

# REBEL WORKER

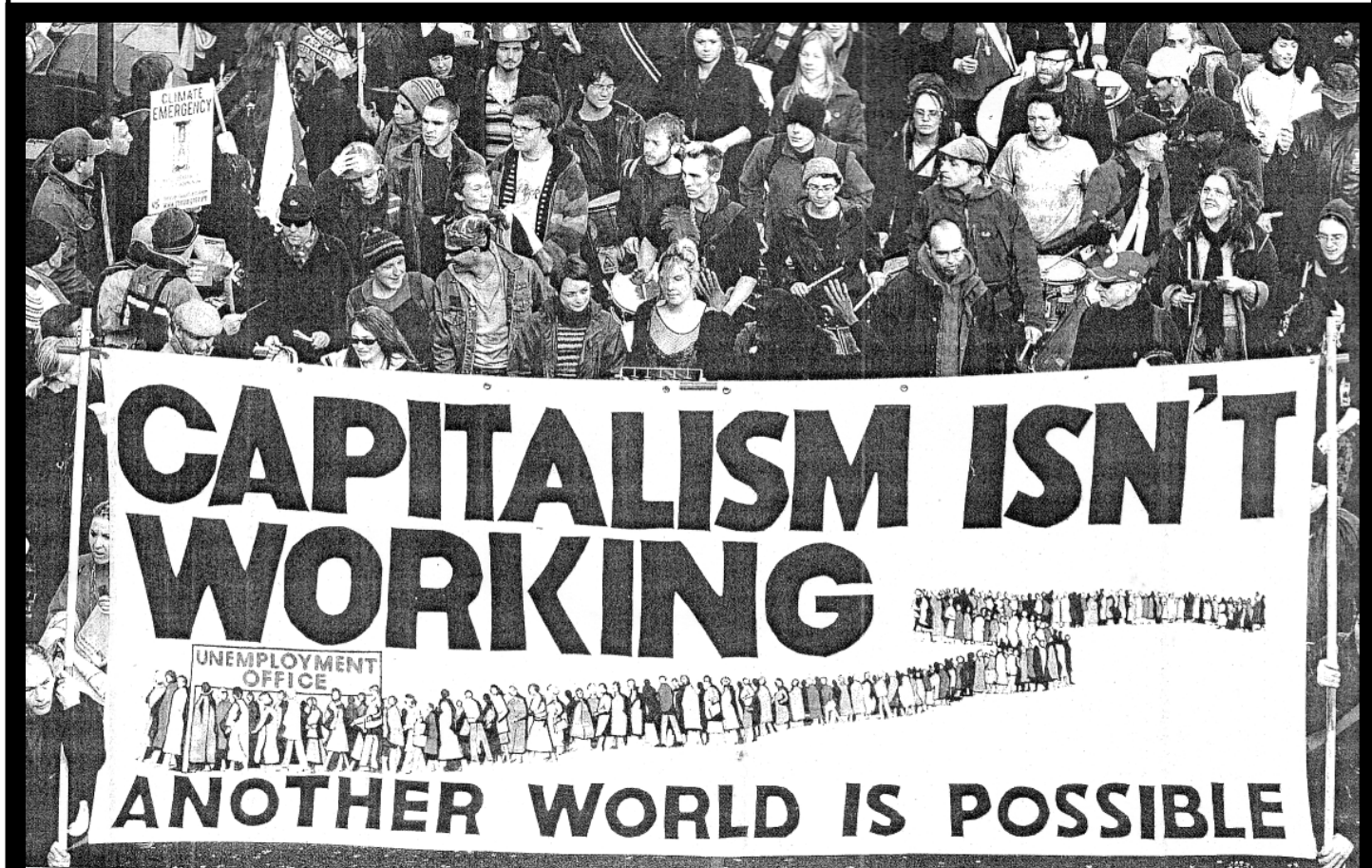
AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



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

## **Employers Use The Cloak of the Global Downturn for Accelerated Job Destruction & Speedups!**



NATIONAL NEWS; N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS; STATE TRANSIT  
NEWSFLASH; SYDNEY WHARFIES' NEWS; SHIFT WORK SAFETY;  
VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; BRITAIN TODAY; NEW ZEALAND;  
SOUTH KOREA; ISRAEL; MAY DAY; BOOK REVIEW CORNER  
"CHOMSKY ON ANARCHISM"; SELF MANAGEMENT OR  
WORKERS CONTROL?; NEWS & NOTES; PLUS MORE!

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

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

REBEL WORKER

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## NATIONAL NEWS

### CORPORATE COLLAPSES

The collapse of yet another agricultural managed investment scheme highlights the limitations of Australia's corporation and taxation laws. Great Southern collapsed in mid May leaving debts of over 750 million. Timber Corp, the other debt laden timber plantation group collapsed a month ago leaving debts of over 650 million dollars.

Over 70,000 investors in both groups lost everything and shareholders in the companies have been left with shares that are virtually worthless. I have little time for the investors and shareholders as both Great Southern and Timber Corp were vehicles that were marketed as taxation havens. Federal taxation laws allow people to legally minimise their tax by investing in managed investment schemes that invest in agriculture. My concerns revolve around the nine billion dollars in possible taxation revenue that's been siphoned from the public purse into debt ridden managed investment schemes that have little to show for the investments.

I expect corporations to wheel and deal to make a buck that's capitalism. If a company doesn't make a profit it normally doesn't take long for it to go bankrupt. I do expect governments not to be a willing participant in schemes that cost the taxpayer billions of dollars. The legislation surrounding managed investment schisms was Sawn from the very first day. The collapse of Great Southern and Timber Corp. will have a significant impact on the regional and rural economy. In an era when more and more family farms were feeling the squeeze and regional centres were losing population, the managed in-

vestment schemes provided employment to a significant number of people. The collapse of these two groups will have implications for rural and regional Australia that will be felt for some time.

The tragedy about this whole fiasco lies directly on the shoulders of the Howard government that passed legislation that allowed a flawed scheme that gave people the opportunity to legally minimise their tax by investing what normally would have been public money, into dubious non-sustainable private corporations.

### VIC. HUMAN RIGHTS ?

You may remember that recently I sent a letter on behalf of the Wednesday Action Group to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission about a problem we were having distributing leaflets outside Southern Cross Station (Melbourne's main railway station), with the private corporation that manages the station on behalf of the Victorian State government. Successive Victorian State governments have a habit of entering into public private partnerships that alienate open public space from people.

So far, so good. In 2006 the Victorian government, to much fanfare and mutual backslapping, introduced The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. Before you pop the cork on the champagne bottle to celebrate, it is important to know;

"The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission does not have the power to receive complaints about breaches of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the Charter)".

*It gets better...* "The Charter does not provide an individual with the opportunity to take a breach of his or her human rights to a court or tribunal as a separate case of action. A human rights argument can only be raised by an individual to support an already existing claim or matter which is to be brought before such a court or tribunal".

*It gets even better...*

"If however, you wish to make a complaint about a breach of human

rights that you believe has been committed by a state entity (eg a Government department or a statutory body) you may contact the Victorian Ombudsman who has the power to investigate alleged human rights breaches by such entities".

Just in case you're wondering what the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission actually does:

"Functions include providing education about human rights, intervening in court proceedings where questions of law arise about the application or interpretation of the Charter, and reporting annually on how well State and local government comply with the Charter".

It seems the Victorian state government has gone to a lot of trouble and expense to ensure that no one is able to exercise their rights and if they're arrested for doing so, it has done a very good job of ensuring they will never be able to obtain legal redress for doing so. I'm afraid the Victorian Human Rights Charter in its current form wouldn't look out of place in Machiavelli's political treatise — The Prince.

*Thanks to the Anarchist Age*



*"I knew something was wrong when my orders for Iraq came in the same envelope as my oil company credit card bill."*

# N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

**Rebel Worker: What are your thoughts on the recent furore over the issuing of the Gold Card to Nick Lewocki, RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) NSW State Secretary?**

Station Assistant: In late March there was a front page story in the Telegraph regarding the issuing of the Gold Card to Lewocki due to the intervention of the Rees NSW ALP Govt. despite, his lack of 30 years of employment on the railways. As he became a full time union official since 1979 and has been on leave without pay since that time. The media also exposed the issuing of the Gold Card to a manager who had had become an acting senior executive with 13 year's service in this position and should have entitlement to the Gold Card. Why hasn't this breach of RailCorp regulations been picked up by internal RailCorp audit? Given few workers these days last 30 years on the job, the union needs to push for the length of service required for the issuing of the Gold Card to be reviewed when each enterprise agreement is negotiated.

**RW: What's the latest with the Transit Officers?**

SA: Most of their work is being taken over by the police. Under 200 will be guaranteed jobs in RailCorp. As a result, most are in a state of limbo in regard to their future employment prospects. This decision appears to have been made by a bureaucrat who has now moved to some other department leaving carnage in his wake. The previous system of railway police who were highly trained for the job was much more satisfactory. The current system of Transit Officers is contradictory as they play a customer service role which clashes with their security role as they have power to arrest people.

## WE HAVE BEEN LIED TO!

**RW: What's the latest news with the Station Reforms?**

SA: Workers were shocked to learn that as part of the 4% pa pay rise for the current Enterprise Agreement (E.A.), 1½% of the rise was payment for compliance with the bosses demand for 400 job losses in the CityRail Network as part of an upcoming staffing review. Many feel confused about the situation and consider they have been conned by the union hierarchy who gave the impression to us at the time, the threatened strike was called off at World Youth

Day, that there would be no trade off's associated with the pay rise and enterprise agreement. As a result, they followed the union officials' recommendation to vote for the E.A.

Likely outcomes of the massive staff cuts will be major speedups in our jobs, workers being pushed around to work in different parts of the system and the cutting out of overtime.

A petition is now circulating on the job to the effect that the enterprise agreement cannot be considered enforceable as workers were misled by the union officials into agreeing to it on bogus guarantees. A Member of Parliament is also being approached to raise the duplicity associated with the enterprise agreement in parliament. Whilst workers are being encouraged to not vote for the ALP at the next state election as a result of the treachery. The amount of money the Govt. will save from the proposed job losses as part of the station reforms is between \$10 mill. to \$30

Duty Managers to compensate them for the reduced hours associated with the increased number of unattended stations and multi control of stations from one central station. The bosses are also proceeding with savage staff cuts on the weekends. In the case of Lidcombe Station there is one station assistant to monitor 4 platforms.

**RW: What's been the union officials' response to this outcry from the grassroots?**

SA: They have held meetings on the job and spread the story that they have things under control regarding preventing the staff cuts, the bosses are demanding. Workers don't believe it, as the EA was signed off and they have been paid the pay rise. The officials are saying they are trying to convince management that the staff cuts to stations shouldn't go ahead on the basis that it poses a threat to passenger safety. However, management can counter argue that the transit officers will do roving pickets at stations and other mea-



mill., a drop in the ocean in regard to overall Govt. expenditure, but likely to cause much discomfort amongst workers. This money saved is likely to be splurged by the bosses on paying fat bonuses for the increased number of managers in RailCorp and the English managers who are on a type of "working holiday".

Even before this staffing review is implemented, bosses are moving to reduce station staffing. One approach the bosses have taken in regard to reducing staffing at stations and having unattended stations is providing an 18% pay rise to SM's and

sures will be introduced. A better argument to make to retain station staff, is the need to ensure safety for the remaining station staff. Many in the station offices will be female and in greater danger.

