

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia
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EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION TAKES NEW TURN TOWARD SELF-MANAGEMENT & WORKERS' CONTROL!



**JOCK PALFREMAN; GOLDEN DAWN IN MELBOURNE; NSW
RAILWAY NEWS; NEWCASTLE RAIL LINE; STATE TRANSIT
NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; WORKERS' CONTROL
IN GREECE; BRITAIN TODAY; EGYPT; IRELAND TODAY; ITALIAN
REBEL UNIONISM; BOOK REVIEW CORNER; NEWS & NOTES**

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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Solidarity News

Anti-fascist Prisoner Jock Palfreeman Ends His Hunger Strike. But Still Needs Your Support

Australian Anti-fascist prisoner Jock Palfreeman, serving 20 years in Sofia/Bulgaria for defending two Roma boys from a racist mob, was on hunger strike from the 13th January 2013. The Director of the Central Sofia Prison had ordered another punishment measure because of Jock's activist work as chairman of the Bulgarian Prisoners Association. Due to this punishment Jock is now not allowed to finish his studies which is very important to him. After 30 days Jock ended his hunger strike because he got an answer from the Bulgarian authorities. The prison administration responsible for his case answered that he can only study in a Bulgarian University, and not in a foreign one. But, if he wants to study in a Bulgarian University he cannot do this from prison, so he is not permitted to continue his studies. This 'official' answer means that he can now appeal in the courts against the deci-

sion. After losing 20 kilos in weight he ended his hunger strike and will continue his protest by legal ways. Jock is very thankful for the support he received. But the issue of being able to continue his studies is not resolved, so it is still useful for friends and supporters to write letters to the Ministry of Justice in Bulgaria. The fight continues! Please keep writing letters of complaint to:

Ministry of Justice Diana Kovacheva No. 1, Slavanska Street Sofia 1040 Bulgaria

A week of solidarity action for Jock is being planned for April, more information will be available soon...

For other ways to support Jock:

Write letters of support to: *Jock Palfreeman *Sofia Central Prison 21 General Stoletoy Boulevard Sofia 1309 Bulgaria

Check out these websites for more information about his case: <http://www.freejock.com/> <http://www.jockpalfreeman.com/> <http://www.freejock.com/>

Join the 'Freedom For Jock Palfreeman' page on Facebook for regular news and updates: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/123586691003205/>

Sign this petition to the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice: To Approve Jock Palfreeman's Prison Transfer to Australia <http://www.change.org/petitions/the-bulgarian-ministry-of-justice-approve-jock-palfreeman-s-prison-transfer-to-australia>

Website of Bulgarian Prisoners Association: <http://bulgarianprisonersassociation.wordpress.com/category/english/>

GOLDEN DAWN & AUSTRALIA

Dear Friends,

We are a small initiative of a few anarchist antifascists who live in Melbourne, Australia.

We forward this text and petition for urging Brendan O'Connor, Australia's Immigration Minister to act immediately for banning the fascists of Golden Dawn entering the country and help opening an office in Melbourne.

The link is this https://www.change.org/en-AU/petitions/brendan-o-connor-minister-for-immigration-and-citizenship-refuse-visas-to-golden-dawn-members-coming-to-australia?utm_campaign=share_button_action_box&utm_medium=facebook&utm_source=share_petition#

Our initiative is organising other events as well for which we will talk when we have news about them.

At the moment we circulate this petition and we ask you to forward in your respective networks and wherever you can.

Thanks.

In solidarity

Greek-Australian anarchist antifascists in Melbourne

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT AND ACTION IN SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS OF IBERIA AIRLINES

The Spanish airline Iberia is laying off 3,807 workers and cutting the wages of their remaining workers between 20% to 40%. Days off and vacations will be significantly reduced amongst other rights as well. This will allow Iberia workers to be sold very cheap in the near future.

This is the reason why we are on strike for 10 days (we already struck for 5 days in February). The CNT (National Confederation of Labour – Anarcho-Syndicalist union) committee calls for all possible measures to put Iberia under pressure: leaflets, graffiti, pickets, sits-in. They shall take place wherever Iberia is present: airports, offices in the cities... We aim to combine all our forces internationally to stop the plans for dismantling the airline.

We would appreciate it, if you sent us pictures and videos of your actions. Thank you very much in advance. All our best wishes. CNT committee in Iberia

More information: <http://iberia.cnt.es/secciones-sindicales/iberia/111-que-esta-pasando-en-iberia> <http://iberia.cnt.es/>

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

Management and Union Leadership Manufacturing a Health Crisis

By Crimson Coconut

There is an outbreak of "Health Care Initiatives" from Transport for N.S.W. and the State Government. Programs such as the regular health checks, BMI checks, Quit Smoking campaigns, Drug and Alcohol Testing (urine and blood sampling), Union and Government sponsored Health Fairs, various workplace lectures on diet and exercise etc are all targeting workers in the health firing line.

When is our employer impinging on our freedom to do what we like outside of work hours or to pursue the lifestyle (whether it is right or wrong) that we desire? Where do we draw the line?

If management were truly serious about our health and fitness they would give us:

- * Subsidised staff canteens that serves up healthy food rather than the junk food that is available in the private businesses surrounding railways.

- * They would stop rostering people around the clock inducing fatigue and fatigue related diseases such as obesity and heart disease. It is no accident, for instance, that those that work around the clock shift-work, whether that be station staff, drivers, guards, signallers etc are the most overweight. There is ample evidence to the link between shift work and obesity. The endocrinology and biological chemical evidence is there for anyone to see. So who's fault is it that employees are overweight? What control do you have over your roster, eating habits or sleep patterns?

- * They would provide sporting facilities (subsidised or not) close to work depots.

- * They would provide a stress free environment in which members were respected instead of harassed with a "please explain-request for information" every time a passenger makes a complaint.

- * They would provide an equal opportunity workplace environment free of discrimination and recrimination where "who you know" counts more than individual ability.

- * They would realise that society as a whole has changed. From the way our communities and work are designed to the way the food industry raises, produces and serves food, to the way we have less and less control over our everyday lives. These

all impact on the health of, not just, rail workers, but the general community. Rail workers would be expected to have a healthier prognosis than the general population though.

- * They would freely give us our allotted leisure time without having to jump through bureaucratic hoops just to get leave. Why is it that we have lie or give some reason for taking our own leave (such as long service leave) when it is due? Why is it up to our level 4 manager to decide when we take leave? Why is it more difficult to get holiday roster swaps

than before because we have to provide a written reason for the swap? Why is leave cancelled during special holiday periods and special events depriving employees from enjoying the benefits of social festivals and events that everyone else takes for granted?

- * Stop treating injured workers like pariahs rather than as valued employees -a commodity that loses value the longer it is injured. The onus and proof of good health has been put back onto us, the employees. We are the ones responsible for not getting sick, when they are the cause of ill health in most cases.

Very few workplaces are as rigorously health tested as RailCorp.

The latest craze, BMI (Body Mass Index) testing is at the extreme edge of employee health testing. There is no science in it at all. Put simply the BM Index is a mathematical calculation of a person's mass in Kilograms divided by their height squared. $BMI = \text{MASS IN KG} \div \text{HEIGHT IN METRES}^2$.

It is a purely mathematical calculation. Using this technique many of our Olympic athletes would be placed in the "Obese" category by scoring a BMI of 30 or more.

In some senses BMI testing is discriminatory as it takes no account of genetic factors such as ethnicity or family predisposition. Theoretically Russian

born immigrants will have more fat than say a Somali simply because genetically they have adapted to different environments.

"A further limitation of BMI relates to loss of height through aging. In this situation, BMI will increase without any corresponding increase in weight." **Sourced at Wikipedia**

That means BMI Testing discriminates against aged employees.

Now new research is discarding BMI Testing as unscientific and outdated. According to a "study published by JAMA in 2005 showed that overweight people had



a similar relative risk of mortality to normal weight people as defined by BMI, while underweight and obese people had a higher death rate.[25] High BMI is associated with type 2 diabetes only in persons with high serum gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase.[26]"

"In an analysis of 40 studies involving 250,000 people, patients with coronary artery disease with normal BMIs were at higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease than people whose BMIs put them in the overweight range (BMI 25-29.9).[27] In the overweight, or intermediate, range of BMI (25-29.9), the study found that BMI failed to discriminate between bodyfat percentage and lean mass. The study concluded that "the accuracy of BMI in diagnosing obesity is limited, particularly for individuals in the intermediate BMI ranges, in men and in

the elderly. These results may help to explain the unexpected better survival in overweight/mild obese patients."[20]" **Sourced at Wikipedia**

BMI Testing should be recognised for what it is. It is a mathematical and statistical tool for the general population which, when applied to individual cases, will give a statistical error that discriminates against the individuals concerned.

The RTBU leadership has gone along with this bogus charade of health reforms agreeing to a national health standard for rail operators without recourse to reason and without consulting members. NSW RTBU Branch Secretary, Claassens is confused as he normally is.

The Daily Telegraph reports:

"Rail Tram Bus Union NSW branch secretary Alex Claassens said there used to be a joke that you weren't a real train driver "unless you had an overhang" but attitudes had now changed.

"There's broad support for these changes," he said.

"The level of obesity is increasing and the fact is this is a sedentary job and people are not exercising as much as they were before." Only a handful of drivers would be affected by the changes, he said."

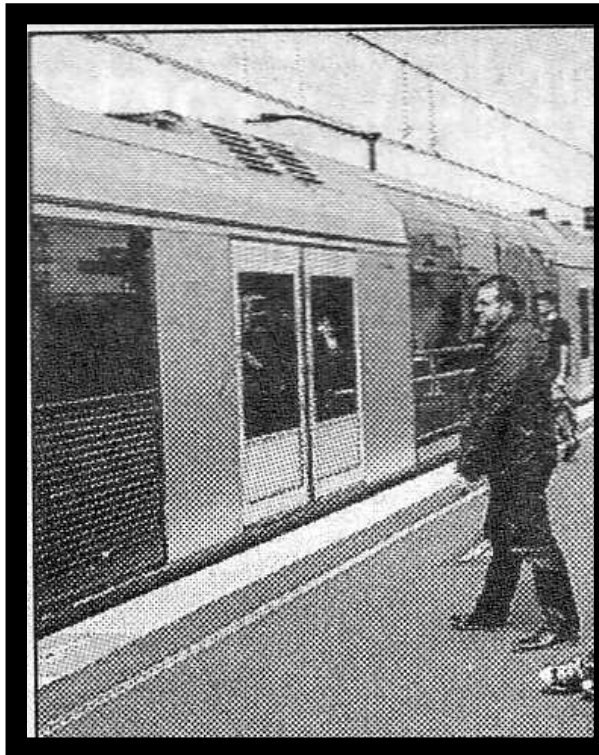
Yet in a bulletin to members:

Claassens*"said rail workers were concerned about how the new measures, which include very specific weight and BMI criteria, would be applied."*

"More rigorous health assessments must be matched by the introduction of health and wellness programs to ensure Category 1 rail safety workers, including drivers and signallers, can meet the tough new requirements."

