also given back the reins of the struggle. Where a more established culture of rank-and-file activity may have helped CSRF to more effectively challenge the mass demobilisation branded as a "summer of consultation," the reality that it was a loose activist network with the intent of building such a groundwork left it largely unprepared.

This isn't to say that such activism, amplified by social media and the internet, can't be useful.

For example, CSRF's attempts to move PCS on industrial action over sanctions at least got the union to take more notice of



union leadership where necessary, and organises to build workers' confidence in their own collective strength instead of in those in charge. In fact, what we need is amply summed up in this article.

Lessons to learn

Class struggle in the UK isn't on a constant upward curve. Even with austerity an ongoing feature of the past five years we've all seen various struggles upsurge and peak, sometimes in a very short space of time, and peter out again just as quickly.

In the civil service, it had definitely died down after the massive strike on 30 November 2011 – with the unions playing their part in demobilising workers. When Francis Maude's intentions to attack terms and conditions came out, it caused another eruption of anger, which the Coventry walkout was able to turn into something tangible, giving birth to CSRF.

But nothing ever happens 'spontaneously.' Organisation is required, and what CSRF definitely lacked was a solid base of

the question than they had previously. It also gave ammunition to claimants groups to press the issue with the union more robustly and opened up a debate that some had for a long while been trying to suppress.

But a rank-and-file movement in DWP workplaces would have been in a position to win workers at the coal face over to the political case for refusing sanctions and from there hopefully to build confidence in their collective strength to resist and stand strong against any backlash, rather than having to rely on appeals to the leadership.

Likewise, when Jon was facing redundancy from the Passport Office essentially because they wanted rid of him as a rep, CSRF was able to support him. There was a significant solidarity demonstration at his hearings and a communication blockade that prompted the Permanent Secretary to write to Mark Serwotka begging him to get it called off!

But a rank-and-file movement in the Passport Office could have staged walkouts in offices up and down the country, blockades of public-facing workplaces, and other disruptive action that could have essentially made sacking Jon too disruptive to business-as-usual for them to handle. This might have increased the prospect of saving his job rather than ultimately failing to do so.

There is a clear need, then, to do some serious building on the ground. What we need is basic and fundamental: building workplace committees, picking winnable battles, winning through collective direct action rather than individual casework, and escalating to shift the balance of power in workplaces. But as basic as it is, it's too often not done – especially in workplaces with well-established machinery for the unions to bargain at a distance from the shop floor and with too much discretion on what they can agree to on behalf of all of us.

This doesn't need to happen under any specific umbrella. There's nothing necessarily wrong with banners like Workhouse or CSRF being temporary and transient. But if they're to have a greater effect and that effect is to be lasting then the organisation that underpins them has to be a lot more long-lasting.

The future

Even if CSRF is gone, rank-and-file activity in the civil service isn't.

Workers in the DWP have over the past few years been chipping away at the leadership attitude on sanctions. So while in 2013 PCS Conference committed only to consider refusing to sanction as a possible action short of strike tactic in a future ballot, in 2014 the union agreed to “build confidence amongst our members to develop a co-ordinated response to these attacks both politically and industrially.”

The union has also become ever keener to show that it is highlighting and challenging the application of sanctions. Frustratingly slow though progress may be, there is potential there for the union to be moved further, which will come down to both those workers arguing within the union for a more proactive stance and groups representing claimants to keep highlighting that moral condemnation isn't enough when without action in the workplace people are quite literally dying.

I've previously highlighted the case of John Pearson, who was sacked by Hewlett Packard on a trumped up charge and denied union support on an equally spurious basis. At last year's Conference, the PCS leadership felt confident to stand with political opponents of John's who had made vile personal attacks on him in his absence in order to shout down a motion of support. The attitude hasn't changed, but the will-

ingness to openly tout such an indefensible position was called into question by hundreds of PCS members and others signing an open letter in support of John.

There will be a lobby of Conference this year to pressure the leadership to do the right thing rather than to refute basic workers' solidarity out of a stubborn refusal to ever admit wrongdoing. You can also add your name to the open letter here.

In HMRC, a group called Your Voice – despite sounding like an overly cheesy voter registration initiative (I didn't pick the name) – has taken on a similar stance to CSRF in promoting rank-and-file activity. While confined to a single employer, and not being born of the same fiery circumstances that created CSRF, it has emerged as a reaction to an incredible level of ineffectiveness and inertia by those who run PCS within HMRC.

None of these things constitute a rank-and-file movement, and although Your Voice aspires to build such nobody is pretending that these things are more than what they appear to be. But they show the potential of workers at the coal face to take control of their own struggles.

The key question is how you organise to realise that potential and avoid the pitfall of being co-opted to prop up the bureaucracy, even a bureaucracy which is keen to present itself as left wing.

Thanks to phil's blog

SPAIN TODAY

Chronicle of an historic indefinite strike

*By J.M., a striker on a direct staff contract
A struggle that should have happened before*

It all started on March 28 in the capital Madrid where a group of hired, outsourced and self-employed or, rather, “pseudo self - employed” workers working for the company Telefonica-Movistar said enough to a new contract entailing very precarious, inhuman working conditions and decided to call an indefinite strike against the telecommunications giant, which is the largest quoted on the Spanish stock exchange the Ibex35.

When this strike began in Madrid, it quickly set off alarms in the rest of the country and from Barcelona, together with

Madrid, the possibility of convening a state-wide indefinite strike, began to emerge. This became possible on April 7th.

A historical struggle that ought to have occurred before started on April 7. It is historical because a strike of this size has never occurred before affecting so many companies in this sector. Thus began a just strike where the fight was against job insecurity, capitalism's abuse of power, the abuse of power of the few and the slavery of the many, the slavery of a working class that is suffering cuts in wages, rights and the freedom of expression. This struggle, known as the “Revolt of the Ladders” gave birth to a movement called the BLUE TIDE.