**RW: What's the latest with Rail Corp targeting of train crews?**

SA: Wheels are continuing to move behind the scenes, with the new carriages built in China being stored at Auburn and Clyde. The Australian involvement with the carriages has been just the final checking and maintenance. Questions arise over whether these carriages will be faulty

given the poor standard of Freight Cars produced by 3rd World Chinese manufacturers. Why didn't the union and RailCorp pressure for the carriages to be built in Australia? Where will the new carriages be parked as with the selloff by the Govt. of much excess railway land there is no space. Already the super signal control boxes exist. There are problems with the T-Card introduction as tendering compa-

nies have found the project too difficult as the public transport system in Sydney isn't based on zones like with the Travel Ten's.

Some food for thought is whether passengers want a faceless rail transport system in the future. Whilst in the case of the banks owning part of the railways under a Private/Public Partnership, we have seen the rundown in safety under such an arrangement in the case of the recent violent incident involving bikies at the Airport.

## The Station Review Sellout!

by *Crimson Coconut*

**Leading up to EBA 2008 Sparks Magazine warned operations staff that a vote in favour of the EBA was akin to signing a death warrant. Within EBA 2008 were several clauses pertaining to the review of station staffing levels and changes to train crew rostering. It handed a blank cheque to management to carry out reforms despite the effects on staff moral and rail worker's conditions.**

One reason we cited for not supporting the EBA was that the exact reform process was never spelt out. Job downgrades, job cuts and restructuring were never mentioned anywhere in the documents, although anyone reading between the lines saw that management wanted the flexibility to use part time and temporary employees on stations and that there was a move to reintroduce their plan of Multi Control of Stations.

On the other hand certain union officials were visiting stations assuring workers that they were "not losing anything" for voting in favour of the EBA but that "they were actually gaining something" for a 4% PA pay rise. That "something" is now highly elusive and rail staff have now seen through the bluster and subterfuge of the union's position.

The voting process, unlike previous EBA's where a secret ballot took place, was by a show of hands at various polling stations throughout the state. Union and management representatives presented their cases in tandem at the polling stations. Management encouraged rail staff to vote in favour of the EBA while the unions sat on the fence saying "it was up to us". Staff were duped and coerced into voting for the reforms while not being made aware of the consequences of accepting the 4% pa. This is all despite the

urgings of the NSW Transport Minister of the day saying that the pay increase was contingent on a massive station operations reform process to compensate.

Before the papal visit rail staff had been seethed loudly to their unions urging industrial action in pursuit of the 4% pa wage rise during the visit of the pope. While the rail unions sought to publicise the potential of the action in the press they were singled out for criticism from the mainstream commentators as being "old school" bullies. They need not have worried, for the hard talk of union officials



was not being followed up by deed. Consequently industrial action was ruled out as an option on the eve of the papal spectacular despite the fact that staff had voted in favour of action. Macquarie Street had been let off the hook once again.

Rail staff are still telling their union representatives in blunt terms that they are opposed to the station staff reviews and that they do not wish to take part in a process that is deeply flawed and would leave them worse off. This is falling on deaf ears as the unions already have representatives on the review committees even though the committees are heavily weighted in fa-

### **RW: What are your impressions of the Govt's construction of new rail lines?**

SA: Many of these extensions such as the MacQuarie line and the Olympic Park to Homebush lines are just white elephants or dead ends such as at Cronulla and don't significantly expand the railway system capacity.

your of management who have the final say on the outcome of the reviews. Staff have threatened to resign from the union if management's proposal gets up.

Sporadic actions at different locations have been organised in resistance to defend jobs and conditions in the face of the the rail unions capitulation. At Central Station a petition against the reforms was circulated, it received over a thousand signatures. This was forwarded on to the unions and the Industrial Relations section of RailCorp as well as several MP's and the Transport Minister. In response the unions have organised a post card handout to the public at major stations; hardly an adequate response to their members anguish. Jannali Station has had help from a local MP for a public petition signing at the station. Other actions have taken place on the Central Coast and in the Blue Mountains.

Some local MP's such as Blacktown's, Paul Gibson and the Blue Mountains Phil Koperburgh are expressing reservations about the impact on their labour seats. NSW Opposition candidates in several seats are capitalising on the public unpopularity of the proposed cuts to staff numbers. In the Illawarra, to be hit hard by the job losses, several MP's and the local newspaper the Illawarra Mercury have come out against the job cuts. The Mercury in a hard hitting editorial says that while "commuters will pay the price"... "station staff deserve much better treatment."

Meanwhile the review process, which is to proceed line by line, has started in the Illawarra where most station review proposals are still in dispute.

The process whereby stations are picked off line by line should never have been agreed to in the first place. It is a basic tenet of trade unionism that "solidarity keeps us strong". By allowing management to isolate particular locations without the knowledge of the rest of us weakens us as workers. For agreeing to such a course of action the union leadership should be condemned. This is particularly bad policy in the face of widespread condemnation of the staff review process both by the public and especially by members of the union.

If the unions cannot protect their members from job losses, cuts to services and a drops in living standards, that are proposed under the review, then their reason for existing is no longer valid. The failure to consult, the failure to act democratically according to the wishes of members and the unions absolute suspicion of ordinary members points to a general malaise in the transport unions. Why the secrecy? What do they have to hide?

Unionism is not bad, it is absolutely necessary. Leaving or destroying a unions

should never be advocated. Yet the present leadership and their cronies must be ultimately held accountable for the failure to carry out their duties to members according to long held and immutable principles of democratic unionism.

In the meantime members must continue to defy management and the staff review process the best way they can. They must support unions where they are active, yet

be prepared to actively resist by gathering support from whatever quarters they can while the union leadership is asleep at the wheel.

### STOP PRESS

Militant workers at Central have organised a mass meeting on the concourse at 11am on 11/6/09 to force the hand of the union to take hard hitting action to oppose the staff review and privatisation. All workers in the railways and elsewhere, political groups, other unions are welcome to attend.

## Night Shift Penalty Rate Claim Leads The Way forward.

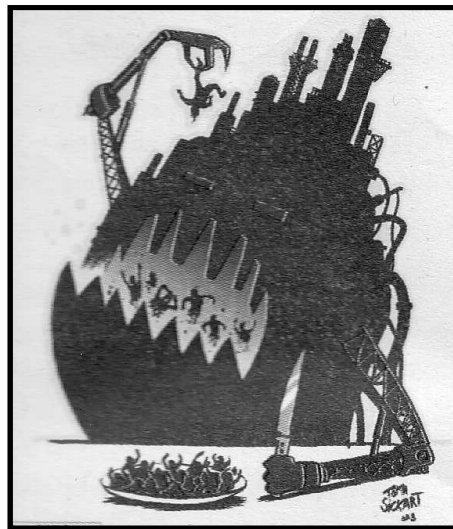
**In recognition of the life-threatening health effects of shift work the NSW Nurses Association has launched a claim for higher shift penalty rates in the Industrial Relations Commission.**

This follows research in Europe and elsewhere which links shift work with heart and arterial disease, breast cancer and increased risk of all other cancers, eating disorders, weight gain, miscarriage and a range of psychological effects. Numerous studies have been published, including in the medical journal "The Lancet".

An article in Walkley Magazine about a cancer cluster at the ABC Brisbane studios quoted here reads:

"While testing continues at the ABC's Brisbane studios, experts seem no closer to finding a cause for the cancer cluster that saw 13 women staff diagnosed with breast cancer. Early in March, shift work was identified as a potential cause of the breast cancer by a panel of experts. "Working in

an illuminated environment over a long



period of time leads to unusual degrees of suppression of the hormone melatonin,"

explained Professor Bruce Armstrong, chair of the panel. "There is evidence that the hormone melatonin has effects that reduce breast-cancer risk" he told ABC Radio's Health Report. "So if it's unusually suppressed, then in principle the risk of breast cancer is increased." Just before Christmas last year, the ABC's managing director, Mark Scott, announced the closure of the ABC's Brisbane headquarters in Toowong, due to the high incidence of breast cancer. Levels were up to 10 times the national average. The claim by NSW nurses follows compensation claims being paid for public sector workers in Denmark and Scotland and a rising awareness around the world.

The nurses claim is an important test case that will also apply to workers in the public transport industry. For if the nurses union succeed in the courts the way will be opened for claims from many of us working in the service sector who now know first hand the reasons for our ill health.

*Crimson Coconut*



*"But we do love the poor. We plan to create millions more of them."*



# STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

## OPEN THE BOOKS ON THE BUS DRIVERS' TRAFFIC FINE FUND & BUS DIVISION ACCOUNTS!

### SOME QUESTIONS WHICH NEED TO BE URGENTLY ANSWERED!

**The Bus Drivers Traffic Fine Fund has about a surplus of \$60,000pa. Given that \$2 p/f is collected from the 3,000 STA bus drivers - amounting to a guess-timate of \$150,000pa and taking away the \$90,000 that's about what is paid out for the fines. Where does the \$60,000 surplus go? It's paid into the Union's consolidated revenue where it is effectively lost from the Division and can be used for any purpose the officials see fit e.g. slush funds, literature/mail outs for election campaigns of candidates they support, such activities which cannot be paid from official union funds because they are audited. Why isn't this huge surplus used to increase benefits to drivers or to reduce premiums?**

Why is it that if any member who ever asks to look at the accounts for these entities or question them, the standard line is that they are audited and therefore are beyond question? When only the State Branch Fund is audited. However, all the money goes through the Divisional Accounts.

Why aren't the Traffic Fine Fund and Bus Division Accounts audited?

Why aren't regular reports issued to drivers concerning the Traffic Fine Fund Status?

Why, at each Bus Division Executive meeting, are the delegates presented only with a list of companies and list of dollar amounts?

There are no dates, no description of what the expenses are for, nothing that anyone could use to determine what the money is being spent on? Why are Delegates given little time to peruse the finances and then it is rapidly put to the vote to accept the expenses and is normally passed unanimously?

## WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

### RW: What's the latest with the Bondi Junction Interchange?

Waverley Busie: The meal room and male toilets which are used by 100's of drivers a

day, 7 days a week and 365 days per year are a shambles, only after 10 years since it's construction. The concrete in the meal room is frayed. Whilst the meal room and toilets are very stuffy, lacking air conditioning and drab. The male toilets are a cesspool with cubicles too small and smelly with paper towels and toilet paper often discarded on the wet floor. Do we really deserve it? These are very basic facilities and not a touch of class. In contrast the toilets at Westfields have a much better design and colour scheme. The impression given of the Bondi Junction Interchange facilities is of shoddy construction and lack of maintenance. How is it that Harry Triganboff who owns Meritons which built the interchange was allowed to get

ion journal, there appears to be a clash between the old guard – the existing union officials appeared very stale and were just relying on their track record whilst in office, and the new guard, particularly Ken Mason who ran for the National President position. Ken's statement presented a forward looking approach focusing on some of the critical issues such as privatisation, which surprisingly wasn't mentioned by the other candidates. With the Liberals likely to be elected at the next State election, this is a strong possibility. Behind this privatisation push is the Forbes 500 conference held some years ago in Sydney, where billionaires pushed both major parties and Govt's to taken down all the barriers to selling off public assets and



away with this substandard, on the cheap construction, whilst escaping land tax for the 2nd mansion he owns adjacent to his home? The STA bosses who always bray about being of service to all, should be of service to us and pressure the RTA, Meritons and any other relevant entities to have a facelift done on our facilities at the Bondi Junction interchange. In the case of the Edgecliff interchange a fantastic job was done in refurbishing it - repainting it with a pleasant colour scheme and adding a new roof. Full marks are deserved for the effort.