So which one is it Alex? Is there widespread support OR are members concerned? Can't seem to make up your mind? Maybe you need some psychological testing?

RailCorp is shirking it's responsibility for safety by fairly and squarely placing responsibility on employees. At the same time they have failed to introduce new engineering safety equipment or work methods into the network as quickly as they might have. That is another issue however



which cannot be discussed here. The union leadership could have nailed RailCorp over the issues of safety but have instead taken the easy route by siding with them.

Don't get me wrong. We are for safe and secure public transport that ensures the safety of passengers, but the approach taken about safety by the Union Leadership and Management leaves almost all re-

sponsibility with employees. Employee's in reality have very little control over the work processes, the equipment that is purchased, reliability or the human factors which interact within the organisation. Maybe it is time to heap criticism where criticism is due rather than clutching at straws and blaming workers for everything that happens. The Union's Leadership, who's job it is to look after members interests, should know better. If they were more in tune with the needs of their members then maybe this could not have happened.

As our workplace freedoms (even outside of work) are slowly removed it is time to draw a line in the sand and say "NO MORE". The Union Leadership should force management into a position of conceding that their policies are contributing to the bad health of employees. To do this they must meet and campaign alongside affected employees and involve them in the decision making process.

This is unlikely to happen unless we buck the trend and refuse to take part in this absurd circus.

The union leadership is strung up on the fact that they have given tacit approval for this to go ahead, despite them not seeking the approval of their members.

Also the fingerprinting of employees signing on and off for duty is one move too many by the bosses. We must also resist this move NOW while it is being introduced. Boycott any moves to take fingerprints in your workplace. This is the equivalent to taking your DNA. It is

totally unnecessary.

If we stick together and stop these ridiculous assaults on our rights, such as fingerprint scanning and extreme health assessments that deny the reality of working life we can draw a line in the sand and halt the erosion of our greater rights at work that lead to a fairer and happier workplace.

stations (Civic and Newcastle). Despite being on a tough wicket, we are determined to make sure they don't get away with it.

Despite repeatedly bringing our plight to the attention of the Sydney media we have received no coverage. We want to break through that wall of silence and make our voice heard. We don't believe that the government would get away with a plan like this in the Sydney metro area and we think that if a critical mass of people in Sydney hear about the government's plans (and our campaign to thwart them!) it will help us put enough pressure on the government to force them to back down.

We think putting the blowtorch on the government over this issue feeds into the

SAVE NEWCASTLE RAIL LINE

Dear friends,

This is an appeal for support from Save Our Rail up in Newcastle. We really need your help for a moment.

You may have heard of us. Save Our Rail is a grassroots community organisation which has fought off successive attempts to cut the last few kilometres of the Newcastle rail line over the last 20 years or so. We have members from various political

backgrounds but are not aligned to any particular party. The Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) is also supporting the campaign as it affects many of their members.

The situation

The O'Farrell government released its Newcastle urban renewal strategy document in December last year and announced they are once again trying to cut the line at Wickham, removing the last two

broader community campaign to discredit them and fight back against their bad planning laws and their attacks on the public sector and the environment.

Why are we campaigning to save the rail?

In a nutshell:

-It is a cardinal rule of transport planning that you do not make people change from one mode of transport to another (eg from rail to bus) unless it is absolutely necessary and unavoidable. Countless examples show that the delay and inconvenience created by making people change over causes them to abandon the service. Most recently in Adelaide the replacement of the Tonsley rail service with buses has seen a 95% reduction in patronage.

-The Government has committed to cutting the line but has not allocated sufficient funding to do so. To follow through with their plan will likely end up costing \$350-500million+ whereas they have allocated only \$110million. This \$350-500m+ figure is based on costing for Wickham Truncation released in 2010 by consultancy firm AECOM; this study, commissioned by the previous ALP government, is the most up to date / detailed / realistic investigation of cutting the line.

-The government claims to be in a 'budget black hole' and has been slashing public sector jobs yet they have committed to this expensive destruction of public transport in Newcastle come what may. Their duplicity is outrageous.

-Previous proposals by Greiner and Costa have openly advocated building on the rail corridor (it is in a prime location close to the Harbour) and a 2008 concept proposal by developer GPT depicted buildings in the corridor. This has been the primary motive all along. After 20 years of having the brazen greed of handing public rail land to developers rejected, the latest plan cynically claims that the land will become a 'green corridor' and will never be built on. Save Our Rail is under no illusions.

-There has been no proposal (from either the current Liberal government nor the prior ALP regime) as to how passengers will be expediently shifted from trains to buses. There are no costing for purchasing and staffing extra buses nor for the major roadwork that will likely be required to deal with new bottlenecks created as existing vehicular crossings are closed in lieu of changed rail movements.



-Cutting the line will disadvantage the elderly, parents with prams, people with bikes and surfboards, blind people and wheelchair users. It will make parents in the Hunter Valley think twice before sending their kids on the train for a day at the beach as the service will no longer drop people 2 blocks from Newcastle beach.

-The Urban Renewal Strategy document has a bunch of pretty pictures of repaved and refurbished streets, arcades and piazzas in Newcastle. Virtually all of this

could be done without cutting the line. Moreover the report says that all of these pretty projects are to be paid for by Newcastle council - not the NSW government.

It is claimed that the rail is underutilised and acts as a barrier. We say if it is underutilised then we should be improving the service and marketing it better, not cutting it. And if it is a barrier we should

have a trial of new at-grade pedestrian crossings to provide better connectivity.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Zane Alcorn

Save Our Rail executive member

m:0401466831

For more info, including proactive plans to improve public transport in Newcastle, please visit saveourrail.org.au/

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's happening with the bosses' attempts to cut overtime money?

Waverley Busie: Recently notices have been put up in the depot on the issue of how we are claiming overtime. The STA is complaining that drivers aren't calculating it properly, involving wrongly showing the amount of overtime worked and that the relevant paper work isn't being

properly completed. In particular, the STA is complaining it's not being categorised properly. The STA now wants drivers to check with Inspectors and their supervisor when overtime is recorded, who will show how to write it up correctly via a step by step process. Now, when the bosses query the amount of overtime you claim, they will be putting a little note on your journal. It all appears to be another pathetic scam to nick more money from us.

RW: What's the latest with depot fleet?

WB: Waverley has now more gas buses than diesel. We recently received some old Scania buses from Kingsgrove. We are awaiting more. Opinions are divided about these buses. Some are quite in favour of these buses.

However, the STA appears to be favouring diesel buses, over gas buses in the general STA fleet. A likely reason is the bosses and Lib's drive to cut costs and disregard environmental considerations. The STA considers these buses are cheaper to operate, in contrast to the gas buses. The gas buses also require more time to fuel in comparison to the diesels. However, diesel fumes are highly toxic. Whilst gas bus exhausts are much more environmentally friendly.

This whole approach of disregarding environmental considerations, in the interests of big business profit making and cost cutting has been a continuing feature of ALP and Lib Govt. policies over the years. One obvious case which comes to mind, is the Rightwing ALP NSW voting against container deposit legislation and the banning of plastic bags at shops. This hostility to recycling and other environmentally friendly policies, seems also about the Libs/ALP not wanting to be seen having environmental policies which have a Greens stamp upon them.

RW: How have the depot renovations been proceeding?

WB: Associated with the depot renovations has been the installation of a diesel fuel tank located high up with the aid of a crane. Whilst, all sheds and the admin block are being renovated. Why hasn't some of the revenue the STA has collected over the years been used to fix up the depot in the past? Has it all gone to the Govt's coffers? Why is this money being splashed out on the renovations now?

RW: What's the latest with STA admin. Restructuring?

WB: Heaps of inspector jobs are expected to be made redundant, resulting in some who are unsuccessful in gaining the new positions which are being created being put off the job. It just goes to show how the STA is doing things on the run. It's doing everything on the run, without looking at the long term consequences of the loss of these highly experienced staff. When some crisis occurs on the job, the disastrous consequences of this approach will become clear.

RW: What's the latest developments with the ferries?

WB: Six months since the privatisation of the ferries, the Telegraph newspaper has been crowing about it being a success. However, there is no other ferry service in Sydney to compare its performance. Consequently, the Telegraph story can only be propaganda for big business and the Libs more aggressive pursuit of the privatisation agenda. Its claims are bogus.

RW: How are the bosses treating staff at the depot?

WB: Lately we have noticed them wearing rather menacing "highly polished" 3rd Reich foot ware, apparently due to the performance pressures of their contracts. Their jackboots have particularly been targeting new drivers, resulting in their high turnover at the depot.

RW: Is this job making you sick?

WB: It's been statistically proven that in Australia, workers productivity has in-

creased 700% over the last 40 years. The pay of CEO's and upper management is sky rocketing. In the case of the STA CEO, Peter Rowley is on a contract of roughly approx. \$450,000 pa. Whilst, employers are screwing us ever more. Both husband and wife are being obliged to work for a family to make a living. Our work place rights and conditions are continuing to be eroded. According to a David Jones worker, I spoke to recently, over 90% of staff at DJ's are casuals! Is the O'Farrell Govt. happy for everyone to be casuals? Is this the capitalist work place "Utopia", which the Neo Conservative Liberals are striving for, which is confusing, undemo-

Given these buses have no windows that can be manually opened, both drivers and passengers would have experienced considerable discomfort.

RW: What's happening with lower admin. Restructuring?

BD: There have been more requests for voluntary redundancy amongst corridor supervisors and duty officers, than there are positions being made redundant as part of the restructure. It's unclear, what will happen with those admin. Staff who want to stay on the job and are unsuccessful in winning the newly created positions.

RW: What's the latest with the bosses?



cratic, frustrating and insecure for workers?

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the latest at Burwood?

Burwood Driver: Recently new rosters have appeared. As they have Leichhardt Depot on them, most drivers are ignoring them. However, those who have examined them, have noticed all shifts have been trimmed back. So the changes will effectively amount to a wage cut. These rosters appear to be in line with STA plans for rosters for different districts e.g. Eastern, Northern, etc. The bosses plan to introduce these rosters, is likely to be in line with the restructure of STA administration. This restructuring which is connected to O'Farrell's public sector cuts involves the abolishing of many management jobs. The higher STA bosses appear to be resisting the loss of their jobs, through saving budget money from operations via cuts to our wages.

Other news at the depot was that on Friday 18/1/13, there were 16 buses with malfunctioning air conditioning systems, due to STA corner cutting on maintenance.

BD: The bosses are becoming increasingly draconian. In the depot they have put up notices, threatening drivers with disciplinary action if we don't wear the new uniform by the end of January. Despite drivers having ordered the new uniform, they have still not received it. Latest, news is that the manufacturer has advised they have run out of different sizes of it. However, the manager has said this isn't an excuse. As drivers should have ordered it early. This approach doesn't make any sense to me, given the supplier doesn't have the uniforms to supply.

HAMILTON DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the state of the fleet at the depot?