Corporate censorship

This strike has suffered injustice for two reasons, firstly and very importantly at the hands of the mass media; from the beginning it has been hidden, omitted and boycotted by the said media. We all know that

Telefonica-Movistar pay a large sum of money for advertising on television, newspapers and radio, but the news has to be told. Possibly it is the biggest advertising investor in the country, but gentlemen journalists, misinformation is not journalism. What cannot happen in the XXI century, in the age of information, in the age of telecommunications, is that news of this nature remains censored because it affects a company that advertises on this media. I, in my humble ignorance, think it right to explain and disseminate what more than 15,000 workers are suffering in precarious situations, in slavery, in a situation that is now leading many of us to a precipice, I think, gentlemen journalists, enough of hiding the truth and time to explain a reality, a reality of how a company with millions in profits exploits workers which it does not recognise as its own, but whom it enslaves for higher profits.

The role of the CCOO and UGT[1]

The second unfair and not so minor reason, is that we have the big unions putting spanners in the works so this Blue Tide may ebb and not achieve its goals. If the two big unions CCOO and UGT do not work to defend workers and are dedicated to keeping the employees calm so they do not achieve their goals and allow employers to operate

with ease, ladies and gentlemen, here is another big problem in this capitalist system which sweeps away and destroys everything in its path. We do not mean by announcing a public indefinite strike that minority unions such as AST, CGT and Cobas who turn up at the last moment without asking, what's going on?, what are you asking for? Why are you in this situation?, and put themselves at the head of the conflict without having called it, instead calling for two day strikes over three weeks, a far cry from the demands of those who suffer this very precarious situation in the flesh.

From here we ask them if they want to do something real for us, to stop delaying the fight and call an indefinite strike and let us in on the negotiations they have opened where not a single worker in the sector is there to explain our situation and what the strikers ask after 37 days of fighting. Not even 10% of those affected are following the strikes called by the CCOO and UGT, however 60% or 70% of staff are following the indefinite strike. Open your eyes for once and help workers already involved. The next strike called for 6 days ought to be indefinite already, do not lengthen the process, do not draw out the conflict, nor drown the struggle; we can say it louder but not clearer. Enough of helping employers and those who do not respect the laws, enough of helping those who mistreat us, enough of helping those who destroy decent jobs and make sectors precarious, enough please, enough is enough, let us have a little dignity, a little morality and principles.

What is the Blue Tide? Why do we fight? How has this situation come about? How are they fighting? What support do we have? What do we ask?

The blue tide are Telefonica-Movistar workers working on direct contracts, subcontractors of the contracted and self-employed working for subcontractors of the contractors, but in reality are pseudo self-employed receiving orders every day as if they were staff wage-workers, but they pay for their own clothing, gasoline, vehicles, tools, etc.

We fight because we have reached a precarious situation, one of slavery, we have no rights and work 10 to 12 hours a day from Monday to Sunday for wages in many cases 600 or 800 euros gross per month. Perhaps some readers will be saying or thinking I'm exaggerating, but I tell you I am not, that is the truth that we are living and to which this crisis we have been experiencing since 2007 has led us, but which in our sector does not exist because telecommunications are essential today for many of us, for many companies related to us, we are all connected and we all need to communicate. So, stop enslaving us to increase profits and regularise the

sector that should have been regularised years ago so that we would not have reached this point. I repeat, this sector has never been in crisis so we do not understand why there are so many cuts in every contract.

We have arrived at this situation due to the privatisation of Telefonica in 1996. Telefonica-Movistar had a staff of 72,000 workers, of whom roughly 22,000 remain today. Make the calculation yourself and consider the jobs that have been destroyed for much more precarious slave-like jobs today. Once it was privatised, it began retirements and early retirements converted into EREs[2] for the direct workforce of Telefónica in their early fifties, early retirement we have paid for and which all the large unions signed for one after another, destroying the staff. Telefónica decided not to hire more people and here we, the subcontracted, come onto the scene. Thus

mission of the subcontracted firms. To give you an idea, the scales of 2006 said that a production line be it of Jazztel, ONO, Orange, Vodafone ... was measured at 4.07 points, having to make at least 3 units to be profitable, according to our companies. Today with the new contract the scale is 0.47, having to make 21 units to be profitable according to our companies. In nine years we have increased production 700%, it is impossible to meet these conditions due to lack of hours to perform the work. In addition, there exist another series of tasks which are set at 0 points, i.e. we do them for free.

Because of these worsening loop contracts our companies thought, if Telefonica-Movistar created contracts, why don't we do the same and in 2012 there began a new stage, more slavish and even more precarious than the last. Many of these companies are no longer in the



a new link in the chain of insecurity was established, but it would not be the last. As Telefonica-Movistar has its own agreement on working conditions, to this new link created today by nine or ten companies including Comfica, Itete, Elecnor, Cotronic, Abentel, Cobra, Montelnor, Liteyca, Teleco it occurred to them to put their businesses within the Metal Agreement, which is not suitable for our sector and besides, they do not meet its obligations.