Would such a shambles in the bosses' facilities at Strawberry Hills be tolerated? Would the cream on their strawberries be allowed to go so rancid?

### RW: What are your thoughts on the recent elections?

WB: From looking at the contenders statements in the election supplement of the un-

utilities. The old guard candidates just focused on their past record and had no forward looking approach to prepare drivers to fight the attack such as the development of a contingency plan in the event of privatisation moves. During the elections the union officials again stooped to their usual dirty tricks by issuing a "how to vote" card but without Ken Mason on it! At Waverley this scam was a complete failure as most drivers didn't take the cards. Latest news is that Ken has been elected to the National President position on a grass roots control of the union platform and welcomes grass roots activists to contact him.

### RW: What's happening with the new timetables?

WB: The STA bosses are engaging in a new push to tighten running times in the Eastern Suburbs under the smokescreen of improving the running times. The bosses

are using the excuse of the introduction of prepaid ticket buses from Railway Square for the new attack. The STA is moving city block by city block to have bus services on a prepaid basis. While I have noticed some decline in cash collected for fares, many passengers still like paying for tickets in cash. Our roster committee has found many flaws in the bosses plans for running time changes. Definitely current running times on many runs need urgent revising. The 400's are particularly hard hit. The running times are in urgent need of improving. The STA bosses have to come down from their acid trips and take a trip on this run to understand the problems. Another driver from Waverley returned from Burwood on the run 1 hour late. My experience on the 400 is that it's impossible to keep to the timetable, particularly due to traffic congestion through the airport. Whilst on a 389 early morning run which was not over busy I was 10 minutes late at Bondi Junction. I was surprised that it was impossible to keep to the timetable.

If you are unhappy with the running times you shouldn't just run into the office. As you could be stood down. You should first seek the advice of an experienced person before taking any action.

**RW: What's the latest with the STA's moves to change to change bus routes?**

WB: There was a protest recently by local residents at Elizabeth Bay over the STA's removal of the second loop on the 311. Many of these residents are elderly and can't cope with the increased walking required to catch the service. In the past I have noticed off peak services on the 327 and 326 services being changed from one in half an hour to one in an hour. By such initiatives in the context of Govt privatisation plans, the STA is doing the hatchet work for private bus companies to increase profitability of routes. It's also not promoting runs. A likely form privatisation would take in the buses involves private bus companies owning specific corridors. Under privatisation we are likely to lose \$10,000 p.a. in pay due to the introduction of casualisation and part timers. If drivers want to jump the ship in the event of privatisation they should be paid a redundancy package.

On a recent radio program Richard Neville journalist and middle class counter culture personality from the 1960's, the son of Bruce Baird who is an MP for the Nth Shore and a medium sized business owner appeared very relaxed about privatisation of public transport. Richard Neville considered under privatisation it's likely that the trains would run better. However I was recently listening to an ABC Radio program where two Public Transport experts were interviewed for the program and stated that privatisation does not make a better system, and doesn't do anything

better. Whilst such a move will be gambling with lives due to likely corner cutting by the private companies affecting safety in the interest of profit making.

**RW: How do you feel after a day's work now?**

WB: As we are continued to be pushed to work harder contributed by our feeling obligated to pick up passengers left behind, rest breaks are shrinking resulting in our working non-stop the halves of our shifts. As a result, there is high turnover of drivers in the job and little time for our minds to rest affecting our sleep patterns causing us to become mentally fatigued. There is now much less freedom due to tiredness from the speedup in our jobs and the STA's alcohol zero tolerance policy, limiting our ability to socialise with friends and family after work.

**RW: What's the latest with the depot fleet?**

Waverley Driver: 15 new Mercedes gas buses have been added to the depot fleet. Most drivers have now been trained on them and have a favourable impression of their road worthiness. All the Mercedes Mk3's have been withdrawn.

**RW: What's happening regarding the new timetables and rosters?**

WD: On Friday 3/4/09 the new rosters were rejected at a union meeting. We particularly criticised the lousy running times provided for the 324's, 325's and 400's. The depot manager tried to bluff the roster committee into supporting the new rosters by saying that Randwick Depot was endorsing the rosters. However according to information received from the delegates from Randwick and Port Botany, both depots are opposed to the rosters.

**RW: How are things going with the Enterprise Agreement?**

WD: The proposal for a 2 1/2% pa pay rise without trade off's was defeated at Waverley. We are hopeful that Raoul Boanza, our bus division union State Secretary who is well known at Waverley is putting a serious effort into negotiating a decent pay rise for us and the associated removal of the clause in the EA which allows the STA to change drivers shift lengths in a highly discriminatory fashion. This clause allowed the STA to savagely cut certain drivers wages following the approval of the last EBA.

## LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

**RW: What's the latest at Leichhardt?**

Leichhardt Busie: Currently at the depot, there is tremendous chaos associated with the depot renovations affecting bus operations. Latest news is that we have been promised that the renovations will be completed by July. However, inclement

weather may delay the completion. With the depot renovations we have been given a very unappealing recreational area near the meal room, the only view you have is of the buses and miles of concrete which will be baking hot in summer. Rather than a better location where you could have a view of the city. Many drivers who are smokers, are angry about management's requirement that following the completion of the renovations, the depot grounds will be smoke free.

**RW: What's the latest with the Institute?**

LB: When the depot renovations are completed the canteen which is the main activity of the Institute will be outsourced. What will be the future of the Institute? Will the Institute bank account monies which are exceedingly large be returned to the members of the Institute? Or do certain "forces of darkness" have their eyes on the dollars?

**RW: What's happening with the union?**

LB: We now have officially a new union rep, Marta. Following the departure of our previous union rep Darren, to Newcastle, an election was held for the position. There was little to choose from for us between the two candidates. Marta was overwhelming successful in the ballot against John Malaccio. The union officials recently held a ballot at the depot in regard to the log of claims for the upcoming Enterprise Agreement. The proposal presented was a 2 1/2% pa pay rise without trade off of conditions. The proposal was overwhelmingly defeated. We demand a decent pay rise, given we are working harder and continually being threatened with the big stick by the STA bosses if we do anything wrong. The increased traffic congestion in the city is making our work ever more tougher. Whilst following the last pay rise there was immediately an increase in union dues and the shaving back of many shifts with 7 1/2 hour shifts becoming quite common, resulting in the slashing of our pay. Making a mockery of the so called pay rise. We recently received a letter from NSW Premier Nathan Rees for our work in maintaining services during the recent power outages. However no cheque was attached. In regard to the recent state and federal union elections, I noticed little literature on the policies of the different candidates to make an informed vote.

**RW: How are things with the depot fleet?**

LB: With the completion of the depot renovations, the depot fleet will expand to 400 buses. Every week now, new buses are being added to the fleet. There are many complaints from drivers that the cabins of the new buses are too small and you have no place to store your belongings.

## BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

You would wonder if we had union elections recently, as the Burwood Union Rep has not posted the results on the union notice board. Is he worried about the results? Does it send a message to the Secretary and President of the Bus and Tram Division to start cleaning their desks out?

Safety seems to be the flavour of this month in our depot. The bosses have started to make new driving lanes in the depot I hope for the smaller bus fleet. Management is telling drivers there is plenty of on-site parking at Leichhardt depot, but how many of the parking spaces are for the corporate offices?

It has been reported that the depot manager was trying to dance with the depot duty

manager to Karoki music in the depot lobby. Has the depot manager finally lost or has no work to do? May be a spell of bus loading checks would fix this problem!

Have you noticed that a new problem has arisen since prepaid services have been introduced. Not enough tickets are available for sale at Kiosks and no enough change in the kiosk cash trays. The kiosk staff say it's not our problem.

# SYDNEY WHARFIES' NEWS

### RW: Has the current economic downturn had any effect on the waterfront?

Port Botany Wharfie: It certainly has. Up until January work here at DP World Port Botany had been going gangbusters. Record numbers of containers had been moved in the previous few months. But then in late January/early February it seemed like shipping levels came to a grinding halt.

The casual workforce suddenly went from regularly working five and even six day weeks to barely making their minimum guaranteed earnings each fortnight. Supplementaries were lucky to get a day a fortnight, while many Guaranteed Wage Employees (GWE's) and Variable Salaried Employees (VSE's) were not making their minimum \$1,040 and \$1,960 gross per fortnight respectively.

While work has since picked up quite substantially in March and April, the resulting uncertainty gave DP World management a chance to once again tighten the screws.

### RW: Did management get what they were after?

Port Botany Wharfie: Certainly not everything. At one point there were stories floating about that management wanted twenty redundancies from maintenance and were thinking about getting rid of all the 70-odd supplementaries.

Management did end up getting four main things. The first was that twelve maintenance positions were made redundant. This is on top of the five positions that were lost as a result of the EBA voted on last November.

The second was the temporary roster change for operations permanents. This has gone from an average 36-hour to a 35-hour week with a proportionate pay cut. In the sixteen week roster cycle, two weekend shifts have been temporarily removed, but four weekend shifts have been changed from evening only to day or eve-

ning. This will, in the words of a DPW letter to employees, help in "improving weekend flexibility and reducing idle time. This "temporary" change can last anything from 16 to 64 weeks.

Third was the twenty-odd supplementaries that should be upgraded to GWE after their first year of service will remain supplementary until further notice; and the fourth was the increased

Unfortunately this was no April Fool's joke. I couldn't help but think of the contrast between how French workers and the "militant" MUA has responded to the economic downturn. While French workers have turned to locking up bosses in their offices and "bossnapping" them to win their demands, the MUA invites bosses to address workers at their union meetings!

One interesting thing to note was the fact that the only MUA official to speak at these two meetings was the national MUA official Jim Tannock. While all four Sydney Branch MUA officials attended both meetings - including our two communists - none of them uttered one single word at either meeting.

It was Tannock that did all the talking. When he wasn't telling us of all the stevedoring job losses overseas and the downturn in shipping volumes, he was trying to tell us how much he sympathised with our plight because his two sons were also in the industry.

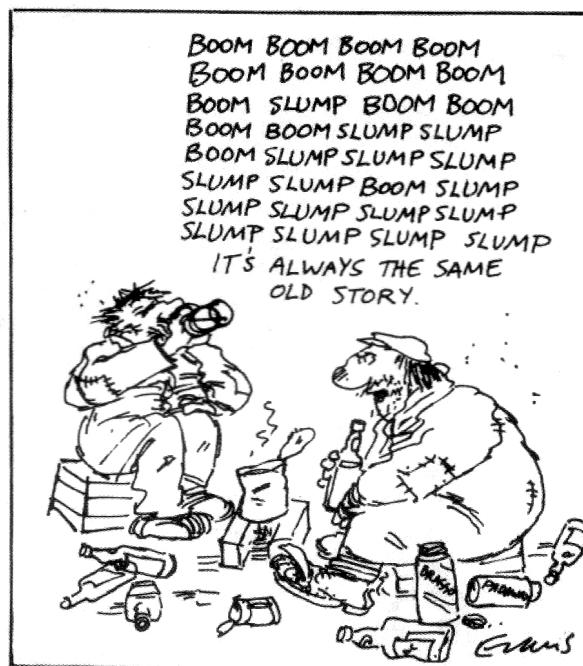
My personal favourite was him repeatedly telling us how we had to "get on the front foot on this one". After the company approaches the MUA with its cutback wish list, the union responds by negotiating to round off some of the sharp edges of management's attacks. If this is getting on the front foot, I would hate to see us on the back foot!