Hamilton Driver: The state of the depot fleet up here is falling into rapid decline. Often the buttons are not working and the doors malfunctioning. We have things like put "in the maintenance book", but the next time a driver get's that bus, obviously nothing has been done to repair it. I am told they have a budget for repairs and once that's exhausted, that's it. Rather than as it should be, the buses are not fixed on demand when broken as they used to be. This used to occur very occasionally in the past,

but it is becoming almost a weekly occurrence now. The bosses have run these buses into the ground and replaced nothing for years and now their falling apart.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the latest news at Leichhardt?

Leichhardt Busie: The most important news lately is that the bosses have put up in the depot, new proposed rosters with major changes. Most dramatically, the rosters don't include Sundays. This work will be given to the casuals, they want to also introduce, to boost their wages. Whilst Mid days will have nearly 2/3's of their lines of work cut. These changes will mean major cuts to many drivers wages. The union has made clear that these changes won't be accepted and there will be a fight.

A possible strategy of the bosses to implement these cuts is to wait until the current EBA runs out and then try to implement the proposed rosters. Using some loophole which their lawyers have advised them about. Whilst some drivers who consider the changes in the rosters don't affect them might vote to accept the rosters.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW we will discuss Privatisation of V/Line and recent management changes. Once again Head Office, Conductors, Drivers and Station Staff will discuss these ongoing issues.

RW: Can you tell us about a Newspaper article in the AGE for the 2/11/2012, about Privatisation of V/Line?

Clarence: It was only a rumour.

Rastus and Roscoe: We drivers heard of this rumour before the article appeared in the AGE. You see some of our Drivers who work at METRO Trains informed us that about last February. METRO Trains approached V/Line Management with an offer to take over the operation of V/Line. In return its alleged that METRO Trains offered to supply new trains without Government Finance.

Sheona: It was obvious that METRO Trains wanted V/Line trains, as they regard V/Line trains as an obstacle to METRO Trains operations, particularly in the EASTERN corridor.

Rastus: If METRO got their hands on the V/Line line operation, then they could stop trains at Pakenham and make passengers change to METRO trains. This would allow METRO to put out of existence trains using V/Line paths.

RW: What happened after the article appeared in the Paper?

Roscoe: As soon as the item appeared, the State Premier appeared on Media Outlets saying that V/Line would not be privatised in the foreseeable future.

RW: Why?

Rastus and Roscoe: You see when the Liberal/National coalition won Government in 2010, they only have a majority of one seat in Parliament.

Sheona: One of the reasons the Labor Party lost the election was train delays on METRO train services. The Liberal Party said they would fix up the Transport mess.

Jethro: Labor lost the election but with the exception of two seats lost in Rural Victoria, Labor held on to the other Rural seats, they won at the 1999 State Election. You see due to the Regional Fast Rail, major commuter lines were upgraded and extra trains were placed on these lines. In 2002 National Express packed up and handed



the Franchise back to the Government. The suburban trains franchises stayed with the Private Sector and V/Line reverted to Government ownership.

Clarence: After the Regional Fast Rail Project was completed V/Line was to be franchised to the Private Sector. This never happened and it was exposed in the AGE after the state election, that a motion had been passed at an ALP State Conference to Keep V/Line in Government hands, the AGE journalist claims this was the reason the ALP held these Rural Seats.

Rastus and Roscoe: We were at a Drivers Union meeting and the Drivers Delegate told the meeting that the STATE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT had told the RTBU officials that if Labor was re-elected, V/Line would remain in Government hands.

Sheona: This may be true, but working in Head Office, some of our STAFF are

CARD CARRYING members of the LIBERAL PARTY and they like to see V/Line Privatised as this would put the Unions in line.

Rastus and Roscoe: They may want to put the Unions in line, but when Privatisation occurred in 1999, we retained all our conditions. Other State Railway employees look to Victoria and ask how when Privatised we kept our conditions.

Sheona: The reason V/Line will not be Privatised until after the 2014 STATE ELECTION is that the LIBERAL/NATIONAL Party Coalition does not hold any Lower House seats in Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo and if V/Line was franchised then Country Voters would not vote for the Coalition, thus Labor will retain these Country Seats.

Clarence: It look like V/Line won't be privatised before the STATE ELECTION, so we call all V/Line workers to go out and campaign against Privatisation via Media Outlets and talking to passengers.

RW: Moving on I hear the Victorian Government owns the XPT.

Rastus and Roscoe: This is correct. It was purchased by the Victorian Government in 1993, so as to replace the Sydney Melbourne Express.

Clarence: The train is in the XPT pool and is staffed by CountryLink, except for drivers who are supplied by V/Line and run the train from Melbourne to Junee. When operations commenced in 1993 V/Line employees ran the train to Albury. They lost these jobs in 1994 due to Transport Reforms of the 1990's. How V/Line lost these jobs will be discussed in a future issue of RW.

Rastus: In 1999 when V/Line was Privatised, an attempt was made to take V/Line drivers of the train. The drivers resisted this attempt and kept the jobs on the XPT.

Roscoe: V/Line drivers working on the XPT may be coming to an end, as there are

rumours that the Victorian Government maybe going to sell the XPT, they own to CountryLink. If this sale goes ahead, the V/Line drivers running the XPT will end.

RW: Will the sale of the XPT be a prelude to selling CountryLink?

Rastus: Yes it is, for once the NSW Govt. get's their hands on the train, then they will be able to put CountryLink out for franchising.

Sheona: Maybe, not until after the 2015 NSW State Elections, as the NSW Govt. do not have a mandate to sell CountryLink.

Roscoe: Correct.

RW: I have heard there has been a management change at V/Line?

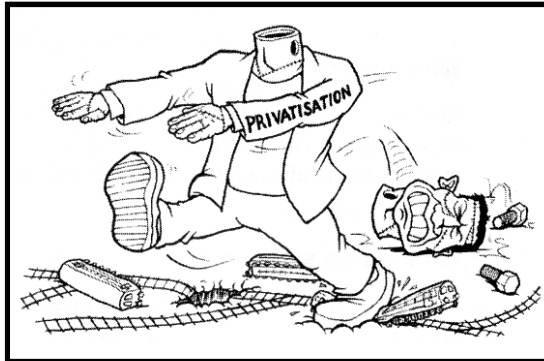
Sheona: The Chief Executive Officer Rob Barnet has resigned.

RW: Why?

Sheona: Yes, he has resigned, as he was told by the CEO of Public Transport Victoria to cut staff.

Clarence: Mr Barnet did bit want to terminate staff, as he has stated V/Line was a family and cutting staff would lower morale.

Sheona: The Government because it wants



to keep a Budget Surplus has ordered job cuts in the Public Service. As V/Line is part of the Government, then cuts have to be made in administration staff. They say there will be no cuts to front line staff.

Rastus and Roscoe: No cuts to frontline staff. They will try to change rosters, so as to reduce the staff by making shifts longer. The cuts should be made in Human Resources. We wonder what they do. In fact over the last seven years, this department has increased at the expense of station staff.

RW: It is obvious V/Line is not going to be privatised before the next State Election, but there are to be job cuts. These must be resisted.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, Privatisation is asset stripping by the Government for their mates in the Private Sector.

As for those employees who are card carrying members of the Liberal Party, get to your branches meeting and oppose any further privatisations. Finally, if you hear of any employee supporting Privatisation, EXPOSE THEM.

WORKERS' CONTROL IN GREECE!

Occupied Greek Factory
Begins Production Under
Workers' Control Monday,
February 11, 2013

Occupy, Resist, Produce!

"We see this as the only future for worker's struggles."

By Makis Anagnostou, Vio.Me workers' union spokesman

Tuesday, February 12, 2013 is the official first day of production under workers control in the factory of Viomichaniki Metalleutiki (Vio.Me) in Thessaloniki, Greece. This means production organized without bosses and hierarchy, and instead planned with directly democratic assemblies of the workers. The workers assemblies have declared an end to unequal division of resources, and will have equal and fair remuneration, decided collectively. The factory produces building materials, and they have declared that they plan to move towards a production of these goods that is not harmful for the environment, and in a way that is not toxic or damaging.

"With unemployment climbing to 30% – sick and tired of big words, promises and

more taxes – not having been paid since May 2011, the workers of Vio.Me, by decision of the general assembly of the union declare their determination not to fall prey to a condition of perpetual unemployment, but instead to take the factory in their own hands to operate themselves. It



is now time for worker's control of Vio.Me.!" (Statement of the Open Solidarity Initiative, written together with the workers of Vio.Me – full statement: Viome.org)

Workers in Vio.Me stopped being paid in May of 2011, and subsequently the owners and managers abandoned the factory. After a series of assemblies the workers decided that together they would run the factory. Since then, they have occupied

and defended the factory and the machinery needed for production. They have continued to reach out to other workers and communities throughout Greece, receiving tremendous support. The solidarity and support of all of these groups, communities and individuals, has made an important contribution towards the survival of the workers and their families thus far.

This experience of worker's occupation to workers recovery and control is not new –

either historically or currently. Since 2001 there are close to 300 workplaces that are run democratically by workers in Argentina, ranging from health clinics and newspapers and schools, to metal factories, print shops and a hotel. The experience there has shown that workers together cannot only run their own workplace, but can do it better. The example of Argentina has spread throughout the Americas, and now to Europe and the US. In Chicago, workers of New

World Windows have begun production under workers control after years of struggles with former owners and bosses. And now in Greece, workers are again showing that the way forward – out of unemployment – refusing the crisis – is workers control and directly democratic self-management.

"We urge all workers, the unemployed and all those who are affected by the crisis to stand by the workers of Vio.Me and

support them in their effort to put in practice the belief that workers can make it without bosses! To participate in the struggle and organize their own fights within their work places, with directly democratic procedures and without bureaucrats.” (Union’s website: biom-metal.blogspot.gr)

As with all factory recuperations, the question of initial financing is central. While solidarity has been able to maintain the lives of the workers of Vio.Me and

their families, the capital needed to continue production is huge. The workers’ union has a business plan that is sustainable, but will take time to get off the ground. These first months are crucial. Financial help can make all the difference. Any contribution is helpful.

Direct financial support can be sent to the Vio.Me workers’ union in Thessaloniki through the International Solidarity Website: viome.org

Solidarity Statements as well as questions can be sent to: protbiometal@gmail.com

Signed,

Thessaloniki Solidarity Initiative, Brendan Martin (Working World), Dario Azzellini and Marina Sitrin

<http://blog.occupiedlondon.org/2013/...rkers-control/>

BRITAIN TODAY

IF YOU EXPLOIT US, WE WILL SHUT YOU DOWN!

Resistance to Workfare Continues

Edinburgh

Protestors blockaded and occupied both British Heart Foundation and Superdrug in Edinburgh on 8th December 2012, in opposition to their participation in the government’s workfare schemes. — A huge banner declaring “If You Exploit Us We Will Shut You Down” blocked the entrance to the BHF furniture store in Leith’s Kirkgate centre as demonstrators occupied the shop.

Impromptu speeches were given inside and out, explaining that although BHF had claimed to be “moving away” from workfare, they were still taking on new compulsory placements.