How does the relationship between Telefonica-Movistar and these companies work? It's easy to explain; among them there is a commercial contract called the "contract loop" which is renewed, always on a downward trend, every 3 or 4 years. The straw that broke the camel's back was the last contract which came into force on May 1, 2015. I will give an example so you may see the situation where we are. In our industry Telefonica-Movistar invented a points system to measure performance saying that a point is an hour's work. Each task we perform has a different scale, which has been modified in each new contract to their liking without measuring production times. The example or rather, examples that I will give reflect the abuse of power by the multinational and the sub-

metal agreement or, but in other agreements which still less reflect the reality of the sector. Of these contracts of the contractors, i.e., subcontractors, most not all, do not meet the laws preventing risks, do not meet schedules and what is worse, do not hire workers 40 hours a week as established by law, but give them two hour contracts while working 10 to 12 per day and pay the rest cash in hand, thus causing incalculable losses for the state coffers today, but, I assure you, they run to millions of euros. However giving a further turn of the screw, these subcontractors decided to create yet another precarious and slavish position called "Entrepreneur" by many politicians, "Self-Employed" by the bosses and "Pseudo Self -Employed" by us which is what it really is.

Substitution of staff by the pseudo self-employed.

What is a pseudo self-employed worker? It is a worker who was mainly staff on a contract and when the contract ran out was dismissed because there was no work, but they came up with the brilliant idea of ??telling the worker if s/he invested their dole money, plus a small settlement but not one that was fair, and bought tools, he or she could continue working as their own boss, taking orders as the staff did but

without vacations, pay, sick leave, obligations, i.e. zero cost and high profit. The perfect business, labour at zero cost and below that which life needs in order to survive.

On the other hand considering the positive side experienced in this struggle, I have to say from my humble point of view and my ignorance, that I was stunned by the great help received from social organisations, universities, social movements etc. I had never felt so much support and so much solidarity freely given, I cannot say in words what these 27 days of strike taught me in and what I have come to feel about all these groups that have made the “rebellion of the Ladders” no longer just a struggle of the Blue Tide, but a struggle of all. People have filled the collection tins, made popular collections of donated meals, collections at concerts, contributions from councils etc. To all these groups I want to tell you thank you very much, that we have run out of words and that without you we would never have been able to fight for so many days. In addition I say to the Blue Tide that we are not alone and that regarding the encouragement we need every day, these groups will be there to give us that boost. Do not throw in the towel, we have nothing to lose, we lost all labour conditions, we lost our rights, we lost the fear, at least let's not lose our dignity and not lose the possibility to live a better life together.

Before concluding by saying what we are asking for, I would tell Telefonica-Movistar this struggle is their concern and to recognise us as their workers. To the companies hired by Telefonica-Movistar, which are only puppets manoeuvred by Telefonica-Movistar, we say put pressure on the company to take a seat at the negotiation table, other-

wise we'll never reach an agreement. To the large unions, CCOO and UGT, please do not get in the way unless you really want to help in the conflict, accepting our list of demands. Small unions, we thank you for giving us all the facilities for this to succeed and putting all their resources at our disposal. We thank social entities for making our struggle their own and supporting us. I would tell politicians that the laws they are approving only benefit a few and they forsake many, you should stop turning a deaf ear to the people and stop favouring their cronies to later place them in multinationals as advisors through revolving doors. And let one thing be very clear, if you want to help the working class, help it, but do not use us for campaigning now elections are coming, we want help now and when the elections finish, continue to help to reverse this situation that not only affects the Blue Tide, but many groups that are quiet now, but will soon realise they have to take to the streets to defend their rights. We did not have to pay for this crisis. To all my colleagues I say that WE WIN OR WE WIN this struggle. No turning back, we have no fear, they have the fear because we control the country's communications.

Finally I want to give advice to all directly hired staff, to which I belong on one of the contracts. For anyone who says he or she is satisfied with what they have today and that this strike does not suit them, tell them our staff decline every day and that someday, you who are saying that, you will be fired because you will not give them the expected profit, i.e. you will be expensive for the company but a pseudo- self employed will be much more profitable. What will you become of you after this, comrade? Become subcontracted telling social security you work two hours and

when you retire you will remember what I said or you'll become a pseudo- self employed, enslaved from dawn to dusk for a few euros and then you'll also remember having read this paper. Having reached this point will you say to the pseudo- self employed, shall we strike now? And I'll answer for them, we tried once and it did not go well. To other colleagues I tell them not to throw in the towel. Until we have a decent sector to work in we do not return to work, and overnight they won't find 15,000 people who can install and repair telephone lines and fibre optics.

So comrades come out of the den where you are hiding and fight for WORTHY jobs. At least we, when we can end this fight, can hold our head high, while the scabs, who go so far as to disguise themselves at work will not be able to look us in the face. All I can say to you scabs is careful because some companies are laying off people who have not gone on strike, so you could be next.

[1] CCOO = Workers Commissions (linked formerly to the Spanish Communist Party) and the UGT is the General Union of Workers (founded by the Socialist Party (PSOE) in the nineteenth century.

[2] ERE stands for “Expediente de regulación de empleo”, a law which was passed by the state to allow firms “in difficulty” to lay off whole swathes of workers more easily.

For those who can read Spanish, more on the strike can be found at elsalariado.info. The document translated above can also be found in French at Www.robingoodfellow.info as well as on the French part of our site.

Sunday, June 7, 2015

Debate on the General Strike

The Campaign for a General Strike to Stop Tony Abbott is developing, but needs to go a lot further and a lot faster. Each day that goes by without an organised working class response is a day that Liberals harm working class people and democratic rights in Australia further, a day to destroy the environment, torture refugees, wage imperialist war in West Asia, stoke reactionary social forces and stack public offices with Right wing zealots.