The other thing to note is the continued intolerance of the leading union site committee members towards any critical questions and comments that come from the floor. The way these meetings con-

tinue to be run - with those asking questions and making comments continually being talked over the top of and shouted down - is alienating more and more of the rank and file from playing any part in these meetings and the union in general.

### RW: What do you know about the wildcat strike at Patrick Port Botany that was reported in the media in late January?

Port Botany Wharfie Like so much that goes on in the Maritime Union, information about this wildcat strike was one of



use of casuals for four-hour shifts of lashing and unlashng containers on ships.

### RW: So how did the Maritime Union officials figure in all this?

Port Botany Wharfie: There were two yard meetings in April - one to hear about the proposals and one to vote on the changes. The first meeting was held on April 1 - April Fool's Day - and the first speaker at the Maritime Union meeting was the General Manager of DP World Port Botany!



those things that you have to slowly piece the various bits of information together yourself. In order to get something like the full picture.

I first found out about it through an article in the Sydney Morning Herald, which reported on an eight-hour wildcat strike that took place on the morning of January 29 in protest at the sacking of a delegate at Patrick's operations in Brisbane.

The article described how the strike was not authorised by the MUA officialdom, with MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin calling it a "spontaneous action". Patrick/Asciano chief Don Telford called the strike "Irresponsible and illegal".

Later on I found out that, on the day of the wildcat, one or more of the local officials

addressed the labour at DP World and passed a resolution in support of recently sacked MUA delegate Paul Patterson who worked at Patrick's Brisbane bulk and general operations.

While the resolution said that "the labour stand ready to take whatever action is deemed necessary to achieve no less than Paul's full reinstatement", no action was ever taken at DP World Botany.

But the wildcat action that was taken across the water at Patrick hit the company and the MUA like a bolt from the blue. Resolutions similar to the one I have mentioned were previously passed at Patrick Port Botany, but no one seemed ready for the vote on the morning of January 29 and the walk-off from the site.

As I understand it, all those Involved were issued with warning letters, but that was about it. As far as the reinstatement of MUA delegate Paul Patterson, I have not been able to find out what happened one way or the other.

Nevertheless, action such as this is what is needed to defend our rights. This action would have been so much more powerful if it had been co-ordinated - either through the "official structures" of the union or through informal connections among various delegates and site committees.

*[Shane Bentley - the "Port Botany Wharfie" - produces "Vigilance", a socialist bulletin for MUA members in Sydney. See [www.vigilancebulletin.org](http://www.vigilancebulletin.org)].*

## Vic. Rail News

*In the 2nd last RW, an article appeared about Conductor Supervisors and the way they were appointed. In the last issue of RW I appealed to any V/Line employee to come forward and tell us what it's like to work under one of these supervisors. Two employees have come forward and once again names have been changed.*

**RW: What made you come forward?**

Misha and Manfred: We have come forward to let you workers know about some of the idiots who have been appointed to this position.

**RW: Can you explain?**

Misha: At one of the country depots, we have a Conductor Supervisor who is a bully as well as an idiot.

Manfred: Yes, this idiot struts around as if he is Hitler. He is right and heaven help anyone who speaks against him. He is known to have a hit list of Conductors, he wants to sack and likes to shoot his fat mouth off about who he hates.

Misha: Some employees know they are on his hit list and have accepted the inevitable that they will be sacked.

**RW: How did he get the job?**

Manfred: I don't know, but when he went for the interview, he was able to convince the corrupt bastards in the Human Resources that he was suitable for the job. You see other people put in for the job who had many years of service but they were passed over. When the job was upgraded to a supervisor's job, it was not advertised for this country area so he got the job.

In other words this particular depot is stuck with this jerk.

**RW: What a joke.**

Misha: You can say it is a joke and you can see why most V/Line employees think Human Resources are corrupt and hate them.

Manfred: When this Conductor Supervisor was a conductor he had an appalling record. He was obsessed with running a train and at a Suburban set down point, a woman had fallen over when alighting from the train. Instead of attending to the passenger, he departed the train. A station employee attended to the passenger and let V/Line know but management hushed up the matter, as the train ran on time. Before becoming a Conductor Supervisor he had ambitions of being a train driver but because he dobbed in a driver at Spencer Street, the drivers let it be known that if he became a trainee driver, they would give him the works.

**RW: Good to see the drivers standing up to him.**

Misha: As regards conductors one day he had to travel to Melbourne for a meeting and he joined a Six Car Velocity and got into an empty driver's compartment. The reason because one of the Conductors on his hit list was working on the train and he wanted to spy on him. The driver of the train saw what was going on and told him to get out of the cab, or the train would not run. The service officer came forward and asked the Conductor Supervisor to sit with the passengers. He started to sulk.

**RW: Good to see the driver put the boot into him.**

Manfred: Yes it is good, but two months ago the driver asked the conductor to come up to the front of the Sprinter to discuss a problem. This was due to service disruption, due to hot weather. The train arrived at a suburban pick up and this jerk was on the platform. He noticed the conductor up front with the driver and he put a report about the driver and conductor. He thought he could sack the conductor and get the driver into trouble, but what he un-

derestimated was that when he touched one driver and conductor, he touched all employees and the drivers threatened all hell would break loose and the conductors threatened action, so the matter was dropped.

**RW: What a spiteful bastard.**

Misha & Manfred: You can say that again but this idiot does not understand that management is using him up and when he passes his use by date they will give him the flick. Also the other supervisors think he is a joke and just laugh about him to other employees behind his back.

**RW: Earlier in the interview I heard you say some Conductors are admitting defeat with this jerk and admit he will get the evidence to sack them.**

Misha & Manfred: Yes, some Conductors do look at defeat in the eye but if we all stuck together with the Drivers and Shunters, we could get rid of this jerk and if he regressed to a Conductor then we can give him hell. The other problem is V/Line management do not have the guts to stand up to Human Resources. This department is a law of its own and they are the ones who selected this jerk for the job. V/line employs less people than Connex yet it employs more people in its Human Resources people than Connex.

**RW: What you need is unity among all your employees and if you all stick together and say you won't work under this person, then Human Resources as well as management will have to look at the suitability of this jerk who is holding the position. Also management should stand up to Human Resources. I wonder if management is frightened of them. As for this On Train Supervisor, he should be counselled and he should learn to get on with his fellow employees and not take a dislike to people who have the guts to stand up to him. Finally thank you Misha and Manfred for coming forward.**

## BRITAIN TODAY

# BEYOND THE USUAL UNION STRUCTURES

**WORKERS AT METRONET, THE FORMER LONDON** Underground (LUL) engineering contractor, have developed their Strike Committee as a form of rank and file organisation that represents an interesting step beyond the confines of the usual trade union structures. Now that the track contract is back in house, they are rolling this organising model out across the whole of the underground to become the London Underground Strike Committee. Here we look at the background of struggle against which the strike committee has been built up, and the bottom up tactics that have been vital to its successes. Historically, the RMT's (Rail Union) strength on the underground had been among train drivers and station staff. Engineering workers had been the poor relations, and the union had relied on drivers to win disputes.

In 1998 the Public Private Partnership (PPP) for the Tube was announced, with the RMT and other unions opposing it and organising a series of one day strikes. This built up resistance, delayed the PPP until 2003 and won a series of concessions including no compulsory redundancies. In addition, all staff reductions were classified as matters for negotiation, not simply consultation, making them harder to implement and easier to organise against. This agreement, dubbed the "jobs for life deal" by the Daily Telegraph, had been won through balloting for strike action to take place during General Election week, demonstrating that well timed industrial action, or the threat of it, is more effective. The fight also turned the RMT membership into fighters, and they adopted a "Trojan horse" strategy of fighting the PPP from within.

During this period, the RMT leadership was overstretched and couldn't attend all of the many meetings, which consequently were conducted by the workplace reps: displacing full timers and taking control of the union on the underground. It is from this, and through a series of disputes, that the strike committee model of rank and file organisation on the underground has been developed. The years between the start of the PPP in 2003 up to the present have seen the following disputes:

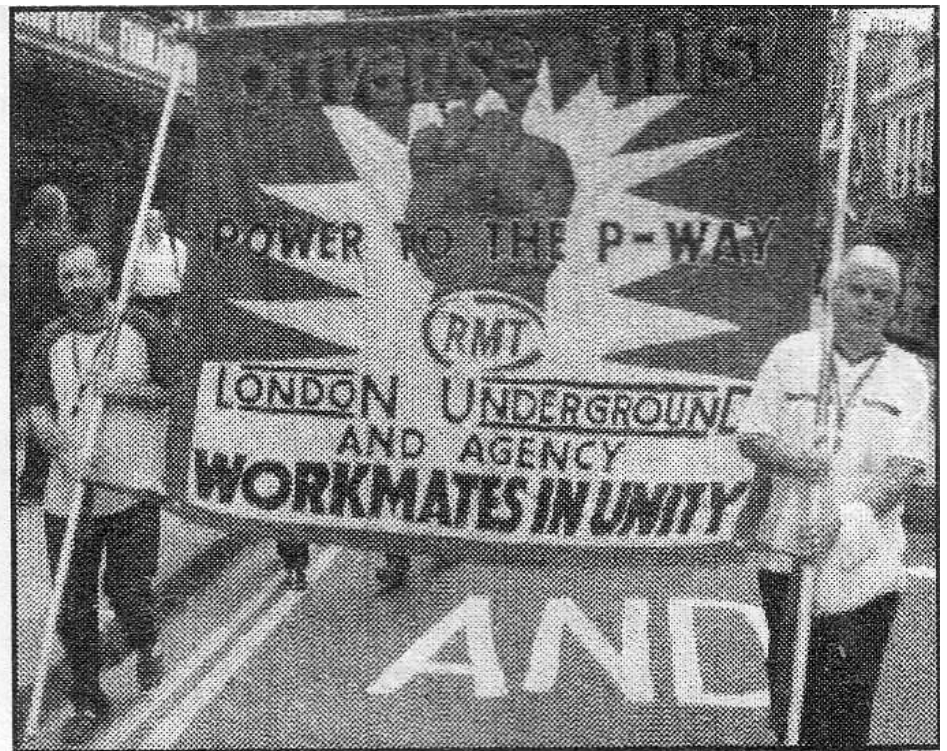
- \* in the first pay round of the PPP the union struck to win a good pay deal, raising the profile of the engineering branches and giving their members confidence;

- \* 2005: when Metronet tried to cut jobs, simply to increase profits, the RMT used the "jobs for life deal" to grind them down, holding a solid strike with solidarity from train drivers and station staff;

- \* also in 2005, Metronet tried to out-source train maintenance; reps were worried about "ballot fatigue" among members, so they formed the Strike Committee to widen

transferred from LUL; however, RMT leaders were keener on getting the contract back in house than on workers' pay and conditions and, as the dispute held up this objective, they hastily agreed a deal over the workers' heads and had to be challenged over it;

- \* last year saw the attempted victimisation of safety rep, Andy Littlechild; the sacking would have been the first of many in an



rank and file involvement - 25 to 30 delegates came from all parts of the workforce, a Literature Group produced leaflets and information, and the Negotiating Team had to report to the Strike Committee to avoid isolation at ACAS; they won a settlement which stopped the reorganisation;

- \* when Metronet went into administration the union had its most successful strike, with great solidarity from other workers; they not only stopped all lines maintained by Metronet but, through control of certain infrastructure, they also stopped the Jubilee and Piccadilly Lines, maintained by Tubelines; a key factor in the victory was that the strike was kept going during negotiations;

- \* the fifth dispute, when the contract went back in house, aimed to win equality of pension and travel rights for workers who started during the PPP and who hadn't

attempt to break the union, but a 48 hour strike, coordinated via the Shop Stewards Network to coincide with planned bus workers' strikes, forced management to cave in;

- \* a new dispute is brewing after LUL announced 1,000 job cuts, threatening the "jobs for life deal" and seeking compulsory redundancies and a five year pay cut; with the Metronet organising model now becoming the London Regional Transport Strike Committee, the successful methods used in the past mean that activists are confident they will win.