After half an hour inside BHF, protestors moved round the corner to blockade Superdrug. Many stopped to listen to spokespeople for the protest who gave speeches through a megaphone, stressing that this action was part of the wider resistance to the attacks by the rich on the poor. Hundreds took leaflets denouncing workfare and in particular the new imposition of workfare on the sick and disabled. Many people came up to the stall outside the occupied stores and joined ECAP’s solidarity network for mutual support against the authorities.

Demonstrators then moved inside Superdrug, where a protestor gave a speech explaining that this action was against workfare and in solidarity with Superdrug workers whose wages and conditions were being undermined by the company’s use of workfare. In Brighton Superdrug are not taking on Xmas staff but are using workfare conscripts instead. Although the police and the Kirkgate’s security guards were present they did not attempt to stop the occupations.

The demo, part of Boycott Workfare’s Britain-wide week of action, was organised by Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty and supported by Greater Leith Against the Cuts. The protest, around 40-strong, was considered a real success by participants. Hopefully British Heart Foundation will now realise that they must withdraw completely from workfare or suffer continued disruption, and the anti-workfare movement will grow and spread to effectively challenge all users of forced unpaid labour.

Glasgow

On Saturday 8th December 2012

The extra people on workfare means less holiday pay for the regular staff. There was a lot of police about and Superdrug had hired extra security for the day. However the combination of the picket, the leaflet saying, ‘Don’t Shop At Superdrug’ and the added security costs meant we succeeded in our objective of costing Superdrug money for using Workfare.

The Superdrug distortions – ‘Work Experience’ is not voluntary in practice. Job Centre Plus and third party workfare profiteers like A4E bully benefit claimants on to the scheme. Benefit claimants can have their benefits cut if they do not continue to



Clydeside IWW, the Crutch Collective, Glasgow Anarchist Federation, Glasgow Solidarity Federation, the Right To Work Campaign and other individuals leafleted a branch of Superdrug in one of the city centre’s busiest streets. The one thousand leaflets given out highlighted Superdrug taking on even more people on the Government’s ‘Work Experience’ workfare scheme for the Christmas period. Apparently someone also left placards saying ‘Superdrug + Unpaid Work = Superdrugery’ outside their other city centre branch.

‘volunteer’ to stay on the scheme, after they have been on the scheme for a week. Only a tiny number of people on workfare get jobs afterwards.

Thanks to Resistance Bulletin

UNIONS CRACK DOWN

Stories about the government threatening a “crack down” on trade union power emerge almost on a loop. Particularly in times of heightened class antagonism. But

far from showing the unions as threats to society, such threats are a demand that the unions tighten up their role in policing class conflict.

The latest such story comes from the Independent, the main headline of which is a policy to “make strikes illegal unless at least 50 per cent of union members voted in a ballot.” This ties in with government rhetoric about ballot turnout whenever they attempt to discredit industrial action by a major union.

There are a number of reasons for low turnout. The main one is that the law insists upon postal ballots sent to members’ homes as the way to gain a strike mandate. Postal ballots necessarily have a lower turnout than workplace ballots, and other restrictions on promoting industrial action in many workplaces exacerbate this. As do the fact that, in large unions spread across many workplaces, high turnouts from the best organised branches will be offset by low turnouts in less well organised workplaces, or even those which have no reps in them.

However, although this is the measure which always gains headlines, the 50% ballot threshold isn’t the most important. The Indy reports that Whitehall opinion is divided on this measure, with Francis Maude and Vince Cable amongst those who oppose it. They must know as well as the TUC (British ACTU) that this type of restriction risks increasing the amount of wildcat action workers take, the opposite effect to that intended by these threats.

Restricting further the ability of the unions to take action will only lead to a rise in rank-and-file movements willing to act independently. Both the unions and the government have a shared interest in avoiding this. Instead, the aim of the periodic threats of union busting is to get the trade unions to tighten up their role as keepers of industrial peace.

Tellingly, the Indy article says that the government “have established a constructive relationship with the TUC and, despite ideological differences, with Britain’s largest union, Unite.” Not a surprise to most militants, but certainly a frank admission of their role in the class collaboration that defines the representative function of trade unions. On the other hand, “ministers are also examining new steps to crack down on the Public and Commercial Services union, representing civil servants and local government staff, which is regarded as the most militant in Britain.”

As a member of PCS (British Public Service Union), I’ll be the first to argue that it is far from a militant union. I’ve detailed before its role in selling out disputes, as well as how reductive it has been in “leading from the front” as far as the coordinated action over pensions was concerned.

Despite this, it finds itself in the firing line because of the Cabinet Office’s determination to attack the jobs, pay and working conditions of civil servants. Being to the left (for what little that’s worth) of the mainstream trade union spectrum it will not be as quick as, say, Unison to stitch up its membership on these issues. Moreover, trading as it does on its role as the “fighting left leadership” of the union movement, it is far more sensitive than many other unions to rank-and-file pressures – as I’ve detailed before. All of which, despite it not being very militant at all, makes PCS far



too militant for the government’s liking. That is why, whilst the 50% ballot threshold is unlikely to be implemented, other measures here should be taken seriously. The Cabinet Office is already imposing serious restrictions on trade union facility time within the civil service, removing it for attending union conferences or meetings concerned with “internal union business,” but also – more worryingly – even for reps consulting each other on how best to deal with personal cases. Now, it is further talking about “scrapping the arrangement where membership subs are paid direct through the Whitehall payroll.”

The recent history of the trade union movement in response to such attacks – going back to the TUC’s collaboration

with Thatcher’s anti-strike laws – suggests that they will take such attacks lying down. And for good reason, as a May 2012 article for Black Flag details:

Chilli Sauce wrote:

Unions officials are expected to be ‘responsible leaders’. This includes ensuring workers ‘stick to their half of the bargain’, follow the union-negotiated collective agreement, and stay within the bounds of labour legislation. If they fail to do these things, the leaders’ privileged role (which, on the national level, includes six-figure salaries) as ‘representatives of organized labour’ is compromised. Union assets will be frozen, leaders could be jailed, and the bosses—with whom the ‘social partnership’ has been struck—will have no incentive to continue to recognize or negotiate with the union.

When workers ask, “why don’t the unions fight this?” The answer is that it isn’t worth their jobs and their positions. The government knows that – “capital and government are very aware the division between the union officialdom and the rank-and-file.” Thus, all the union tops can do is meekly protest the attacks, hoping that things don’t get worse again.

For PCS in particular, the threat to remove payroll subs collection is a very serious one. The union is losing members thanks to the contraction of the civil service, and it has already started to impose its own austerity measures internally – cutting the length of annual conference, scrapping certain equality events and even shedding jobs – to save money. Several years of heavy campaigning have also left it heavily in the red, making this situation more dire.

From this point then, there are two options: do as the government asks and police class conflict more tightly, or go on the offensive. The latter is suicide for PCS as a representative structure, so it really only becomes one option.

For the rank-and-file of the union, our choice is slightly different: accept this reigning in with a grumble, or launch the offensive that the union refuses to, against the union itself where necessary. This is already happening to some extent with the Civil Service Rank & File Network. Numbering in the tens, we have forced a substantial movement from the union bureaucracy. Numbering in the hundreds or thousands, we could not only continue

to do that but raise the question of how we ultimately go beyond PCS and render the representative structure completely irrelevant in favour of direct action.

But this issue is not confined to PCS and the civil service. Already, the Tax Payers Alliance is demanding that similar measures are implemented in the rest of the public sector. No doubt taking on the heart

of trade union strength in the public sector will also embolden other employers with recognition agreements to impose similar restrictions and employers whose staff are making their first organising efforts to be even more ruthless in cracking down.

The so-called war on the unions then poses an ultimatum all of us. If the government smashes the unions entirely, or if they are

able to preserve themselves, in both cases it will be at our expense. Instead, we need to organise on the ground, win the arguments for acting independently and seize direct control of our own struggles.

Thanks to Phil's Blog

SELF-MANAGEMENT IN EGYPT

A reality unprecedented is taking place in the city of Port Said: a complete self-management, a rejection of everything that represents authority. A fact that the protagonists of the struggle of the Egyptian right now - the workers - are trying to play in other cities.

Port Said has become a place completely in the hands of the people. At the entrance of the city, in the past there were many po-

protesters, but also because the Government officials were convinced that Port Said would have required massive Government intervention to quell the likely riots. Instead, the reality is very different and shows that a city without the "law enforcement" is safer and better lives.

Then there is a tacit agreement that allows the army (mostly respected by the people

The factories are closed, marine traffic is blocked, it produces only what you need and stays open only to provide the necessary services. It makes the bread (pictured at right, a shop selling bread at low prices, the signals indicate the reasons for the protest), the food, hospitals and pharmacies remain open. In every factory, the workers decide whether to continue production or not and the answer is NO generally now. Before justice, before completion of the revolution and, if anything, it will then restart production.

A new form of self-organization is being tested in schools. These remain open but the same families of Port Said people refuse to send their children to government schools. In these hours teachers and the popular committee is trying to organize popular schools in the central square, renamed Tahrir Square in Port Said, where, in addition to academic subjects, they want to teach social justice and the values ??of the Egyptian revolution.

A reality that may seem impossible.

After the death of the 21 defendants for the killings in the stadium, a new popular consciousness has arisen in this city, in the past, probably very conservative. In fact, to be condemned were 21 young people, mostly students, while the blame for the massacre must be sought in the political sphere, the judgment appears to have been a sop given to those seeking justice. None of the defendants came from the ranks of the police or of the state and its secret services. Port Said has understood this and as soon as the death sentences were handed down, protests broke out that led to the killing of forty protesters. Some of them even at the funeral of the victims of the riots. From here began the general strike and civil disobedience.

A reality that we ourselves, never imagined.

Anger, initially born from a desire for justice for the death penalty and for the next 40 victims, but then grew and became political. The strong militancy of workers and the growth of awareness of the population of Port Said have made this unprece-



lice checkpoints, now there is a check-point format, however, by the people, especially striking workers, self-proclaimed "People's Police". The same is true for traffic: no more police, but young people, students and workers who control urban traffic.

As for the factor "security", with self-management, the streets are now safer than ever. The police - following the protests, the popular anger that followed the 21 death sentences related to the massacre in Port Said and the 40 victims of the subsequent clashes - last week was forced to agree to leave the city in the hands of the people.

The government has agreed to remove the police due to the irrefutable video evidence showing police shooting and killing

and traditionally less tied to the regime than the police) to preside over key points of the city, but no power to intervene.

So the reality is this: unarmed military to guard places such as the court and the important port (now on strike) and the "People's Police" in charge of security in the city.

The rejection of everything that represents authority is in practice not to pay government taxes and bills, even rejecting any communication with the central and local governments.

The closure of the central government and the self-organization of means and modes of production, make the experience of Port Said a reality and an unprecedented trial of a new way of life, to produce, to exist.

dented protest a fight that both shakes the regime . A fight that, if implemented in other cities, could really bring the regime to its knees.