To wait till the next election is to concede Tony Abbott the right to commit any crime, no matter how appalling. The Senate Won't Save Us Firstly, many of the atrocious measures contained in last

May's Budget were waved through because they were part of the appropriation bills which give the government authority to spend public money. This is how cuts to school and hospital funding for the States, cuts to higher education and many program cuts have gone ahead uncontested. Secondly, relying on the Senate allows the Government to wangle deals with Right wing independents and minor parties if they have to – neither Labor nor the Greens can be trusted to oppose government attacks consistently. The Government got the abolition of the mining tax and its anti-refugee legislation through, so placing faith in the Senate is a recipe for disappointment. The Labor Party Won't

Save Us The ALP, whatever its previous philosophy, is now a thoroughly neo-liberal party. Many members continue to fight the good fight inside it, but decades of rule changes have ensured that the leadership always wins. Labor's differences with the Liberals are marginal and, left to their own devices, when in power they would implement most of the attacks they now profess to oppose. We have seen it already under Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard. Now the ALP serves Big Business even more slavishly. Anybody who thinks Bill Shorten would chart a substantially different course from Abbott, let alone reverse his attacks on workers, has rocks in their head. The Union Officials Won't Save Us Virtually the entire union bureaucracy is loyal to the Labor Party (most of the exceptions having thrown in their lot with the Greens – good luck with that!). The limit of their ambi-

tions is a return to a Labor government, with the more photogenic of their number landing plum parliamentary seats for themselves. The officials will not challenge the neoliberal consensus unless their own positions are threatened – and not necessarily even then. They quake in fear before the State apparatus and have no faith in their rank and file members. They cannot even defend the institutions over which they preside, let alone mobilise a movement that can stop broader government attacks on the working class. We Have to Save Ourselves Only by organising a movement at the base of our unions can we fight back. We have to mobilise a rank and file groundswell in favour of a general strike to stop all of Tony Abbott's attacks. Once the movement is strong enough, we must be prepared to act independently of the union officials. When we create facts on the ground, the officials will be forced to either lead the struggle against Abbott or be bypassed. Take Back Our Unions, Take Back Our World The organised rank and file necessary to build the general strike against the Abbott Government is also necessary to fight subsequent

attacks on the working class by Australian capitalists. The union bureaucracy must be shattered and those genuine elements within it must dissolve into the rank and file movement. By its nature, capitalism continually attacks workers and siphons off ever more wealth and power to those already rich and powerful. To end the attacks for good, our rank and file movement must link up with similar movements overseas and rise up in worldwide revolution against capitalism. To contact the Campaign for a General Strike to Stop Tony Abbott, look for that name on Facebook, or E-mail: generalstriketostopabbott@gmail.com From The Anvil.

Comment:

Your discussion of the proposed campaign for a general strike seems quite vague, abstract and lacking in consideration of significant historical precedents and the nitty gritty of actually getting it going in contemporary Australia. The typical abstract propaganda churned out by leftist sectlets. In particular there is an absence of discussion of "Strike Waves", which often result

in general strikes. The most significant and largest was the general strike of May 1968 in France. It was called by the union hierarchy for one day, as a measure to gain control of the spreading waves of wildcat strikes and factory occupations. However, the grass roots disregarded this ploy and continued with the general strike. However, following the union hierarchy's rorting of a ballot among Paris underground workers regarding its continuation, the union officials were able to break its momentum. These workers initially returned to work, and subsequently went back on strike, when the ballot rigging was discovered, but the damage had been done. Workers in other sectors had been demoralised and returned to work.

In the Australian context, the union hierarchy in Sept. 1999, played an important role in orchestrating a small public sector strike wave. The State Sec. of the now, Rail, Tram and Bus Union, intervened in a campaign by the grass roots to fight moves to restructure Sydney Trains stations for privatisation. Forming an important spearhead of the employer offensive. See Page 20

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Review by Martin Comack

Ready for Revolution: the CNT Defense Committees in Barcelona, 1933-38. By Agustin Guillamon. Translated by Paul Sharkey. 264 pages. Oakland and London: AK Press/Kate Sharpley Library, 2014.

This book, the editors of the Kate Sharpley Library note by way of introduction, "is not an easy read for those of us looking for a comfortable reinforcement of the purity of our anarchist ideal." (10). The libertarian left in Spain, the Confederation Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and the Federation Anarquista Iberica (FAI) were neither naïve nor unsophisticated, or for that matter "filled with saintly militants drive by the purity, righteousness, and moral correctness of their mission." They were organizations shaped by their members' "experience of strikes, insurrections, imprisonment, exile, cultural activities, and lives led in the working class barrios and villages of Spain" (6-7).

The anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists and their organizations formed an organic part of the working class community, involved in all and every aspect of working class life, social and cultural. And for all that it was a remarkably complex move-

ment, containing various currents and tendencies frequently in conflict with each other - both between and within the two organizations. They could almost be considered as separate entities. For although membership in both groups often overlapped, the FAI never could claim more than several thousand militants, while by 1936 the CNT numbered its members in the hundreds of thousands. The CNT sought to organize the entire working class of Catalonia and of Spain, driven on the basis of need and physical survival. The FAI was a voluntary association of ideologues.

From its founding in 1910, and throughout the early years of the twentieth century the CNT was characterized by internal factionalism that only intensified with the outbreak of the Revolution and Civil War in 1936. From the outset there were those who sought some means of collaboration or *modus vivendi* with the state and with other political and social movements, a policy often followed by labor organizations elsewhere in Western Europe. On the

other side were the revolutionary elements, soon to be labelled *incontrolados* by the government collaborators and Stalinists, for whom armed class struggle was both unavoidable and desirable.

The CNT defence committees were formed in reaction to the ferocious repression visited upon the union in the 1920s in its attempts to organize in the workshops and factories of Barcelona and the province of Catalonia. It was the era of *pistolero*.