The tactics used by the Metronet Strike Committee are crucial factors in its successes. Their organising model is built from the bottom up - the reps meet with the rank and file members; the reps then meet with the Strike Committee; and the Negotiating Team takes its lead from the Strike

Committee. They use the ACAS guidelines on consultation to organise workplace meetings to speak with the membership. After talks at ACAS, the Strike Committee meets and coordinates the activities of the reps while the Literature Group constantly puts out information to the membership. When still under Metronet they also involved other grades, like drivers and station staff, in the Strike Committee. When it suited them, they also made sure that Metronet and LUL knew what they were doing, as it put pressure on them to back down.

Widening involvement maintains rank and file control and provides an anchor for the Negotiating Team, who could easily become isolated and open to the suggestions of management and full timers at ACAS. The Strike Committee had even considered giving the Negotiating Team a mandate that would be flexible but with a bottom line beyond which they would be trusted not to concede. If the Negotiating Team were in a position where they had to break the mandate to make progress, they would have to meet with the Strike Committee first. The Strike Committee is also

able to monitor and challenge actions by full time officials and, crucially, does not call off any strike before a firm deal is on the table.

Some factors in their success are unique. They had built up a culture of resistance



from fighting the PPP; they had the “jobs for life deal”; they also had a critical mass of good reps - whereas TubeLines had a shortage of reps and workers have suffered in comparison despite similar conditions. Solidarity was also built up with the many subcontractors and agency workers on the track, over health & safety issues, for instance. This paid off when the RMT

fought against the PPP - even though ten RMT members scabbed on the first strike, none of the 200 agency workers crossed picket lines. Another factor was their ability to have big mass meetings, as the workforce is dispersed and has to come back to the depot. The RMT also has a “short structure” where there are not too many layers between the rank and file and the national leadership, which makes it easier to pressurise the leadership. The small number of full timers also worked in the reps’ favour.

This organising model shows the possibilities for building a culture of resistance in any workplace, if effective reps, and affinity among them, are built up and spread out. A resolution is to be put to the RMT’s AGM to formalise the position of Strike Committees in the union’s structure.

Although it includes a few sops to the Executive, it would also make them accountable and force them to consult Strike Committees before doing any deal with bosses.

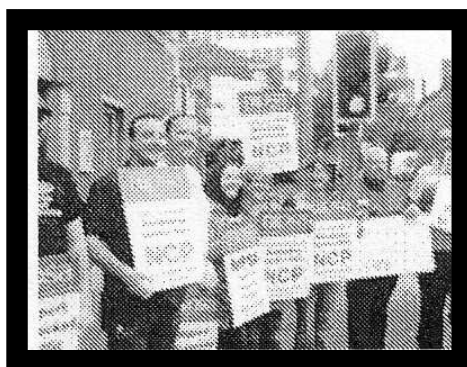
*Thanks to  
Direct Action*

## OCCUPATIONS GET THE GOODS!

The three Visteon plants have ended their occupation and pickets, following the agreement of improved redundancy packages. The dispute came out of the immediate sacking of all UK Visteon workers with no further payment, and instructions to return the next day to collect any belongings. As the company had filed for administration, only statutory redundancy from the government would be available, a paltry amount for people who are approaching the end of their working life and would be considered unemployable. Workers in Belfast decided to take action, occupying their factory on the 31st March, with workers in Basildon and Enfield following suit on 1st April, although they had to end their occupation and settle for pickets a few weeks later.

Visteon were eager to distance themselves from Ford, having officially become a separate company in 2000. In reality, the ties were still there with staff on mirror contracts and carried Ford identification, and Ford secured Visteon a \$163 million loan on May 15th. While this is a victory, the workers still face other struggles. Their pensions are still very much up in the air, likely to be going into the Pension Protection Fund, which would mean less money;

according to some in Basildon, as much as 40% less. There has also been a union convener in Swansea sacked for supporting the struggle. Rob Williams was dismissed for what was called “irretrievable breakdown of trust”. Workers on the floor walked off their day shift, and surrounded the union office after the management had brought the police in to remove Rob by force. Although he was reinstated, he was



again dismissed, and workers were warned to not repeat any solidarity action, being threatened with the sack by foremen.

This is a victory against job cuts, a struggle fought across different parts of Britain, relying on working class unity and self-managed direct action. For all the MP

and trade union involvement, those involved are clear about the fact that it was their own determination that resulted in decent pay-offs. But there will.

## Parking attendants sacked for wildcats fight back

Parking attendants employed by NCP in Belfast have been mounting near-daily pickets of the company’s offices on May Street. A third of NCP’s parking attendants were sacked in April following wildcat action over pay and conditions, sick pay, rotas, uniforms and facilities for workers. The firings followed a two weeks suspension. They have been supported by anarchists from the Northern Ireland group Organise! and representatives from the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA).

## Local government workers reject pay offer

Local government workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have rejected an offer of a 0.5% increase in pay during wage negotiations. The offer would represent an increase of only 3p an hour for

hundreds of thousands of low-paid workers, which is nowhere near enough to keep up with the rocketing prices of food, utilities and other essentials.

### Olympic site protest met with solidarity walkout

Workers at Lindsay Oil Refinery, which was at the centre of wildcat strikes earlier this year over the erosion of the NAEI agreement and the blacking of workers from the UK, walked out in solidarity with a jobs protest at the Olympic site in London. Workers at the demonstration stressed that the issue was the erosion of the NAEI agreement through paying imported labour cheaper rates, or employing foreign workers under different conditions, not the presence of foreign workers themselves. The mainstream media portrayed the wildcat walkouts as being 'over foreign workers', and as a xenophobic struggle. The actual demands presented at LOR, which were clearly anti-racist in nature and demanded parity of terms for all workers, weren't reported, as they clashed with the official picture.

### MISTAKEN IDENTITY

At the start of May, just before the MPs' allowances neutron bomb properly hit the news, there was a brief mention of the latest 'developments' in New Labour's ID card and database plans. On the 6th of May the Home Office announced that trials in Greater Manchester would offer British nationals the "chance" to enroll for an ID card. In the autumn there would be a web page to "register interest". Later, kiosks

for fingerprinting and face scanning would be installed in chemists and post offices. We were reminded by Home Secretary Jacqui Smith that "ID cards will deliver real benefits to everyone, including increased protection against criminals, illegal immigrants and terrorists." On that basis Mancunians would be flocking to their nearest registration booths soon, surely?

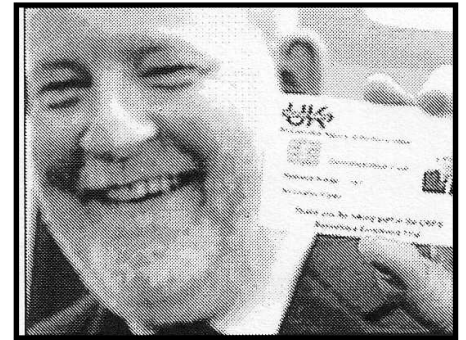
Local Radio station Key 103 told a different story, "We've been on the streets of Manchester getting reactions to the announcement. Everybody we spoke to said they would not be volunteering for the cards or they wouldn't commit at this point." Furthermore the government confirmed that web registration would only be for a "small number of volunteers" to begin with. Not only that, it would be two years until enrolment was possible in shops. Even if they got paid up front, those high street companies who were apparently in "talks" with the Home Office may not want to risk installing equipment for a controversial scheme, one that might well end up being scrapped if the Tories win the next General Election.

All of this means that whilst we are ready to fight Big Brother, we shouldn't always jump to the sound bites of a government desperate to show it is in control in the run up to the EU elections.

The only really significant story during that week was a commitment by 'airside' workers at airports to resist being the next cohort of guinea pigs for the new cards. In particular on 5th May, Jim McAuslan, general secretary of BALPA (British Airline Pilots' Association, which represents more than 10,000 commercial pilots)

wrote, "Our members believed the government promise that the national ID card would be voluntary, but they now know it is anything but."

Continuing, he wrote, "Our members must have an airside pass to operate aircraft and now discover that to get that pass they must have a national ID card. They are told, "You don't actually have to have one" – but no card equals no pass, which equals no job. This is coercion and, by trialling the scheme in Manchester and London City airports, the government is clearly attempting to isolate pockets of resistance." This refusal is amongst a group



of relatively privileged workers who have already accepted a high degree of security in their jobs. But other staff will also be targetted, even those currently without airside passes.

We must all prepare to resist ID cards on our own terms and support others who are already in the firing line, such as overseas students and workers.

Get more information and ideas from: *Defending Anonymity: Thoughts for struggle against identity cards*.

*Thanks to Resistance*

## MAY DAY WORLDWIDE

**France:** A record number of protesters were out on the streets for May Day, with over 300 demonstrations called by all the major unions. Public support for the protests was at over 70% as social struggle in France intensifies, shown in the wave of strikes, occupations and 'bossnappings' recently.

**Greece:** The revolutionary movement in Greece hit the streets hard, showing the anger that sparked weeks of rioting last year hasn't gone away. There were demonstrations in every city in Greece, and anarchists organised their own in Athens. The headquarters of



ISAP, the cleaning company whose thugs attacked prominent cleaner's union activist Konstantina Kouneva with acid last year.

**Germany:** Autonomists clashed with the Police in Berlin, leading to arrests and the injury of 29 cops.

**Turkey:** The Mayday demo clashed with police, leading to exchanges of rocks, Molotov cocktails and tear gas. The massacre of 37 people at a May Day demonstration in 1977 ushered in military dictatorship 3 years later. Celebrations of May Day had been banned until this year.

Many more protests took place around the world, with massive events in Egypt, the Philippines and elsewhere. The anarchist movement in Spain mobilised thousands in demos around the country.



# NEW ZEALAND

## Flight attendants stand strong against lock out across New Zealand |

by Asher on May 14 2009

**240 flight attendants spent Thursday 7th - Sunday 10th May locked out from work across Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The attendants are contracted to Zeal 320, a shell company owned by Air New Zealand, and operate on trans-Tasman and Pacific routes for the airline.**

Despite doing the same job as flight attendants contracted directly to Air NZ, the Zeal crew are paid significantly less. The Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union (EPMU), which represents the workers, has been negotiating with Air NZ for months, but Air NZ have been unwilling to move towards pay parity for the Zeal staff.