On Monday a large demonstration was held in the streets of Port Said: independent unions of workers, students, took to the streets with many who departed from Cairo to express solidarity to the workers and to the city of Port Said in the fight. A great procession took to the streets of the city, appealing for a general strike across the country.

Meanwhile, other Egyptian cities have in recent weeks experienced major strikes : in Mahalla, Mansoura, Suez workers in many factories went on strike for weeks.

Similarly hundreds took to the streets to invoke a general strike across the country, many schools and universities have now announced a general strike.

It is unknown how this experience, called “the Egyptian city of Paris,” will continue. Surely it is difficult to carry on a fight like this at a time when the central government might disconnect water and electricity and, for now, if not, it’s only because it fears more explosions of anger amongst the population. In addition, the continuation or not of the workers’ strikes, is strongly linked to the possibility that this will generalize and reproduce in other cities.

Initially, the residents of Port Said had announced plans to continue the strike until 9th March. Its continuation will be dependent on the leadership of workers. The future is uncertain, but certainly full of potential.

The difficulties at the time may seem a lot, but the awareness of all the people (not only workers), the practice of refusal of the regime, the self-organization, are all elements that seem to give the positive outlook in these struggles.

Thanks to A-Infos

Ireland Today

STAFF at a Tesco warehouse have to wear digital arm-band devices that constantly monitor their performance. Workers at the distribution centre in Donabate in Dublin claim they got lower scores on the rating system if they keyed in that they went to the toilet or took a break.

Tesco said there was a ‘break’ function on the devices that was used to log stoppages, but denied it had any impact on productivity scores. Known as arm-mounted terminals (AMTs), workers said that the Motorola devices were used to monitor the performance of ‘order pickers’, who load supplies, and forklift drivers. They are not used by managers, administrative workers or security staff.

They said the device instructs employees how to pick their orders by scanning barcodes and stacking goods on a trolley. It also has an in-built performance monitor, which grades them every time they collect goods in the warehouse and bring them to a dispatch area. They said they got percentage scores for collection assignments, like loading beer or toilet rolls. The devices give a set amount of time for a task, such as 20 minutes to load packets of soft drinks. If they did it in 20 minutes, they would get

100pc, but would get 200pc if they were twice as fast. One former picker, who did not want to be named, said staff were under huge pressure due to the de-

vices, which are like Game Boys strapped to their wrists.

He said many of his colleagues were eastern Europeans, whose language skills



were not good enough to get jobs in the services industry. The worker said he got “surprisingly lower” scores if he took a break or went to the toilet. He said lunch break was not counted in the scores. Sometimes, management would call staff to an office and tell them they had to do better if their scores were low.

“I had really easy assignments and when I’d come back after a break, I would get a horrendous score and wonder why,” he said. “One manager said to me that it was due to the breaks.

“You might get 80pc because you took a break, and would have to get 120pc later on to make it up. Some guys were amazing and got averages of 110pc all the time.

Sweating

“The guys who made the scores were sweating buckets and throwing stuff around the place.”

Tesco said the distribution centre at Donabate uses modern work practices, including the use of arm-mounted terminals. It said the AMTs were a working aid and did not monitor staff on their breaks.

A spokesman said there was a ‘break’ function used to log stoppages for genuine reasons, including going on breaks. “An average of 25 minutes a day has been factored into the system for genuine breaks,” he said. “This has been in place since the system was introduced and means that break times do not impact on productivity scores in any way.”

He said the “paperless order picking system” had been in place for five years and was a feature of any modern warehouse facility. The spokesman said Tesco had an agreement with SIPTU (Irish Union) in relation to work practices.

Thanks to Independent Irish News

Italy’s Rebel ‘Base’ Unionism

A member of the Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici (FdCA) goes over the history of the ‘base unions’ in Italy.

“The unions were born, historically speaking, in the workplace as a result of precise material needs of the working masses who made up its membership and under whose control they operated.”

Since its beginnings, the Italian workers’ movement has expressed two trends: one bureaucratic and tending towards reformist, the other self-organized and tendentially more radical or revolutionary. These two trends have often cohabited within the same mass organization while at other times they have given rise to different organizations. In the first decade of the 20th century, the two trends in fact corresponded to two different labour organizations - the reformist CGdL and the

revolutionary syndicalist USI (a split from the CGdL), while there were also radical unions among the railway and marine workers. Anarchist workers were members of these unions, and even occupied positions of great responsibility within them.

During the famous Biennio Rosso ("Two Red Years"), from 1919 to 1921, which preceded the advent of fascism, Factory Councils were formed in the occupied factories, in which anarchist workers played a determining role. This was the first example in Italy of grassroots labour organizations in the workplace.

The Fascist regime then instituted its own syndicates, within which recent historiography has recognized the role of those ex-USI syndicalists who did not go into exile, but stayed in Italy at the side of the workers. It was certainly a difficult choice given the risk of compromise with the Fascist regime, but it also helped in the survival of "red" ideas which later led to the factory revolts of 1938 and the General Strike of 1943.

In the same year, the attempt on the part of anarchists and radical communists in the newly-liberated South to build the CGL was smothered by the government, the Allies and the parties in the CLN and led to the creation of the CGIL after the war. In this, the anarchist current was so active that it was offered the position of general secretary alongside a communist, a socialist and a catholic. The offer was rejected. But there had already begun a progressive distancing of the Italian anarchist movement from union work and the attempt at re-constituting the USI failed.

The CGIL then suffered two splits: the catholic area left in order to create today's CISL which then itself split, when the non-religious social-democratic part withdrew to create today's UIL. Only the communist and socialist areas remained within the CGIL.

The reformist drive which affected the country from the mid '60s to the early '70s was responsible for a rebirth of the Factory Councils with different structural characteristics to those of the '20s, but basically establishing themselves as organs of autonomous self-organized workers' power. The first grassroots labour collectives known as cub ("comitati unitari di base," or unitary grassroots committees) were also founded throughout the country. This corresponded to the emergence of political formations to the left of the PCI and of a radical syndicalist left within the CGIL.

During this decade, the confederal unions, CGIL-CISL-UIL, were able to re-absorb and defuse the autonomy of the Factory Councils, but the grassroots, self-organized syndicalist option had by that stage reached the point of becoming

ingrained on the collective union memory, thanks to its forms and content. This is the climate in which the category of "syndical base" was born, an area which is opposed to the bureaucracy of management and fed by the ethos and experiences of struggle and organization from below and which pervaded Italy throughout the '70s. In the anarchist movement, only the young anarchist communist organizations understood what was happening and they created national structures for the coordination of anarchist workers.

Many militants entered the confederal unions, which they considered mass organizations where it was possible to meet large numbers of workers and where, through a process of direct democracy, they could work from a grassroots level towards the defence of the immediate interests of the class and for the historical interests of the proletariat.

The economic crisis of the late '70s and the pincer effect on the mass struggle created by political terrorism and State repression opened the doors to the labour defeats of the early '80s, together with an abandonment of reformist policies by the confederal unions. In 1984, the movement of the "self-convening factory councils" tried to revive the expectations of the "syndical base" regarding questions such as the autonomy of workplace councils and wages which, thanks to the CGIL's strategy, had lost their characteristic of "independent variable" in the productive cycle. It was the last attempt within the factories to rebel against the cruel destiny which over 15 years had transformed the Councils from autonomous agents in the class struggle into cogs in the machine of the unions. The structural changes in the productive cycle were by that stage taking place against the backdrop of a weakening of workers' organizations in the factories, in tune with the political choices of the union bureaucracies outside the factories.

In fact, it was in the state sector, which had avoided the structural changes affecting the factories, that the struggle from below was to take off again: there had already been skirmishes in the areas of transport, health and education in the late '70s, but 1986 was to see the explosion of the COBAS in the schools and railway sectors. Their principal demands were large pay increases for everyone, an end to wage incentives, permanent contracts for those on temporary contracts and union rights for all workers. As these demands were in direct contrast to those of the confederal unions, the latter were seen as a counterpart to the COBAS movement. The "syndical base" awoke again, this time in sectors which were not a traditional part of the council tradition, to shake up the union bureaucracies or try new methods. Soon,

in fact, the widescale disagreement among train drivers with the confederal unions' policies led to the creation of a strong new union, the COMU.

The COBAS in the schools created for themselves an organization of school delegates, later provincial delegates who participated in the national assembly. Being a mass movement, they included tens of thousands of teachers who were already members of unions, and some who weren't. Also in the schools, the confederal unions were unable to re-absorb the COBAS who, however, quickly became bogged down in sterile debate about whether or not to remain as a mass movement or to set themselves up as a new union in the sector, something which led to them almost disappearing altogether from the scene.

In 1988, we wrote:

"Both as a result of the pulverization of labour structures (in schools as in the railways) and due to the absence of alternative proposals, the problematic re-growth of models such as councilism has forced the movements into an exasperated "assemblyism" which only serves to favour political rather than direct representation [...]. So while recent phases of the social conflicts have seen a renewed need for the direct involvement of large sectors of employed workers - which could be described as a strong drive towards the self-management of the struggle - there has also been a notable absence of an organizational model which would be able to respond satisfactorily to the formation of organisms which can effectively and definitively break with the bureaucratic and institutionalised syndicalism of the confederal unions." 2

But by this stage, the banks had burst. The first anti-strike laws directed against the cobas were approved with the okay of the confederal unions and served to deepen the divide. In 1991 there was the first nationwide strike called by the various cobas groups from different categories against the Gulf War. COBAS was no longer a single grassroots organization or mass movement, but had become synonymous with a plethora of small union organizations. This was the moment of the birth of "base syndicalism, or grassroots syndicalism, as distinct from confederal syndicalism. It was a galaxy, composed for the main part of advanced political militants active in the world of labor, but was potentially capable of attracting large radical sectors of the class. During the first great financial crisis following the war, the CGIL-CISL-UIL trio were forced into partnership with the government and the bosses and in the autumn of 1993 there were violently vociferous protests in the streets against their leaders. The war on union representation was now declared

and the agreements signed by these three unions, by which they managed to obtain an exclusive on the right to represent the workers, seemed like a bad joke.

1995-2001

These were the years of centre-left government when we witnessed the absolute submission and complicity of the confederal unions. The CGIL, above all, stands accused of throwing open the doors of Italy to neo-liberalism by supporting and facilitating the bosses and the centre-left governments without criticism, with the introduction of reforms and contracts which only served to worsen the workers' conditions. The dissention which was widely expressed in all areas served to strengthen the "base unions" at a local level, or within certain categories, but there remained a weakness regarding global representation of the collective class interests. In recompense, the cobas also spread to the factories - right to the heart of the CGIL's union power!! However, the politico-syndicalist class which was at the root of the various grassroots syndicalist organizations had come from different ideological backgrounds and political choices, and soon this resulted in competition between the base unions, each trying to assert their hegemony within a certain sector or among the few thousand workers that they represented. There were various futile consultation pacts, there were cartels which at times included all but at other times excluded this one or that one; the CGIL (which supported the war in Kosovo) was systematically demonized, but there was never any strategy of dialogue with its members or with its internal opposition. Grassroots syndicalism set itself up as an alternative to a CGIL which was no longer viable, not even for reformism, but in the cobas galaxy everyone felt they were an alternative to everyone else or imagined themselves to be a possible pole of reference for the others. These were the years when the opportunity was lost to make a great step forward through a federative pact between the various organizations.