Under both the monarchy and the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, attacks on the CNT went far beyond the routine blacklisting of militants, lockouts and the use of scab labor. The Civil Guard, the employers and Catalanian vigilante groups did not hesitate to employ officially sanctioned terrorism against strikers, union members and the working class in general, and followed an unrestrained policy of physical assault, imprisonment without trial and assassination. This general policy of repression did not essentially change with the proclamation of a Republic in 1931, much to the disillusionment of many in the CNT who had actually taken the Republican promise of popular power and rule of law at face value.

From the outset, CNT union militants were forced to arm themselves, form self-defence teams, and retaliate shot for shot against the agents of the state and the employers. Under conditions of mass unemployment and wide-spread impoverishment, some groups began to engage in expropriations, bank holdups and raids on payroll offices to sustain themselves, their neighbours and the union itself. In the author's words, "the distinction between legality and illegality was meaningless in a wretched and forlorn world of rampant exploitation, where it was a struggle simply to eke out a bare existence" (33).

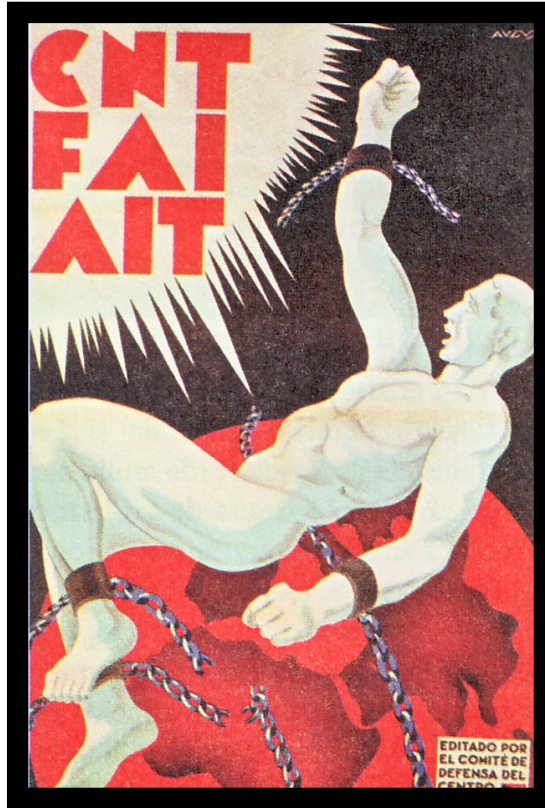
Funded by, and subject to the CNT, the defence groups provided the union with its own militia force. Each defence group generally consisted of some six dedicated militants, all members charged with specific tasks. These included liaison with other cadres, gathering intelligence on government forces and the employers' pistoleros, drawing up plans of urban structures, reconnaissance of strategic areas for purposes of street fighting, surveillance of public services, and the provision of weapons and resources.

By the early thirties, under the pressure of constant attack, the defence committees took to the offensive and engaged in a series of mini-insurrections – preparations for what they considered to be the inevitable social revolution. But Guillamon considers these latter actions to have been merely examples of "a childish policy of revolutionary gymnastics," that left the organization severely weakened, and a course of action that was finally superseded by more realistic plans that emphasized intensified training, organizational coherence, and the stock-piling of resources (24). By the outbreak of the Revolution and Civil War in 1936 the CNT defence committees could mobilize some 20,000 armed militants. And it was the defence committees that met head on and defeated the military uprising in Barcelona. Guillamon describes this battle between the pro-Franco forces and the anarcho-syndicalists in some detail.

In the wake of the fascist defeat, in July of 1936 the CNT armed cadres held effective power in Catalonia. Now the CNT was forced to make an immediate choice – cooperation with the Republican government in Madrid and the provincial Generalidad in Barcelona, the better to concentrate on the military defeat of General Franco's army that had succeeded in taking over half the country – or the immediate launch of the Social Revolution and the implementation of communism libertario? Or was the one somehow dependent upon the other?

On the one hand, some demanded the assumption of power by a Committee of Militias, that would basically constitute a

dictatorship under another name, a complete betrayal of libertarian ideals. Besides, the anarchists were not strong enough to initiate libertarian communism in the rest of Spain. Even in Catalonia, the collectivizations that the CNT was able to immediately effect in industry and agriculture were opposed by some peasant farmers, small business owners, more con-



servative Republicans.

And would the central government in Madrid tolerate such a radical social upheaval in the midst of a civil war, not to mention the governments of Britain and France?

On the other hand, although the provincial government of Catalonia could rechristen itself a Council, and be granted a certain measure of autonomy by the federal Republic, it still remained and retained the powers of a traditional state, representing a coalition of different classes, political parties and groups with opposing interests, ranging from the radical to the reformist to the socially reactionary. This was true whether the CNT entered into collaboration with it or not. It is this that had been the bane of revolutionaries since the days of the Paris Commune – an existing governmental structure always ready at the first opportunity to ally with conservative or reactionary forces against popular control and popular power. This choice broke the ranks of the "pure" anarchists of the FAI as much as the CNT. Collaboration meant that the CNT was absorbed into the machinery of the state, merely one of several parties and unions represented in a Popular Front political alliance – despite

its membership of over half a million. And the CNT could not enter the government and still maintain its own independent defence committees, its own armed militia.

Guillamon makes frequent reference to the "higher committees" of the CNT, whom he charges sought collaboration with the Generalidad and the Republican state from the beginning. "In July 1936, the defence committees ... were potential organs of the power of the working class. They could have become everything had the revolutionary situation of 19 July spread and deepened" (133-134). Instead, the Confederation engaged in a "succession of retreats and an undermining of their revolutionary gains" that included the reduction and eventual disarmament of the defence committees (132).