The Zeal staff have been engaging in low level industrial action since late March, including breaking the uniform policy and refusing to do paperwork (see Solidarity, Issue 2). The action was escalated with the announcement of four days of strike action for May 7th - 10th. Air NZ responded to the strike action by announcing the workers would be locked out for the same period.

In the build-up to the lockout, at least 30 Zeal staff were suspended for breaking the uniform policy. These suspensions were short, only lasting until the next shift, as due to understaffing there would not have been enough people to replace any Zeal staff who were suspended for longer. An EPMU spokesperson mentioned that there had been some issues with pay resuming when the suspensions finished for some workers.

Across the four days of the lockout, Zeal workers and their supporters picketed at airports and Air NZ Holiday Shops in all three centres and the Air NZ headquarters in Auckland. In addition to the EPMU, members and staff from at least 8 other unions were present to show their solidarity.

In speeches and on placards on the picket lines, many unionists spoke out against contracting through shell companies, as occurs with Air NZ and Zeal 320.

While the Zeal staff are back at work, their fight for better wages and conditions continues. If Air NZ doesn't come to the table with a better offer soon, further industrial action is a possibility. In the meantime, negotiations between Air NZ and the EPMU continue.



### Zeal 320 Interview

*The following interview with two locked out Zeal 320 workers was conducted in Wellington on the last day of the lockout, May 10th.*

#### **Solidarity: What has been the build-up to this lockout?**

Zeal worker A: Over the last couple of months we've been having a few sit-downs with the company, basically trying to negotiate a fair contract and fair pay. Every time we've gone back to the table, the offers have been getting progressively worse. The last offer that they gave us was laughable.

Zeal worker B: And it's quite hard for us to accept that the company says we are earn-

ing between forty and sixty thousand dollars and that we're now asking for seventy thousand. In all honesty, if this was the case, we would not be standing here.

Zeal worker A: In fact, that's a challenge - if you would like to pay us that amount of money, we'll certainly sign on the dotted line, and we'll sign today. For three years we've been putting up with terrible conditions, and the kind of contract that leaves us open to exploitation at every turn.

Zeal worker B: We're not asking to be paid any more than anyone else, we're just asking for a fair pay for a fair day's work.

Zeal worker A: It's about time they stopped treating us like second class citizens, because we're part of Air New Zealand and they need to recognise that.

We're not some dirty secret that they can keep from the general public, it's out there now, and we're gonna be heard.

#### **Solidarity: Have you ever been on a picket before? How has it been?**

Zeal worker B: I've never been involved in a picket or a strike before ... we're all standing here because we know that what we're asking for is only fair. We know that the New Zealand public would agree that we deserve to be

treated fairly ... and that's why everyone has taken this stand against Air New Zealand.

Zeal worker A: It's worth it for us to be out here, and we will come out in the cold, and the rain, and nothing's going to deter us, because, this is worth it for us, we're gonna fight hard. We're going to show the company that the little people have big voices, and we're not going anywhere mate.

*This article and interview taken from Solidarity, free monthly newsheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement.*



## WORKERS IN SOUTH KOREA RESPOND TO MASS REDUNDANCIES WITH STRIKE ACTION

by Ed  
on May 25 2009

Workers at South Korean automaker Ssangyong Motor went on strike on Thursday in protest at plans for mass layoffs to save the firm from bankruptcy. Assembly lines at its plant in Pyeongtaek, south of Seoul, stopped at 1:30pm, said union spokesman Lee Chang-Geun.

"Management should come to talk with the union on avoiding the proposed massive job cuts," Lee said, adding that the duration of the strike would be decided Friday.

Debt-stricken Ssangyong in February won court protection from creditors. The court



told its Chinese majority owner, Shanghai

Automotive Industry Corp (SAIC), to give up management control. Court-appointed managers have since struggled to turn the company around through job cuts and cost savings.

The programme calls for the sacking of 2,646 workers or 36% of the workforce, in what would be the country's first mass layoffs since the onset of the global economic crisis in September. The programme also proposes the firm take out a new bank loan of 250 billion won (200 million dollars) by offering its factory as collateral.

Union leaders representing 7,100 workers immediately rejected the job cuts and demanded managers minimise sackings through job-sharing.

Ssangyong, which specialises in sport-utility vehicles and luxury sedans, posted a net loss of 709.7 billion won last year on sales of 2.5 trillion won. In the first three months of this year, its sales nosedived 76% to 6,471 units. SAIC still holds a 51% stake in the firm.

*Thanks to Libcom*

## ISRAEL RAIL NEWS

Tue, 21 Apr 2009

### Arab railway workers in Israel face discrimination, job loss

**Here's an appeal from Sawt el-Amel, an NGO based in Nazareth, protesting the decision by Israel Railways to deny employment to railroad crossing guards who lack a permit to carry weapons.**

As such permits are usually only issued to army veterans, 150 Arab employees now face the sack.

To learn more and to send off your message of protest, please visit the Sawt el-Amel website:

[http://www.laborers-voice.org/article\\_details.aspx?TopID=964&catid=46](http://www.laborers-voice.org/article_details.aspx?TopID=964&catid=46)

### Background

In March 2009, Israel Railways, a state-owned company, launched a new policy denying employment to railroad crossing guards who have no permit to carry weapons – that is: who have not served in the Israeli army. This policy will lead to the lay-off of the app. 150 Arab railway workers who monitor and main-

tain Israel's level crossings. Israel Railways explicitly stated that the new employment policy is designed to give priority to young army veterans.

Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel have always been extremely underrepresented in Israel's public sector (including state-owned companies), and despite existing anti-discrimination laws only about 5% of civil servants are Arabs, while they make up almost 20% of the overall population. Exclusion of Arabs from the public sector is mainly a result of Israel's state security policies, which deny Arabs who have not served in the Israeli army and do thus not have a permit to carry weapons access to employment in public administration and services (such as: communication, water, electricity, public transport and port authorities, fire brigades etc.). This strong focus on state security is also reflected in the biographies of executive officers in Israeli government-owned companies. Yitzhak 'Haki' Harel, general manager of Israel Railways, for instance, is a Major General in the Israeli army (IDF). He retired from the army in August 2006, shortly after the July War on Lebanon, and has headed the company since 2007.

Israel Railways' new policy is an instructive example of the way Arab workers are systematically excluded from the Israeli labour market: firstly, it shows that state

security takes absolute preference over personal safety and security in Israel's employment policy; secondly, it reveals that these security concerns are used to camouflage double standards in favour of Jewish Israeli workers because a) the job of crossing guard has so far not required bearing arms, b) other railway workers, such as train drivers, are not addressed by the new policy, and c) some positions are reserved for "minorities who did not serve in the army". This allows the conclusion that army service is in fact an irrelevant employment condition. At this point, it should be noted that the new policy also excludes recent immigrants, ultra-orthodox Jews, disabled persons and conscientious objectors.

On April 7, 2009, the Tel Aviv Labour Court suspended the dismissal of the railway workers until the next court hearing on April 19, 2009. However, workers told Sawt el-Amel that Israel Railways has already started recruiting new crossing guards. On April 8, 2009, Israel Railways responded to Sawt el-Amel's enquiry about the new employment policy, reaffirming that the policy decision is based on 'practical and security considerations' and does not aim to 'discriminate against minorities'.

On the whole, Israel Railways' new employment policy should be seen both as a continuation of Israel's long-standing strategy to exclude Arab workers from the labour market and as an assault on all economically and socially marginalised groups in times of growing economic crisis.

# BOOK REVIEW CORNER

## REVIEW ESSAY BY GRAHAM PURCHASE

B. Pateman, ed., Chomsky on Anarchism, AK Press, \$16.95.

**The dismissal of the working classes is currently popular among “radical” intellectuals. Some of the stupidest political ideas and outlooks may be found among primitivists (back-to-the caves) and post-modernists. A few individuals mistakenly believe themselves to be avant garde anarchist thinkers or philosophers.**

Post-modern ‘anarchists’ (a tiny clique embedded in the academy) believe class analysis is passe and the working classes largely irrelevant and/or virtually non-existent. Primitivists believe workers exist but are just human robots within our evil industrial- technological civilization, which will end with our return to the caves. Quizzed about his views on such nonsense, Chomsky sensibly replies that “post Modernism is gibberish” (216), and primitivism would entail “the mass genocide of millions” (226). For Chomsky, “technology is a pretty neutral instrument,” utilizable for both good and evil ends. (225) He dismisses the post-modernist denial of “fundamental class differences.” He hasn’t “much problem in discerning class differences and their significance. In fact we see class issues rising all the time.” (228)

Barry Pateman, the editor and compiler of Chomsky on Anarchism, is clearly unsympathetic to Chomsky’s commonsensical views on class, culture and social change. Pateman takes the liberty of using his Introduction (pp. 7-10) to rebuff Chomsky’s remarks about post-class-ism elicited in Pateman’s own interview with Chomsky in 2004 (presumably undertaken to supplement this book’s meagre offerings of new material)

Quoting George Woodcock, Pateman states in his Introduction, “Chomsky’s equation of anarchist struggle with a single class fails to see how anarchism appeals to the people of all classes who seek a society where the potentialities of existence are varied and liberated, a society to be approached by lifestyle rebellion as well as economic struggle.” (7) This is unfair. One might reasonably accuse Chomsky of confusing liberalism, humanism and anarchism, but not of ignoring non-economic factors, thinking and movements neces-

sary for progressive social change. Throughout the book, Chomsky champions “classical liberalism.” (191) He repeatedly cites Dewey and Bertrand Russell, who stressed the importance of attitudinal change leading to both community and individual lifestyle experimentation in sexual mores, gender equality and core social and developmental processes, particularly the reform of primary education. Libertarian lifestyle change and experiment evolve hand in hand with economic liberation and empowerment because they are all essential pathways through which humanity socially self-organizes a libertarian, humane and wise society.

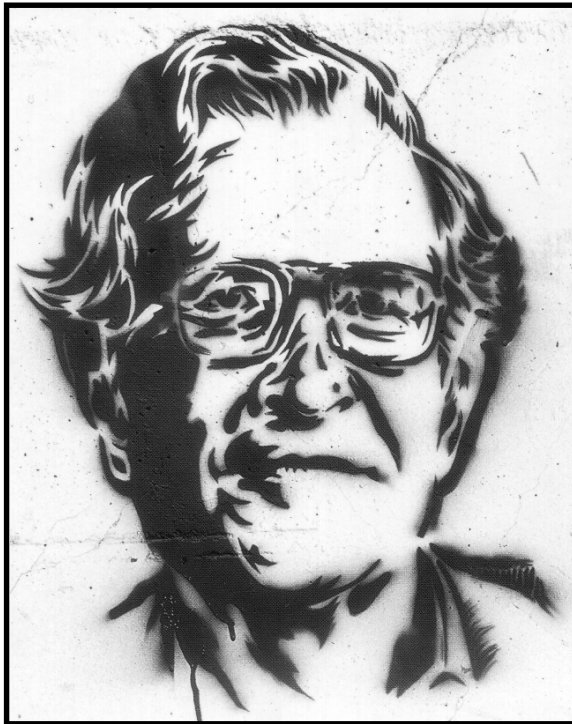
But, as Chomsky repeatedly argues, eco-

pliant nation states and media and university spin doctors, employing force and indoctrination dedicated to ensuring that big money states, people and corporations stay on top forever.