The Grassroots Syndicalist Organizations

USI: Revived in 1978, it reached a certain consistency in the '90s, before it split into two (following disagreement on union practices), with a more syndicalist, open wing and the more orthodox, ideological wing. The split was later sanctioned by the IWA (AIT). USI-AIT today claims a historical legitimacy as a revolutionary, anarcho-syndicalist union, which is lost to the collective memory, and seems to attract workers who have already made a political choice towards anarchism or libertarianism. It considers its anti-war activities to be central. The other USI, ex-

cluded from the IWA, is limited more or less to the city of Rome where it is quite active through its policy of labour forums. Both organizations lay claim to the name USI.

CIB Unicobas: This union was born from the cobas movement in the schools in 1991 and describes itself as an independent, libertarian union, something which has been responsible for an appreciable growth over recent years, particularly in the schools sector. It makes no ideological claims and has a horizontal organizational structure. Having been, in the early '90s, a driving force for the aggregation of base unions, it is now going through a phase of self-isolation due to differences with other base unions who tend to exclude it. It is part of the SIL network and, together with



CGT-Spain, SUD-France and SUD-Switzerland it is working towards the creation of a European federation of alternative unions, the FESAL.

Confederazione COBAS: This is the Cobas that is most commonly seen in demonstrations and on TV, despite it only formally becoming a union quite recently. It is descended from the remains of the school cobas groups of the '80s and is still strongest in this area. It presents itself as a political, syndicalist and cultural entity, which makes it seem something of a party-union-cultural association. This, in fact, leads one to suppose that its members share not only a common labor strategy, but also a political and ideological line. This characteristic together with its tendency to want to devour all around it, was mainly responsible for the failure of the policy of trying to get "all the cobas into one single union". It enjoys great political and media support among the Italian communist left wing, which also serves to make it much more visible than the other base unions, but also much more susceptible to the general political choices of parties such as Rifondazione Comunista or structures like the Social Forums, one of whose greatest exponents is in fact the Confederazione COBAS leader.

CUB: Federated with the RdB (which is strong in the civil service), the CUB is the largest grassroots confederation in Italy, with unions in several different categories.

It grew out of a split in the machinists' sector of the CISL. It has been able to reach the requisites which enable it to enjoy national representativity, something which has permitted it to participate in talks for national work contracts, while placing itself firmly as an alternative to the CIGL-CISL-UIL trio. It has a vertical organizational structure, with paid officers and services for workers. It employs a distinct syndicalist line, with no apparent ideological interference.

SLAI COBAS: This union exists above all within certain large industrial plants where it practices highly radical policies and is able to win votes and seats in the union representation elections in the workplace. It is strongly biased towards the communist left-wing, but autonomously with respect to the parliamentary left, which was to result in a split which led to the birth of the S.in.Cobas. Its original statute foresees a horizontal structure.

S.in.Cobas: A split from the SLAI guided by Rifondazione Comunista. It is active above all in certain factories and in local administration, thanks also to its parliamentary connections.

Other base unions are active only within certain categories, for example the Or.S.A. and SULT in the transport sector and SNaTeR in telecommunications. All the so-called base unions, with the possible exception of the USI, found themselves effectively forced to present candidates at the union elections in the workplace, with some even obtaining excellent results. However, there is unfortunately no data available to allow us to establish if the base union delegates have been able to practice a proper relationship between delegate and workers, as one would expect of anti-bureaucratic syndicalists, in respecting the mandates they have received from their workmates who have elected them.

2001-2003

The victory of Berlusconi and his right-wing government in the elections has, for now at least, forced the CGIL into taking on again a more combative role, given that its existence and legitimacy as Italy's biggest union is at stake. The return to militancy of the CGIL, with all the weight of its organization - 5 million members - has clearly placed a shadow over the grassroots unions who now seem to be more concerned with distancing themselves from the CGIL than with looking to build a vast mass movement against the government. This was dramatically seen on the occasion of recent strikes this autumn against the destruction of state pensions, with the aggravating factor of the appearance of further divisions between the various base unions.

The Anarchist Communist Strategy

As we have seen:

- class unity has been broken on many occasions;

- representation of the class is today in the hands of a whole series of unions each claiming the title of mass workers' organization, be it on the level of institution or at grassroots level:

- the capacity of the proletariat to organize itself in Councils seems to have exhausted itself with the changes in the organization of labour or else been absorbed by the union bureaucracies; it is perhaps emerging again today as a mutant, providing the spark for countless protests against the confederal unions' line and nursing the alternative and grassroots unions.

But what about us? For us, mass organizations are the product of the capacity of the working class to organize its strength in the clash with capital in any given historical and socio-economic context irrespective of sex, religion, geographical origin or ideology. Consequently, the unity of the mass organization comes from the ability of its objectives and its struggles to defend the immediate (and historical) interests of the proletariat to be widely shared. Its revolutionary force comes not only and not so much from the maximalism of its demands or from the harshness of the struggle, but from its capacity to function according to a libertarian method of decision-making and responsibility. These two characteristics of the mass organization place the anarchist communists in a situation of continual confrontation with the authoritarian currents, who - both as far as objectives and struggles are concerned (the reformists and the trade unionists) and as far as control is concerned (the authoritarian communists) - try to weaken or erase the autonomy of the mass organization. Anarchist communists know only too well that unity and revolutionary strength lie in practices (struggles and organization) and statutes. It is for this reason that we reject the conception of a mass organization founded on spontaneism and on ideologism. The former deprives the class of the possibility to establish an organization over time and over wide areas while the latter bases its unity on a shared ideology, thereby separating the workers and breaking that unity which is the basis of the defence of class interests.

We therefore believe that if a mass organization declares itself to be anarcho-syndicalist, if it is composed only of anarchists and is based on a shared anarchist ideology, it falls within the conception of ideologism. It is of course a different matter if it is anarcho-syndicalism that characterizes the forms of struggle and the internal structure of the mass organization or its representatives, that is to say if

anarcho-syndicalism is practiced as a tendency/development/result of the unity and the revolutionary strength of the mass organization, and not as a foregoing requirement. An anarcho-syndicalist mass organization is not the most maximalist one, but the one which breaks the pattern of reaching agreements, which creates room for conflict, which seeks advanced, practicable objectives and which uses direct democracy in its bargaining.

The same is true for revolutionary syndicalism. If a revolutionary syndicalist mass organization is just that by reason of its members being ideologically revolutionary, then it does not matter which anti-capitalist ideology they believe in and if revolutionary syndicalism is an a priori component of this mass organization, then we fall back once again into ideologism. The revolutionary level should not be measured by the revolutionary beliefs of the members, by the maximalism of its platform, by the harshness of its forms of struggle. It should refer to the capacity of the mass organization to represent a credible reference point for the workers - revolutionary or otherwise - in the defence of their interests.

Without the history behind it of anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism, Italian grassroots syndicalism remains trapped between the radicalism of its platforms and the need for bargaining, between its criticism of bureaucratism and the inevitable formation of a leadership class - but always providing each tiny union survives.

We anarchist communists place ourselves wherever the class consciousness organizes itself in any given historical period, in the forms laid out by the social conflict and the subjectivity of the workers. We do not have any pre-defined boxes nor do we follow any particular form of syndicalism: the FORA in Argentina and the Spanish CNT, the IWW and the USI from the '10s to the '20s - can all provide useful teachings, as can the French Labour Exchanges, the anarchist elements of the Italian CGdL in the '10s and '20s and the CGIL in the fifties.

However, over and above the defined mass organizations, we must carefully watch the forms of self-organization of the working class in the workplaces and in the community because that is where the mass organizations are built. There, where anarchist union activists are on the inside of that organized expression of the working class, encouraging its growth. We also observe the evolution of capitalism and the working class answer to it, so that the ideas of the anarchist communists, developed within our specific political organizations,

can become a leadership of ideas in the definition of the objectives and forms of struggle within the mass organization or organization in which they are members.

This is what unites us as anarchist communists. This is what unites me with other members of my organization who are members of a different union than mine. If, instead, we had to do all this from the starting point of the union we were members of or through a particular form of syndicalism, we might perhaps be reduced only to being a limited coordinating group of union activists seeking to protect our own little union.

We choose the workers over any particular union. We choose the unity of the workers over any particular union. We support the struggles of the workers for the defence of their interests, irrespective of the form or union involved or of the type of syndicalism involved, provided it can lead to an improvement in the living conditions of the proletariat, and to the creation of freer spaces within society. And if, in these struggles and/or unions, we are able to bring our ideas, to influence through our ideas, we will have contributed to strengthening the autonomy of the workers and promoting the role of class-struggle anarchism. In other words, we will have engaged in real revolutionary syndicalism, real anarcho-syndicalism, real libertarian syndicalism, real... syndicalism.

It is the material situation of labour which determines the organizational possibilities of one union over another, rather than our revolutionary wishes. It is the actual condition of the relationships of power which widen the possibilities of radical syndicalism with a libertarian praxis, rather than our simply being anarchists.

We are materialists, after all, aren't we? Well then, let the advanced elements and sectors of the working class who are part of the internal opposition in the CGIL or in the many alternative unions be seen as an objective fact. Whether we like it or not. A strategy can be built on what is possible and not only on what is right. But radical syndicalism based on a libertarian praxis cannot be achieved with the following three elements:

- autonomy from party and political domination;

- unity of the workers, reached through the definition of a general platform of radical syndicalism wherever and however it appears; unity of objectives and methods of struggle;

- revolutionary strength, through libertarian praxis in the internal organization of whatever type of union; this applies equally both when developing the general platform and during the phase of bargaining.

The Syndicalist Tactics of Anarchist Communists

The highest level of exploitation and confrontation is found in the workplace and in the various sectors: this is where we need to rebuild the unity of interests between workers with different types of work contract and take back the right of decentralized bargaining, safeguard the right to health, manage working hours in order to be able to manage our lives, separate wages from productivity and reject the blackmail of overtime. Coordinating groups composed of rsu delegates from the various sectors, workers on permanent contracts and temporary contracts and migrants could represent sound forms of co-operation, unity and struggle.

Within the community, it is the task of anarchist communists to build spaces and situations where we can promote relationships and develop syndicalist theory irrespective of union or party membership. This is where we can see the richness of the various union experiences, of self-managed organizations and unions, of those activists who pursue certain struggles (both partial and more general) upon which we can federate the workers from different unions. Chambers of Labor connecting the various unions, popular labor forums, regional co-ordinating groups of grassroots unions - these can all be places where we can work towards the effective defence of the class interests of all workers and migrants.

On a national level, it falls to anarchist union activists to ensure that it is possible to federate class sectors, union activists and the various grassroots unions on a platform within unavailable objectives and principles regarding wages, work hours, rights, services and union democracy.