The ebbing of the revolutionary tide paralleled the simultaneous growth in power and influence of the reactionary Communist Party, the conduit through which a dependent Spanish Republic received arms and resources from the Soviet Union. Stalin's foreign policy aim was to forge an alliance between Russia and the Western powers in a Popular Front against Hitler and Mussolini. A social revolution in Spain would undermine this effort, panic the ruling circles in Britain and France, and turn them in the opposite direction.

The anarcho-syndicalist *incontrollados*, now calling themselves the Friends of Durruti, aligned with the radical socialists of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista in attempting to resist the Stalinist-led counter-revolution. But it was too late. The events of May 1937 in Barcelona saw the final suppression of the revolutionary militants and the opening of a campaign of imprisonment, torture and murder directed against them. It was, Guillamon insists, "the Republic rather than Franco's dictatorship that defeated the Revolution" (190).

"Throughout history," Guillamon instructs the reader, "revolutionary movements have never been unblemished and flawless; they have been motley and contradictory, naïve and forward-thinking, irksome and blinkered, surprising and far-sighted, all at the same time" (246). The mass movement of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain proved to be no exception.

Martin Comack, member of the Workers Solidarity Alliance (USA), author of Wild Socialism: Workers Councils in Revolutionary Berlin, 1918-21. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. 2012.

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An Interview with Miguel Amorós about his book “Durruti in the Labyrinth”

In this 2015 interview, Miguel Amorós discusses his book about Buenaventura Durruti, Durruti in the Labyrinth (2006), the controversies and enigmas surrounding the untimely and mysterious death of this charismatic figure of anarchism, and the impact of his death on the anarcho-sindicalist movement in Spain during the civil war, which Amorós says was not dependent on the actions of any single individual, but that his demise demoralized the rank and file of the anarchist movement and reinforced the trend towards bureaucratization in the CNT-FAI by providing those institutions with a martyr for propaganda purposes to rally the masses behind the war and government collaboration.

An Interview with Miguel Amorós – Cazarabet-El Sueño Igualitario

Miguel, you have written a lot about Durruti: the revolutionary, the voice of the revolution, the bellwether of the struggle ... what is the contribution of your “reevaluation” of this “personality” of anarchism, libertarian ideas and the libertarian movement in Spain?

My purpose in writing Durruti en el Laberinto was to demystify him as a person and situate him in his historical context. To break down an ideological myth that was the “organic” creation of a particular bureaucratic apparatus, to restore his anarchist and revolutionary identity, visible in every aspect of his everyday practice. In order to do this, I recapitulated almost every day of the last five months of his life.

I had some older relatives that were on the losing side of the war and more than one of them said to me at one time or another: “Ay! How would the war have turned out if they had not killed Durruti?” What do you say to that?

The outcome of the war did not depend on any one individual, no matter how charismatic that person may have been. It is nonetheless legitimate to speculate that the rolling back of the revolution might not have taken place at such a rapid pace, that the strategy of the CNT might not have been so counterrevolutionary and that the Stalinization of the Republic might not have penetrated so deeply. So, if Durruti had not been killed, a factor that played a role in the defeat, the enormous demoralization experienced by the masses after his death and especially starting in 1937, might not have had such a major impact.

And what might have happened with the revolutionary process ... if Durruti had not died ... what might have been different?

There is no doubt that they would have tried to bribe Durruti with a military command of a division or something like that. As they did with Mera. In any event, the first step of the counterrevolution, the militarization of the militias, once it took place, would have taken place under other conditions. The CNT might not have caved in to “circumstances” with such abandon. Furthermore, the attacks of Líster’s division against the Aragon collectives would have been inconceivable



with Durruti in Catalonia or Aragon.

People back in November '36 began to ask who killed Durruti and some questions are still unanswered ... after all these years: do we know anything for certain?

There was a conspiracy of the Soviets to remove Durruti from the Aragon Front and “neutralize” the anarchist influence there. This has been proven by the documentary record. As for his death, it is known for certain that the official version of the stray bullet was as false as the versions of an inside job and an accidental discharge of a “naranjero” [the MP-28 submachine gun used by the Republican forces in the civil war]. Durruti was killed by a shot at close range, from behind, presumably from a group of militiamen who were fleeing from the front lines. Whether this encounter was a result of chance or a set-up is something that we can speculate about, but not prove.

Durruti was for everyone, for all factions, more of an enemy as a revolutionary element and as the advocate of a social uprising than he was an enemy for the military rebels?

The counterrevolution, which was spearheaded in Spain by the communists, considered Durruti to be an obstacle to the creation of a regular army with barracks discipline, gold braid and epaulets and a general staff outside of the control of the workers organizations; in addition, it feared his projects for “libertarian reconstruction” in the rearguard and at the front, which it stigmatized as absurd utopian experiments.

The important thing was to confront the abuse of power that victimized those who always had less, the worker, the farmhand, the peasant, the wage laborer ... and create an egalitarian society ... what was important was the revolution and with the military revolt an opportunity arose ... isn’t that what happened?

That is not how the leading officials of the confederal organization saw it, which from the very start advocated collaboration in mixed institutions with other political forces and insistently appealed to the rank and file militants to go back to work and not to go too far.

I understand, based on the little that I have been able to gather from my reading and my conversations, that if people like Ascaso, Durruti, and so forth had not been killed ... the spring of '37 in Barcelona (its impact was more widespread) would not have taken place as it did ... maybe it would not even have had the same outcome.

I make it a point to insist that individuals, as important as they may be, are only individuals. The events of '37 would have taken place in one way or another. Even while Durruti was alive a similar event occurred in Valencia in connection with the funeral of a militiaman from the Iron Column. On the other hand, people whose prestige was unquestionable, such as Federica Montseny and Juan García Oliver, forfeited all their credibility with their “Cease Fire” appeals. It can of course be assumed that with Ascaso and Durruti among the workers on the barricades the defeat of the revolution would not have been so complete. The abandonment of the barricades might not have implied, for example, the dissolution of the Defense Committees and the Control Patrols, the mass imprisonment of libertarians and the suppression of the Council of Aragon.