The editor is unhappy with Chomsky’s perfectly clear and orthodox syndicalism. He feels that Chomsky’s stress on economic class and workerism makes him more Marxist than anarchist. But Chomsky states that he holds traditional anarchist beliefs, and the text shows that he is an unadulterated disciple of Rocker, Bakunin and classical liberalism. Although occasionally quoting agreeably libertarian passages from Marx or one of his acolytes, Chomsky is primarily a supporter and student of syndicalism, with a particular interest in scholarship of its historical achievements, political role and significance during the Spanish Civil War.

Pateman feels Chomsky’s class analysis “could be a little tighter” and substantially improved by greater consideration of the “complexity” and phenomenology of class “experience.” This is a polite way of saying that Chomsky’s ideas on anarchism and class are one-dimensional, simplistic and economically essentialist or deterministic. Chomsky, Pateman continues, does not fully appreciate how working-class identities are not only an “economic” category, but also “cultural states.” Post-modernists balk at Chomsky’s ‘economic essentialism’ and “workerism,” thinking working class identities are historically dated and primarily culturally and semantically determined inter-subjective social-psychological states. The working class, according to the post-moderns, is not an objectively existing entity (economic or otherwise), but some historical-cultural-semantic label or identity — one historical-cultural identity psychological state or semantic construction among many that change over time and by which people routinely classify or rank themselves and others.

Post-modernism is pure sophistry. With a few intellectual tricks and fancy long words, the post-modernists talk the workers out of existence. This is the very antithesis of Chomsky’s unwavering anarchism and syndicalism that hopes someday the self-organization of labour will place workers at the centre-stage of human social and economic existence. Pateman suggests that class analysis is old-fashioned and inadequate:



nomic or capitalist class hierarchies are the most prevalent and important obstruction to the obtainable dream of a new collaborative libertarian order, an order made possible through self-organization of working people in both traditional and service industries. It is these economic or capitalist class hierarchies that obstruct the overthrow of the corporate capitalist structures of local, national and global political oppression and economic exploitation. The systems are based upon “unaccountable control pyramids,” “largely business-run private totalitarian dictatorships” or “tyrannies” (188, 192 and 213), aided by com-

“Chomsky’s perception of class as the central tenet of anarchism is out of synch with Woodcock and some elements of contemporary anarchism.” (8)

But what Chomsky correctly says (citing Bakunin and Rocker in support of this thesis) is that, the “leading traditions” of “traditional anarchism” (179 and 191) present us with a revolutionary socialist movement based upon the idea of peasant-agricultural labourers and the industrial working class organizing themselves democratically into syndicates in order to fight for their liberation from state capitalism.

Individuals who deny the existence or relevance of the working class, have no justification for calling themselves anarchists, because they deny the essence of what anarchism has historically been all about. Where there is capitalism, there are workers, and in an era of global capitalism it is not difficult to find them suffering among the poor, underpaid and unemployed.

## The question of state power

**The dominant thread binding Chomsky’s many works of contemporary political commentary is: The Statue of Liberty is a prostitute pimped out to the “private dictatorships” and “totalitarian organizations” (213) constitutive of corporate capitalism. This is also a major unifying theme of Chomsky on Anarchism, insofar as there are any in this haphazardly conceived book.**

In his early essays, Chomsky allies himself with anarcho-syndicalism, but over time progressively adopts a purely syndicalist position. He focuses on corporate capitalist tyrannies and is open-minded on questions of the compatibility of the state and the future possibility of a comparably large non-hierarchical libertarian welfare structure run by public workers’ syndicate and administering pensions and healthcare or providing co-ordinated inter-regional relief in natural disasters and other large-scale emergencies. Once the capitalist monster has been decapitated, workers can utilize the established civic body of a now headless workers’ state to concentrate largely upon administration and coordination of useful, socially productive basic services.

Unlike anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, syndicalists have generally felt happy to leave the question of the fate of the state unanswered. Syndicalists consider overthrowing and supplanting capitalism work enough, and view the perhaps utopian vision of a stateless workers’ society as a much more distant or larger project. With regard to the future of the state, syndicalism can be flex-

ible and does not hold to the either/or position of anarcho-syndicalism. In fact, syndicalists may even contemplate the idea of strengthening the welfare state. Chomsky is of this view, believing that the welfare state at least establishes some sort of “public arena” and provides considerably more relief to the poor than the bread crumbs handed out by big business. Minimizing the welfare “state,” Chomsky asserts, would result in “increasing an even worse power [private capitalism].” (214) In contemporary capitalist society the worker is left with little else predicament, Chomsky believes we should not be too inflexible over our principles with respect to our visions and goals. Instead, we must take a “practical” (190) approach to assisting the working classes because they are currently facing the daunting prospect of having to continue to cling onto the edges of the welfare state frying-pan or be tossed into a capitalist inferno.

Anarcho-syndicalism is syndicalism enriched and empowered by the diversity and wealth of anarchism. Syndicalism has a very narrow tactical, industrial or workplace focus, whilst anarchism is a broad and inclusive political movement historically and ideologically embracing and influencing many different philosophical and cultural movements, outlooks and activities.

Syndicalists assume that without international capital and faced with the non-cooperation of the workers of the world, the political power of the most powerful states would be reduced to nil. Anarchists believe that capitalism is a fundamental part, but not the whole, of the nation state system, representing in their view a different and possibly greater evil than corporate capitalism. For anarchists, the workers’ revolution involves a fatal blow to the body that unites the two-headed monster of state-capitalism.

Chomsky was at one point a member of the syndicalist organization, the Industrial Workers of the World. Private tyrannies are the exclusive target of the IWW’s efforts, with campaigns aimed at inspiring workers to educate, agitate and organize grass-roots union networks for their protection and to overthrow the employer class. In contrast to their anarcho-syndicalist cousins, the syndicalist IWW members, or Wobblies, have always maintained an ambivalent, wait-and-see attitude to the fate of the state. The elimination and replacement of the capitalist system, not the nation-state, is the syndicalists’ focus and priority.

Chomsky implies that syndicalists, unlike some anarcho-syndicalists, have shied away from “detailed programs” (221) or social-economic blueprints as to how the post-capitalist worker-run society will emerge and organize itself, including

whether it will retain a state-like structure or civic body. Revolutionary syndicalism can be distinguished from more reformist versions of syndicalism that simply call for local shop-floor democracy and militant unionism as the only way for the worker to live a decent life within state-capitalism.

The editor of this compilation mistakenly believes that in placing greater emphasis upon the evils of capitalism than those of the nation-state, Chomsky has gradually come to embrace Marxism, when, in fact, Chomsky has become more purely syndicalist. Chomsky is clearly attracted to the tactics and less utopian vision of syndicalism, but he seems equally strongly drawn to libertarian-liberal or progressive literature, networks and movements, historically spawned, inspired or organized by anarchists.

Syndicalism and anarchism are complementary, but not identical, political theories of social and democratic transformation. Anarchists of all descriptions seek to eliminate state functions and institutions. But many disparate anti- or non-state world views are unified in the madness of armchair pseudo-anarchism. In the Anglo-American world, anarcho-syndicalists are confronted by the intellectual equivalent of pathological lunacy in the bipolarity of libertarian free-marketeers and libertarian survivalists (primitivists), both asserting a clearly unfounded claim to carry the anarchist flag. Anarchism, according to these ways of thinking, is either back to the caves or back to the market! Non-anarchist

syndicalism provides an opportunity and an ideology albeit a somewhat narrow one, to bypass such idiotic, impractical and contradictory pseudo-anarchist positions. The worst enemies of anarchism are often the “anarchists” themselves.

Chomsky appreciates this depressing situation and has reacted by warming towards the IWW/syndicalist position, to which Chomsky, as a lifetime disciple of Rocker, has always been sympathetic. Chomsky and Rocker blend an open-minded and open-ended libertarian approach to their concepts and exploration of culture and freedom, while calling for practical, effective industrial and syndicalist concepts, tactics and methods for the realization of a free and equal society.

## Liberalism and freedom

**Hand in hand with early socialism, the assumptions and outlooks of classical liberal writers provide an underlying world view and ideological source for the anarchist and many other 19th and 20th century political and philosophical traditions. The predominant subject of**

**several of the essays in this collection is liberalism and our understanding of the instinctive experience in striving and satisfying our deep-felt need for freedom of thought, action and in conducting ourselves as we feel best. Chomsky's analysis of freedom and classical liberal literature freedoms is a isn't straightforwardly about anarchism because the defining feature of great liberal thinkers (with the exception of Dewey human nature... and Russell) predate the anarchist movement.**

Bakunin, Chomsky (121-2) and almost everyone else can readily agree that, at an instinctual level, everybody desires and seeks freedom. The struggle to enlarge or defend individual and collective freedoms is a defining feature of human nature, individual and social aspiration, such that it is a major force behind the great historical changes in human civilization.

But anarchism differs from liberalism in its core assertion that freedom will only be achieved when the working classes liberate themselves by their own agency and self-organization. Anarchism disputes the idea that the democratic and libertarian visions of the great liberal dreamers can be realized under the torpor of the nation-state-capitalist system. Anarchists insist, instead, that the state should be replaced by a technologically savvy and "rational social order" (114), developing out of the revolutionary syndicates and neighbourhoods organized by the people in mass, open and constructive revolt against institutions that have failed to deliver housing, health care, bread, freedom or democracy for all in an age of global communication and potential plenitude.

In these essays, Chomsky takes several historical tours of liberal-minded thinkers familiar to most undergraduate students of political philosophy (Rousseau, Kant, Bentham and Mill), but more unusually, he pays considerable attention to the much-less known (outside of Germany) Humboldt, for whom Chomsky clearly has great admiration. In his sadly neglected masterpiece, *Nationalism and Culture*, Roker "describes Humboldt as 'the most prominent representative in Germany of the doctrine of natural rights and of the opposition to the authoritarian state- (117, note 15). Kropotkin despairs i his *Ethics* at how Humboldt's books lie neglected and "moldering" upon library shelves while many lesser thinkers have become fashionable. The great French geographer E. Reclus also greatly admired Humboldt. Reclus had been a Paris Communeard, a confidant of Bakunin, and also worked closely with

Kropotkin. Reclus' first geographical book, *The Earth* (1868-9), received nearly universal praise from the scientific estab-

lishment. One prominent reviewer of the time thought Reclus' work "as worthy of figuring as one of the monuments of science alongside Humboldt's *Cosmos*."

There is no mention whatsoever in this anthology of ecology or the environmental movement/crisis. Chomsky seems unaware of the direct and profound links between the great anarchist geographers and Humboldt's life and ideas. Humboldt, like Kropotkin, had been a Siberian explorer. Humboldt and Reclus are justly remembered for their contribution to the integrated geographical and scientific study of the Earth's systems and phenomena at the local and global level.

Chomsky tells us how he took on his anarchist political ideas as a "young teenager" and hasn't "seen much reason to revise those early attitudes since." (178) But in the more than half-century since Chomsky became an anarchist and syndicalist convert, the scientific and public perception of an approaching environmental crisis has gradually crawled to centre stage.