It was for this reason that the FdCA launched an Appeal to Anarchist and Libertarian Union Activists in 2001, irrespective of the union they were members of, which sought to co-ordinate their action (with full regard for the libertarian praxis of free agreement), and to "[...] enable the general union action in the wider struggle to become more efficient, to rebuild the unity of workers, to re-establish class solidarity, to regain union democracy and autonomy with the aim of a more egalitarian, more libertarian society" (from the "Appeal to Anarchist and Libertarian Union Activists", FdCA 2001).

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Index of Acronyms:

- COBAS: COmitato di BASe (Base Committee)
- CGdL: Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (General Labour Confederation)
- USI: Unione Sindacale Italiana (Italian Syndical Union)
- CGL: Confederazione Generale Lavoratori (General Confederation of Workers)
- CLN: Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (National Liberation Committee)

- CGIL: Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (General Italian Confederation of Labour)
- CISL: Confederazione Italiana Sindacale dei Lavoratori (Italian Syndical Workers' Confederation)
- UIL: Unione Italiana Lavoratori (Italian Union of Workers)
- COMU: COordinamento Macchinisti Uniti (Co-ordination of United Engine Drivers)
- CIB UNICOBAS: Confederazione Italiana di Base UNICobas (Italian Base Confederation Unicobas)
- CUB: Confederazione Unitaria di Base (Unitary Base Confederation)
- RdB: Rappresentanze Sindacali di Base (Base Syndical Representation)
- SLAI Cobas: Sindacato Lavoratori Auto-organizzato Intercategoriale (Self-organized Inter-category Syndicate of Workers)
- S.in.Cobas: Sindacato Intercategoriale Cobas (Inter-category Syndicate)
- FULT: Federazione Unitaria Lavoratori Trasporti (Unitary Federation of Transport Workers)
- SNATER: Sindacato Nazionale Telecomunicazioni (National Telecommunications Syndicate)

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Special thanks to Nestor McNab (FdCA) for the English translation of this essay.

Book Review Corner

Carlo Cafiero, Revolution (Black Cat Press, 2012)

Until now only in Volume One of Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, by Robert Graham, English readers interested in anarchist ideas and the movement were able to read some of Carlo Cafiero's thoughts on fundamental issues such as anarchism, communism and anarchist organisation.

This is because the editor of Volume I had included excerpts from Carlo Cafiero's 1880 speech to the Jura Federation in Switzerland. Where he made the case for anarchist communism. He later expanded this historical speech into a lengthy essay under the title "Revolution".

This essay has recently been translated by Nestor McNab and published by Black Cat Press from Canada - which gives us another significant document of the an-

archist movement in its early years. (The other very significant and extremely interesting documents are the three so far published

Volumes of Nestor Makhno's Memoirs, again for the first time provided to English readers and translated directly from the Russian, which we will hopefully review in the next edition of "Rebel Worker").

Carlo Cafiero's "Revolution" is the first English translation from Italian by Federazzone dei Comunisti Anarchici (FdCA) member, Nestor McNab.

The book is very well structured. It consists of almost 120 pages. It starts with a Preface by the translator and editor Nestor McNab, where he tells us a little bit about the essay. It follows a very detailed historical introduction by the historian of the Italian working class movement, Pier Carlo Masini. Then the whole document by Cafiero, which covers 90% of the length of the book. "Revolution" consists of Three Chapters with the titles "Revolution in a Natural Law", "Our Revolution" and "Revolutionary Practice" respectively. Then the editor provides a list of

books, articles etc, about Carlo Cafiero and his writings and finally a very lengthy bibliography of Cafiero, which follows in chronological order. Something very useful for researchers.

This historical and very important document represents one of the earliest attempts at compiling a complete theoretical conception of anarchist communism.

Carlo Cafiero was an important figure of the First International, an ally of Mikhail Bakunin and influential in the early Italian socialist movement.

We think it's important to publish a brief excerpt of Cafiero's essay below:

"Anarchy - A World Without Borders: Anarchy and Communism

Our revolutionary ideal is the age-old ideal of all those who refuse to resign themselves to oppression and exploitation; for us, as for our predecessors, it is summed up in two no less ancient terms: Freedom and Equality.

As ancient as human servitude, that is to say as humanity, this ideal has always had a limited, partial application thanks to the efforts of reactionaries, who in every age have hindered the revolution. However,

despite all the past and reactions, it [the ideal] has continued to spread and is about to realize its most complete application in our revolution.

Having learnt from past history, which shows us the endless deceptions practised by the reactionaries of every sort and every age in order to diminish, corrupt and misrepresent the true value of freedom and equality, that is to say of the revolution itself, we have been forewarned and now place alongside the face value of these two oft-counterfeited coins the exact value that they truly have, in order that we may accept them as genuine.

These two precious coins must pay for the eternal redemption of humanity and the transaction will never take place until such times as the true value exactly matches their face value.

Now, we express the true value of freedom and equality with the two terms, Anarchy and Communism.

Consequently, we will not accept as true any freedom that does not correspond exactly, that is not perfectly identical and perfectly equal to anarchy — anything else will be false and mendacious for us; nor will we accept as true equality anything that does not correspond exactly, that is not perfectly identical and perfectly equal to communism — any other purported equality will be false and mendacious for us.

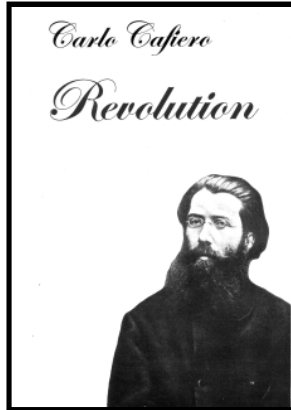
So if freedom for us is anarchy and equality is communism, then our revolutionary formula will be: (Revolution) = (Freedom and Equality) (Anarchy and Communism).

Anarchy and communism, like force and matter, are two terms which should form a single term, since they jointly express a single concept.

The submission of the proletarians, the vast majority of humanity, to the accumulators of the materials and means of labour, a small minority, is the prime cause of all oppression and exploitation, of all inequality, despotism and human brutality. The human community laying claim to the materials and means of labour is a claim for the freedom and equality of all men. But guarding the treasure that has been stolen from us lies the State with all its constituted authorities and its armed might, obstacles that we must throw down if we are to have our goods returned to us. And consequently, while the two terms of our revolution are twins, anarchy is destined to emerge from the womb first, to pave the way for communism."

Carlo Cafiero (1846-1892) was born in Barletta, in the Apulia region of southern Italy. In 1864 he moved to Naples, where he got a degree in law. He then went to

Florence to embark on a diplomatic career. Here, he first came into contact with atheist ideas, through the Rationalist movement. At the beginning of 1870 he was in Paris, as guest of the painter Giuseppe De Nittis, a fellow townsman who described him as a "beautiful young man, fascinating to women". He then went to London, where he matured, renouncing his diplomatic career, wealth and family to join the revolution and socialism. Cafiero made contact with Marx and Engels.



He joined the International Workingmen's Association and was charged with winning Italy over to Marx's ideology, in a country where workers were under the strong influence of the Republicanism of Giuseppe Mazzini or in some places the Anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin. He re-formed the old branch of the International in Naples, with the help of the young Errico

Malatesta. There, during an assembly, he was imprisoned for the first time.

Cafiero spent over a year in Italy as a representative of Marx and Engels to hinder the influence of anarchism. However, thanks to the contact he had had with Giuseppe Fanelli, he passed over to the other side of the barricade, siding with Bakunin and his Italian followers.

In early 1872 came the first issue of the newspaper "La Campana" and Cafiero wrote for it, and gave money towards its publication. In the same year he met Bakunin in Locarno (Switzerland) spending a month with him, discussing Bakunin's ideas and objections to what Bakunin perceived as Marx and Engels' authoritarianism, winning Cafiero in the end to his cause. In the summer of 1873, with the help of Cafiero, an old project was realised: to create an international centre for the revolution in Italy and the world. Cafiero, selling all his inherited lands, bought a farm in Switzerland where Bakunin could live. This centre was called La Baronata, and it would also be a safe shelter for revolutionaries persecuted by their respective governments. In 1875 Cafiero went to Milan and joined the editorial staff of the first socialist daily paper, "La Plebe", edited by Enrico Bignami. In April 1877, Cafiero, Malatesta, Ceccarelli, the Russian Stepiak and 30 other comrades began an insurrection in the province of Benevento. They took the village of Letino without a struggle where they were greeted with great enthusiasm. Arms and expropriated goods were distributed amongst the people, tax money was returned and official documents de-

stroyed. Cafiero, in dialect, explained the ideas of anarchism, freedom, justice and the new society without the State, without masters, servants, soldiers and owners. His proclamations even convinced the parish priest, who explained to his parishioners that the Internationalists were 'the true apostles sent by the Lord'. The following day, the village of Gallo was taken in a similar fashion. Unfortunately, as they were leaving Gallo the Internationalists were surprised and surrounded by government troops and all were arrested. Held in prison for over a year, before being brought to trial, all the accused were eventually acquitted in August 1878.

During his imprisonment, his contacts with the International never ceased and Cafiero wrote his best-known work: A Compendium of Das Kapital, published in 1879 in Milan by the publishers of La Plebe. The work was appreciated and praised even by Marx who found it superior to other similar works. The Compendium was written in order to bring the theory of Capital to students, educated workmen and small proprietors. In 1878, Cafiero, unable to return to Italy because of Giovanni Passannante's assassination attempt on the King, which brought a strong repression against republicans and internationalists, was living in Marseilles. He was working as a cook and a docker. In October, he was arrested along with Malatesta, then released and deported from France. He went to Switzerland, where he met Peter Kropotkin and, with the collaboration of Élisée Reclus, promoted the publication of the Bakunin's essay God and the State. Andrea Costa, who had deserted the anarchist camp by passing over to legalitarian, parliamentary Socialism, disappointed Cafiero who described him as "an apostate, a renegade of the revolutionary faith and the people". After being arrested and soon released, in 1881, Cafiero went to London, where he remained for a long time. There he was the victim of a strange illness which was accompanied by feelings of persecution; he saw spies everywhere and was frightened by the telephone, which had just appeared in the world. In March 1882, he returned to Italy, expressing a will to take part in the imminent electoral campaign. On April 5 he was arrested without any charge but, on May 2, while imprisoned, he fell victim to a strong mental crisis and attempted to kill himself. The scandal of a crazed man, imprisoned without reason, exploded and Cafiero was released, but given a choice of living in Barletta, his home town, or exile to Switzerland.

Emaciated and feverish, he chose exile in Chiasso, where he again attempted suicide. Emilio Bellerio took Cafiero to his house in Locarno and Errico Malatesta wrote about him: "though his mind is ill,

his heart is still healthy...". In February 1883 Cafiero left for Florence, where he was met by a friend. He immediately headed for Fiesole, took rooms in an inn but then immediately fled into the woods, where he was later found half-naked. After being aided by a doctor and the police he was transferred to the San Bonifacio psychiatric hospital in Florence. Olimpia Kutusoff, Cafiero's wife, returned from Russia in September 1883 to look after him at the Imola psychiatric hospital, where he had been transferred. Olimpia left him after one and a half years because Cafiero was violent with her during his moments of crisis. Carlo expressed the will to return to Barletta, where he arrived

in the second half of '89. However, his brothers turned him away but, after living some time in a hotel, he was taken in by his brother Pietrantonio. Cafiero's mental conditions improved, but one day, returning home, he saw a group of peasants eating a piece of black, hard bread which revived his revolutionary spirit and he entered his house screaming against his family. In 1891, following another crisis, Carlo Cafiero was confined in the psychiatric hospital in Nocera Inferiore, where he died on Sunday 17 July 1892 of tuberculosis at the age of 45.