It is often said—and always to condemn anarchist and libertarian ideas—that they were the ones who proposed the alternative: revolution or win the war ... but I saw this more from another perspective: why

don't we ask ourselves whether this was not the idea of others, those who were afraid of anarchist ideas and the development of the revolution, and that these people fought two wars at once, one of which was aimed at the revolution and the other (as in a monologue), the war [against Franco's forces] ... what do you think?

The intervention of the masses against the military rebels expelled the State and the employers from many domains wherever the revolution made rapid progress: farmlands, factories, public order, militias, healthcare, education.... However, the state structures remained intact and thanks to the collaboration of the libertarian organizations these structures were rebuilt within a few months. The forces that sought a return to the pre-July 19 status quo employed the slogan of "first the war and then the revolution". This meant the recovery of control by a State reinforced with its own army and police, and the liquidation of the revolutionary conquests, first by way of nationalization. The first phase of the process took place under the Largo Caballero government; the second phase, during the Negrín period.

Did Durruti's militiamen frighten them so much that they had to be sent to Madrid? (I ask this question with respect to both the rebel military as well as the communists....) (Because they could have allowed them to do more to "take" Zaragoza, but all of a sudden they are sent to be entangled in the labyrinth of the Madrid Front and the Ciudad Universitaria; sorry, but this whole question just seems to me to have too many loose ends.) What can you tell us about this?

Durruti's arrival in Madrid was quite low-key and did not have a big impact in the press, not even the libertarian press. There was no triumphal procession; that was an a posteriori propaganda invention, and was part of the media disputes between the communist and confederal hierarchies. Durruti was stalled about 35 kilometers from Zaragoza due to a shortage of ammunition and weapons, and a lack of artillery and air support. And I will also point out that it was also because of a shortage of combatants (his column did not have more than six thousand men, a few more than fifty "centuries"). The government did not want to compensate for these shortages because it did not want to arm the FAI. Soviet diplomacy had sabotaged all arms purchases because the Soviets did not want to see the anarchist militias well armed, either. Durruti went to Madrid because the leaders of the CNT convinced him that a successful effort there would result in his getting the weapons that he needed in Aragon. But he arrived in Madrid with only one thousand two hundred men (plus another three hun-

dred recruited by Estat Català); none of the other available Catalan militiamen who had been assigned to serve with him wanted to fight under his orders. The result was that with meager forces, exhausted from their journey and not accustomed to fighting under air assault and artillery bombardment, he had to try to seal a dangerous breach in a front with courage alone against twenty five thousand militiamen and soldiers. It was not a mission that provided an opportunity for great accomplishments and praise, but a suicide mission. Those who pulled the strings to send him there knew what they were doing.

What was the profound impact of Stalinism and its men in Spain during the Civil War?

Starting in September 1936 Stalinism was hard at work in the Spanish Republic. The weapons that it contributed allowed it to take control of military operations and the secret services, obtain advantages for the Communist Party, persecute dissidents and put an end to anarcho-sindicalist dominance. The Spanish revolution was sacrificed and the revolutionaries persecuted and assassinated because the Soviet foreign policy of alliances with the bourgeois democracies required the existence in Spain of an authoritarian bourgeois Republic. Stalinism left in its wake a trail of authoritarianism, perfidy, double-dealing, falsehood, manipulation and crime, in short, totalitarianism. The communist parties inherited its methods and applied them to the degree that they were capable of doing so.

Was there treachery, direct or indirect, in the assassination of Durruti? Was the government behind it, and the hand of Stalin and his agents in Spain?

It can be said unequivocally that Stalin's agents conspired to remove Durruti from the Aragon Front. The Prime Minister consciously or unwittingly played his role in this. And so did some of the other Ministers in his cabinet. The National Committee of the CNT and the Peninsular Committee of the FAI did their part, too, for what must be assumed were their own political reasons.

The disagreements in the CNT, when some took a position in favor of joining the government, a position that we can characterize as indicative of the "bureaucratization" of the CNT, and others were very much opposed to this course of action ... the outbursts of dissent were quite violent, there were incidents involving what we could consider to be "fighting words" ... maybe this had something to do with his death ... we can only recall what you wrote in your book: that Mariano Rodríguez Vázquez ("Marianet"), at that time the General Secretary of the CNT,

"met with all the witnesses and pressured them to remain silent" and you conclude that "Durruti was killed by his comrades; they killed him by corrupting his ideas".

Durruti did not come out publicly against the entry of the CNT in the republican government, just as he did not publicly oppose the CNT's joining the Catalanian government. He did, however, express his anger at the sinister machinations in the rear-guard (see his famous radio speech of November 5). His death was in a way favorable for the development of the anarchist bureaucracy. First of all, it allowed the leaders of the CNT to unambiguously advocate the militarization of the libertarian columns; and later, they put into his mouth words that called upon the workers to renounce the revolution and libertarian principles in order to support the war. The CNT-FAI was bureaucratized as it became integrated into the State institutions, as the odds of winning the war diminished, and as the Spanish proletariat was isolated internationally, as the libertarian organizations felt they had to make an abrupt change of course and make deals with the communists. The class war was buried to the benefit of a war for independence. The militiamen ceased to fight for their class interests in order to fight instead for the defense of "the nation". Their enemies were no longer the bourgeoisie, the clergy and the military, but rather "foreign invaders". The mystifying rhetorical excesses of the libertarian leaders transformed Durruti, the proletarian hero, into a national warlord [caudillo nacional], a figure of racial mythology and a xenophobic militarist. That was when they killed him a second time.