Chomsky became a disciple of Bakunin and Rocker as a teenager because he was sympathetic to industrial syndicalism, and he remains so today. Unfortunately, the industrial bias of syndicalism in the late 20th century resulted in a widespread tendency to express antagonism toward or dismiss the environmental movement. This occurred in reaction to the predominantly middle-class liberalism of that movement, which almost instinctively ignores the needs and views of the working classes and is often indifferent to the inherent ecological evils of the capitalist system. Unfortunately, in the last quarter of the 20th century, dogmatic and provocative anti-technological diatribes championing pseudo-anarchist primitivist-survivalist idiocy also helped to widen a sectarian divide between sensible ecological anarchists and industrial syndicalists. The late Judi Bari was the most active and coherent advocate in the early 1990s of the urgent need for radical environmentalists and industrial unionists to join hands and organize.

Chomsky often quotes Rocker and Bakunin, who had nothing to say about environmental issues. He mentions Kropotkin in passing, and Reclus not at all. Reclus and Kropotkin, rather uniquely for their time, stressed the need to integrate and harmonize the natural and non-natural, or human, environment. Kropotkin's general idea of the democratically self-governing, bio-regionally integrated and self-sufficient green city-region (served by inter-communal and international industrial syndicates) must, in my opinion, form the material basis and lie at the heart of any modern and realizable conception of anarchism.

Chomsky believes in essentialism, rationalism and universalism (all vehemently opposed by post-modernists), examining how apparent "restraints" or "restrictions" have been compatible with bio-linguistic evolution and human freedom. Chomsky attempts to reconcile Bakunin's idea that the "essential and defining property of man is his freedom" with Chomsky's equally long-held view that the human mind's linguistic abilities are systems of innate developmental properties of the species-specific human mind, in the form of a "universal grammar." (101-4) These ideas, Chomsky argues, are allied with Humboldt's concept of an abstract and "fixed form of language as a system of generative [developmental] processes or innate properties of mind but permitting an infinite use of finite means." (113-15)

Since Chomsky originally expressed these thoughts, the field of semantic biology has been greatly enriched by M. Barbieri's "The Organic Codes", an extraordinarily fertile work described by Chomsky as "intriguing" and "fascinating." Barbieri discusses how life diversified and evolved by means of creative, cooperative locally autonomous epigenetic or developmental systems of social meaning and biological reconstruction. The extraordinary diversity of life occurred through the developmental integration complexity of coded semantic exchanges between molecules and cells freely exploring, interpreting, refining, discovering and inventing infinite possibilities, despite the apparently restrictive, to nature, or grammar, of the DNA code or language. This, Barbieri contends, parallels human linguistic diversity, despite the innate and universal nature of the epigenetically or developmentally reconstructed "human species-specific mind."

In addition to his linguist achievements, Chomsky is also known as an intellectual opponent of the Vietnam War. Oddly awkwardly for a book about anarchism, this anthology begins with a detailed 30-page scholarly analysis of establishment ideology justifying the continuation of the Vietnam war some 40 years ago. Chomsky's overview of modern elite theory concludes that the New Mandarins, the term he uses for America's intellectual bureaucratic servants, were motivated in Vietnam by ideals and goals that were undemocratic and illiberal.

I am too young to know anything much about the Vietnam, other than that America and Australia lost the war. For the upcoming generations, Vietnam is a distant historical event known out only through war movies. This long essay introduces a book called "On Anarchism", but it is not about anarchism and does not mention the word. Some sort of introduction about how this history relates to anarchism is

badly needed. Specifically, I would at least expect some background about what led to the war, and why and how resistance to it became one of the major causes of 1960's youth or student rebellion, resulting in a brief resurgence of libertarian thinking in Australia and the United States.

The first half of this book consists of essays from two recently established books: *The New Mandarins* (1969) and *Reasons of State* (1970). Only one section concerns Chomsky's anarchism, and it is a wholly derivative work of anarchist historical orthodoxy analyzing liberal historical scholarship surrounding the early and revolutionary period of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1937). Chomsky draws upon standard or classic anarchist studies (Rocker, Peirats, et al., Richards) and contemporary journalistic accounts (Orwell, Borkenau).

Chomsky sympathetically presents the anarchist account, but like the Vietnam material, this essay does not serve as a clear or inspiring

introduction to those who are ignorant of revolutionary Spain, and Chomsky reveals nothing new to those already familiar with this history and scholarship.

"I don't really regard myself as an anarchist thinker. I'm a derivative fellow traveller" (135). This is how Chomsky described himself in 1976 at the beginning of an interview hosted by the BBC's London Weekend Television. The text is the fourth chapter of Chomsky on Anarchism and was previously anthologised in *Radical Priorities* (republished by AK in 2003). As Chomsky recognizes, he has little original to add to the insights of Bakunin and Rocker. Instead, he remains happy, like most of us, to have been their fellow worker and fellow traveller.

I doubt very much that Chomsky was inclined to articulate his present views about his long-held anarchist political beliefs had they not been gently coaxed out of him. Chomsky has not written much about anarchism; rather most of his reflections on anarchism have appeared in the course

of interviews for a couple of anarchist journals. Without these brief statements, Chomsky's 1960s essay on Spanish anarchism and his brief introduction to Guérin's book *Anarchism* (1970, republished 2003) would have remained his primary contribution to anarchist literature. Recent interviews conducted by anarchists represent only a tiny fraction of this book, which consists primarily of old and recently republished essays of no direct relevance to anarchism. (Despite the paucity of both new and anarchist material, the editor, Pateman, failed to include two interviews with Chomsky conducted and published by the *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*.) The publisher of this anthology, AK Press, has republished several classical anarchist works and some excellent historical studies. But their catalogue offers little sensible, new, specifically anarchist analysis and theory. Unfortunately, Chomsky on Anarchism does little to fill this need.

## WORKERS CONTROL OR SELF-MANAGEMENT? (1972)

**Much of the literature produced for this conference(1) contains brief references to the term self-management. One session of the conference has been devoted to "Workers Control workers participation, self-management and socialism". It would seem then that the terms Workers Control and Self-Management represent two different things. They do in fact represent two different things, these differences have been the basis for much debate in the workers control movement in other countries. The aim of this pamphlet is to explain and the reasons why we support self-management.**

The booklet "Workers Councils - the Economics of a Self-Managed Society", available at the conference, explains, more fully than we wish to here, the concept of self-management.

Real workers control can only come about when the working class collectively take all the fundamental decisions in production. Not only in the individual factories but in relation to the entire economy. It must do this directly, through institutions of its own choice with which it can identify completely, which it can dominate completely. Such bodies are the workers councils. These councils are the historic creations of the working class, every time the question of power has been raised the workers have responded with these basic

bodies. The Russian Factory Committees of 1917, the German Workers Councils of 1919, the Hungarian Councils of 1956 all express this pattern of self organization.

With regard to the economy as a whole we see these councils federating nationally.

dominate. This is workers self-management of the economy. We use this term to differentiate between workers merely supervising, inspecting or checking decisions made by others and workers collectively initiating decisions in full



They then bear on every aspect of the economy. This means the workers are not only controlling production but they are also taking initiatives and setting directions through bodies they can completely

knowledge of the relevant facts.

We also use the term self-management to separate our idea of real workers control

*See Page 20*



## NEWS &amp; NOTES

Whilst many leftist groups today are becalmed in all manner of self absorption antics such as the lascivious massaging of micro or macro bureaucracies, the precious construction of paper organisations and the production of abstract propaganda and grotesque political correctness displays, the ASN has been showing its fighting fit in the struggle for grass roots controlled unionism. We have recently assisted militants in public transport nationally to strike a major blow against the ALP controlled union bureaucracy (See article page 6). We have also been assisting militant workers in City Rail to oppose massive staff cuts and restructuring for privatisation. This fightback has culminated in the holding of a mass meeting at the concourse at Central at 11am 11/6/09 to oppose the staff cuts and privatisation.

Have you ever wondered how come the ALP has managed to control the hierarchies of many unions, which has enormously contributed to the success of various Govt and employer attacks on workers' jobs and conditions over the years via the Accord, Enterprise Bargaining and privatisation? Article page 6 throws intriguingly light on the mechanics of this process.

There were quite lively discussions with many new faces at both talks organised by the ASN in recent months at Jura Books on the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union the CNT during its heyday in the 1930's and anarcho-syndicalist perspectives on countering the current accelerated employer offensive.

Rebel Worker has an internet web site. Its address is [www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org) Many articles from back issues of Rebel Worker are available in the archive section on the site.

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

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**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.....

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*Continued From Page 18*

from those who see workers control merely as a tactic, to be discarded as unnecessary "after the revolution." Alternatively some see workers control as the workers ratifying and applying the decisions made by the "vanguard party of the working class" when it achieves state power. Those formulations of workers control can only mean one thing for us, that the real control over the means of production will lie in the hands of a few. For us production cannot be managed by any agency other than the producers themselves. To us the basis of a class society is when the producers do not dominate the means of production. The question of real workers control versus a form of workers control which is subjugated to the 'vanguard party' or the trade unions has been posed many times in recent history. A classical example is the degeneration of the Russian revolution into a state capitalist bureaucracy.

For us the decay began when the Bolsheviks began to emasculate the workers councils and factory committees, that is as early as 1918. Anytime a Leninist party proposes workers control it should be viewed with great suspicion for real workers control would make their organization redundant.

In all the literature surrounding this conference we have seen none which confronts the issue of state power. Obviously any form of workers control which alters the relationships within production in a meaningful way will require the destruction of the bourgeois state. The contentious point is the method of organization which we replace it with. Self-management means that the organ of the federated workers councils (perhaps a central assembly of delegates) take over the management of the economy as a whole.

Many of those who have failed to raise the question of the state obviously feel that the 'party' will assume these functions. The entrenchment of any group in state power can only lead to bureaucratization and the weakening of the workers councils. The issue of state power must be raised and thrashed out now as it will determine much of the future of our movement.

One result of the points outlined above is our opposition to the proposal to be put to this conference to form a National Institute for Workers Control. We feel a national institute could too easily become removed from the realities of the rank and file movement and that it would fall under

the domination of ideological groups with vested interests. It would also be subject to overdue influence by the Sydney movement.

The influence given to trade unions by the proposed institute could also undermine rank and file groups who come into conflict with the union bureaucracies. The alternative proposal to establish regional Workers Control Information Centres with workers control groups affiliated to them is one more in line with the needs and realities of the situation. This proposal will be circulated during the conference.

We must determine what workers control really means. To us it means the workers are really in control. That is workers self-management.

#### **SELF-MANAGEMENT IN STRUGGLE.**

#### **SELF-MANAGEMENT IN SOCIETY.**

*Railway Workers Rank and File Group (Melbourne)*

*Notes:*

*(1)1972 Workers Control Conference in N.S.W.*

## **IRELAND: BUS WILDCAT STRIKES**

### **Bus worker wildcats spread across Dublin north**

*by weeler*

*Apr 28 2009*

The wildcat strike action taken by Dublin Bus drivers has spread to four new garages as the dispute enters its third day. The dispute began on Sunday after a driver at the Harristown depot was suspended when he

refused to work a new schedule. The 450 staff at the Harristown depot stopped work in solidarity with the driver before the dispute spread to the Clontarf depot. At present just two depots are operating (based in South Dublin) with almost all of the North Dublin routes brought to a total standstill. Dublin Bus recently developed a "Cost Effectiveness Plan" to address their €31 million projected loss for 2009, which included plans to reduce their fleet by 120 buses as well as letting hundreds of work-

ers go. Unions agreed to the cuts at the Labour Court earlier this month and have distanced themselves from the action. The companies says it will only enter talks with drivers if they return to work and operate the new schedules.