About Cafiero's offering to anarchist thought and movement another great Ital-

ian anarchist theoretician and militant Errico Malatesta, wrote amongst the others, in a letter to Serafino Mazzotti: "Carlo was first of all great, for his inner nature, for this effective treasure, for the ingenuousness of his faith. These memories must not be lost. Even today there is the need to elevate the moral level of anarchists, who must react against the egoism and brutality that invade us, to return to unselfishness, to the sacrificial spirit, to the sentiment of love, of which Carlo was such a splendid example".

Dimitri Troaditis

(MACG, personal capacity)

Deserts, Anonymous, Melbourne 2011

Review article by Graham Purchase

Misanthropism, Biocentrism and Environmental Anti-Humanism:

Misanthropy is derived from the ancient Greek for "hatred" of "mankind". It describes someone who has a generally gloomy view of humanity. It can be compared with pessimism, though misanthropy is more particularly a pessimistic view of humanity.

Misanthropism has recently been appropriated as a slogan by environmental biocentrists, as well as their critics. Extreme biocentric perspectives, see the planet and its life forms as very much more important than humans and their environmentally damaging activities.

Some environmental misanthropes go as far as to welcome the extinction of our species through over-population or famines (neo-malthusianism). For example, the co-founder of Earth!First, Dave Foreman wrote an article in the Australian life-style magazine *Simply Living*, in which he welcomed AIDS as a means of getting rid of humanity in the name of planetary survival. This infamous direct action environmental group which he then represented, has/had a columnist in their American paper writing under the pseudonym of "Miss Ann Thropy" and openly sells a bumper sticker saying "Malthus was right". Foreman's remarks and similar sentiments by like-minded environ-

mental groups sparked a wide debate in the radical environmentalist movement during the 1990's. (For an extensive analysis of the 1990's environmental anarchist debate See my

Anarchism and Environmental Survival, Black Cat Press, Edmonton, Alberta, 2011.)

Pessimistic and Misanthropic Deserts:

These new forms of ecologically inspired misanthropy and anti-humanism attract adherents whom are optimistic that humanity will not survive the anthropocene. With human extinction the planet, although it will have lost much of its former bio-diversity will freely evolve once again. A survivalist variant of this scenario is that a small number of human survivors of social-ecological meltdown will reintegrate with nature by returning to a stone-age mode of existence in the expanding deserts.

Deserts (Anonymous, Melbourne 2011) is a very depressing and highly disturbing anarchist-survivalist rave. *Deserts* portrayal of contemporary anarchism as

an atheist version of a doomsday cult is an extreme, but hardly isolated example of a new low-point in (anarchist) political writing.

Typical of so many post-2001 books *Deserts* begins with an admission of generational and personal disillusionment following the failure of the anti-globalism circus at the turn of the 21st century. Like every other member of this movement or generation the author's "optimism and drunk-like exuberance" has given way to

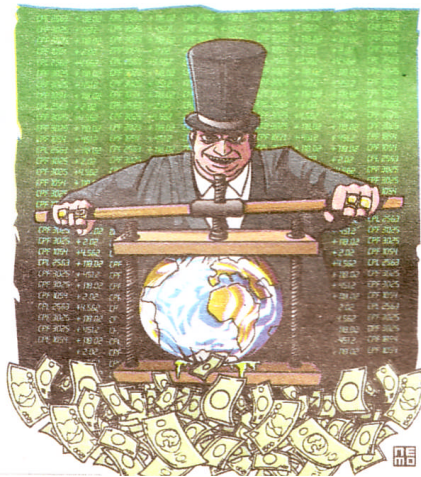
defeatism and pessimism. Moreover, rapid global warming and overpopulation means there is no hope for human civilization. Famine and dislocation will most likely result in mass "human die-off" because "There is No Global Future". Faith in "green goo", solar and hydrogen based energy systems is simply a delusion.

Human nature is fundamentally territorial, hierarchical and exploitative. "Even in the slums...rooms are rented out by established inhabitants to newer arrivals...in an exploitative relationship with even poorer people." (p. 48) The author gloomily prophesizes that "Failed states and Hot wars" will Balkanize the remaining or newly more fertile areas. Using the collapse of the Yugoslavian state as a model the author predicts that after "civilizational dismemberment" a new barbarianism will emerge based upon traditional regionalist nationalist identities and engaged in brutal ethnic conflicts. The warming of the poles will open "new frontiers" created by a "cold rush" for oil, gas and newly habitable lands. Life on the new frontiers will be mostly characterized by "slavery". But as in all frontiers there will exist opportunities for autonomous libertarian countercultural groups at the periphery or margins based upon sexuality, gender, ethnicity etc. The author thinks that such groupings will be transitory, nothing more than "grass between the cracks" awaiting their inevitable destruction by "weed-killer".

Beyond the reach of the neo-barbarians and the brutality of the new frontiers, "Survivors" of the "collapse of agriculture" subsisting in the new desert wildernesses created by global warming will adopt an "autonomous nomadic" lifestyle like that of the "African bushmen of the Kalihari" based upon "foraging and herding".

This appalling Hollywood-like mixture of *Mad Max* and *10,000 Years BC* is somehow associated with anarchism by the author.

See Page 20



NEWS & NOTES

In this edition of RW, we provide coverage of a new radical turn in the "Arab Spring" and in particular, the Egyptian Revolution. With the appearance of a sort of "Port Said" Commune. Where organs of self-management have mushroomed on the industrial and the community levels, replacing state and corporate structures. The mainstream media has of course blacked out completely, this inspiring development. (See article page 11.)

Public Transport in NSW, continues to be a major focus of the State's orchestration of the tempo of the employer offensive. Its latest development has been a move to impose bogus B.M.I. (Body Mass Index) requirements on workers in RailCorp. The ALP Rightwing union hierarchy has of course caved in completely to this attack. It poses a major threat to the jobs of many workers and appears to be aimed at wiping out the older, more industrially experienced layer. The ASN has been assisting militants to fight back against this new onslaught. (See article page 3.)

Another important initiative of the O'Farrell Govt. in NSW, which has been blacked out in the mainstream media in Sydney has been renewed moves to close the Newcastle Rail Line. O'Farrell's developer business mates are heavily behind this push. (See article page 4.)

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

General Secretary

PO Box 106 Kotara 2289 NSW.

Continued From Page 18 tic-survivalis
t-primitivist
f a n t a s i e s
have no place in anarchism which is char-

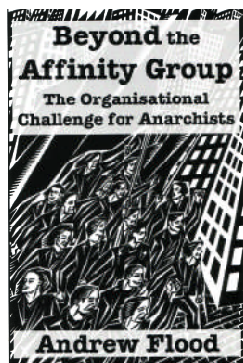
One important back drop and focus of the pamphlet is the anti-globalist movement of the late 1990's and early 21st Century, particularly associated with capitalist summit protests. Another is the fall of the Berlin Wall and the associated collapse of the state socialist bloc and the marginalisation and dissolution of Communist Parties and Trotskyist groups in many countries.

Due to the decentralisation and networks of affinity groups character of the anti-globalist movement, it's been seen as having something to do with anarchism by various commentators. The author fails completely to examine the social base of this movement, particularly amongst students, middle class layers and workers with high levels of autonomy in their jobs and how this explains its forms of action. The author is certainly correct to point out that its largely symbolic actions whilst disruptive of some international capitalist jamborees in the Anglo-European world has been inadequate in facilitating in anyway the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production. The author argues that those identifying themselves as anarchists involved in these networks and no doubt pre-existing groups should merge to form a sort of "anarchist party" on the lines of the "Organisation Platform of the Libertarian Communists". This document was drawn up by Russian exile anarchists in 1926, as a means to more effectively out compete for influence with communist parties in various arenas. Involving adherence to such principles as collective re-

acteristically a utopian dream or futuristic vision of an ecologically sustainable and civilized worker's paradise based upon social justice.

sponsibility and tactical and theoretical unity. In the context of the post Berlin Wall Collapse scenario he sees by this panacea the so called “anarchist movement” can grow to significant numbers. He sees this failing to occur in this period, despite the bankruptcy of rival authoritarian socialist formations.

One problem with this remedy which the author proposes is the legacy of mass Stalinism for 3-4 decades in 20th Century to the left of social democratic formations when anarchist and other ultra left groups



were totally marginalised, particularly in the Anglo world. Consequently, despite Leninist groups of various stripes being marginalised today, there is a hegemony in the Anglo world for the unwholesome ways associated with Stalinism e.g. hostility to freedom of discussion and debate, duplicity, underhandedness, stacking of meetings, etc within many groups which use the anarchist label. The author certainly gives the impression he is oblivious to this important issue. Combined with the above discussed social base of such groups with all their “oppression mongering”, guilt tripping, lack of experience of the class struggle and the nefarious influence of the divisive and irrational “identity politics”, the creation of a large formalised grouping or party will not in any way assist winning the vast majority of the working class and sectors of the middle class and transitional sectors such as students to anarchism.

Rather just another leftist sect or cult will crystallise, providing another micro bureaucracy to massage and fight over by various “swell heads”, an escape from the

alienation of bourgeois society and swept into all manner of issues and campaigns under the sun, like its more orthodox Leninist rivals. It would certainly be unable to conduct the serious long range precision work in strategic sectors which can slow down the employer offensive and turn the tide and facilitate the emergence of large scale organisation on the job and the transitional steps toward establishing mass syndicalist unionism. Subsequently leading to widespread interest in the revolutionary project and interest in anarchism in the working class. (1) The acceleration of the employer offensive, associated with increased privatisation surges, the roll back of the welfare state, increased state and employer surveillance, the intensification of the speed up and waves of work restructuring on the job, etc , which has accompanied the collapse of the Berlin Wall and creates major obstacles to industrial organising is also not focused upon by the author.

In conclusion, the author whilst being serious about finding a remedy for anarchism's marginality in the Anglo world in the post Berlin Wall collapse period, is unable to effectively tackle the issue with the panacea he presents. Whilst, his lack of class struggle experience and research in part explains this inadequacy, another more decisive factor is that he sees the issue through the "prism" of the "Left Subculture". Its associated with the above social layers and enthusiasm for identity politics, oppression mongering and often adopting unconsciously ways of the Stalinist legacy which influence many in today's so called anarchist milieus.

Mark McGuire

(1) See “Anarcho-Syndicalism: Catalyst for Workers’ Self-Organisation, Not Leftist Sect Building” in the archive section of www.rebelworker.org for what this serious long range work could look like.