Miguel Amorós, interviewed by Sussanna Anglès Querol on behalf of Cazarabet-El Sueño Igualitario

March 26, 2015

Translated in April 2015 from the Spanish text available online at: <http://www.cazarabet.com/conversacion/fichas/fichas1/laberinto.htm>

"Cazarabet" is the name of a bookstore in Mas de las Matas, Spain; "el sueño igualitario" means "the egalitarian dream", and is the name of one of the bookstore's departments that specializes in anarchism and the history of the Spanish civil war: <http://www.cazarabet.com/> [Translator's note].

** 1. Miguel Amorós, *Durruti en el laberinto* [Durruti in the Labyrinth], Muturreko burutazioak, Bilbao, 2006. New, expanded edition published by Virus Editorial, Barcelona, 2014 [Translator's note].*

NEWS & NOTES

The latest revelations associated with Bill Shorten's (ALP Federal Opposition Leader) appearance before the Royal Commission into Trade Union Corruption exposes as never before the shocking sell outs associated with enterprise bargaining, involving the ALP union hierarchy and employers. It certainly spotlights the urgency of building a grassroots controlled and direct action unionism alternative, as never before.

Whilst many across the spectrum may decry these secret deals with employers and the enterprise bargaining scam, it's important to organise on the job to counter it. Currently the ASN is assisting militants in the buses to do just that and to fight the current draconian discipline regime in State Transit and regain many conditions lost over the years due to successive enterprise agreement scams. (See article page 4.)

Currently in Sydney Trains, the feral fat cats are also showing their claws, with the imposing of ever more cruel and unnecessary rules to harass workers and undermine their health. Whilst, major station staff cuts are in the pipeline. (See article page 3.)

On Sunday August 23rd, 2015 4-8pm, the Denis Kevans Memorial Agent Orange Peace Concert is being held. Tix \$25/\$15 concession at 142 Addison Rd Community Centre, Gumbramorra Hall, Marrickville.
Gig info jeffersonlee.aust@gmail.com
www.agentorangejustice.org.au A Lorie-keet's Whisper production (2015).

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Grassland Infoshop

207B Nicholson St.
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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 106 Kotara 2289 NSW.

Continued From Page 15

Militants, assisted by the ASN and the Sparks network, had won a mass meeting to support the campaign. Following intervening in the campaign, the union State. Sec. called next day a NSW wide lightning rail strike. It formed the apex of a strike wave, which also included NSW nurses and Sydney garbage collection workers. It was aimed at achieving a variety of goals e.g. influencing an ALP conference in Sydney on the weekend, to facilitate the union hierarchy gaining a greater hold on the NSW ALP Govt., preventing militants organising a public information campaign about rail privatisation and taking direct action, alienating commuters so as to head off grass roots industrial action by public transport and other workers during the upcoming Sydney Olympics in 2000, etc.(1) Whilst, one of the most significant strike waves in recent times, which culminated in several one day general strikes called in Victoria, by "Left" sectors of the union hierarchy was the campaign against the penal provisions of the Industrial Court and the freeing of Clarrie O'Shea in 1969.

In regard to the "rank and file" movement, which you consider will play such an important role in work to get a general strike going, the rarity these days of workplace papers, illustrates its current poor health. One of the very few notable exceptions is the "Sparks" network and paper



based in Sydney. Its currently, assisting militants to establish the grass roots organisation, which would be vital to fighting current management attacks and in initiating future strike waves, which can lead eventually to major action against the

Abbott Government and create the transitional steps leading to the emergence of breakaway mass syndicalist unionism. (See article page 4 in this edition).

In conclusion, if you are talking about getting a formidable "rank and file" movement going and building the capacity to launch strike waves and ultimately a general strike, work to assist Sparks is vital. Particularly in regard to developing new sections e.g. Victorian tramways and buses, Qld railways and Brisbane buses, etc and so assisting militants in the day to day class struggle in vital arteries of the capitalist economy, not just anywhere. It's this type of serious sustained activity which is required rather than the easy and illusionary stuff of "abstract" appeals for building "rank and file movements" and general strikes via banners and occasional leaflets at demos, articles, etc, favoured by leftist sectlets.

Ed.

Notes:

1. See "Anarcho-Syndicalism: Catalyst for Workers Self-Organisation" and "Anarcho-Syndiclaist Strategy for Australia, Today", in the archive section of our Web Site www.rebelworker.org

British Channel Ferries Wildcat Strike

24/6/15 Summary of today's events in Calais, France.

Now that things seem to have calmed down in Calais, it seems like a good time to wrap up the blog. Here's a summary of what happened there today.

Thousands of travellers were stuck on both sides of the travel after French sailors launched a wildcat strike against plans by their employer to sell off two ferries.

Workers blocked the port of Calais then the entrance to the Channel tunnel with burning barricades, snarling up traffic in the area and across the sea in Kent. Calais remained blocked for most of the day.

Migrants camped out in Calais took advantage of the heavy traffic to try to sneak aboard slow-moving vehicles they hoped might take them to Britain.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Eurostar passengers found themselves stuck at St Pancras station after Eurostar cancelled all their trains until tomorrow.

Kent Police responded to the disruption of cross-Channel ferries from Dover by turning the M20 southbound into one long lorry park. The force has said its Operation Stack contingency plan will remain in place until tomorrow.

The deputy mayor of Calais, Philippe Mignonet, reiterated calls for the English border to be moved to Calais. The move would make UK authorities responsible for migrants waiting there to try to travel across the Channel.

STOP PRESS: There were also "sympathy" strikes in the port itself, with around 50 protestors trying to stop ferries from leaving for England.