

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia
Vol.33 No.1 (219) April -May 2014

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

UKRAINE CRISIS STOKES WAR TENSIONS & ULTRA NATIONALIST UPSURGE!



Scene from Recent Putin Russian Government initiated Coup in the Crimea

**THE OPAL CARD & THE NSA; SEND IN THE CLOWNS; NSW RAILWAY NEWS;
STATE TRANSIT NEWS FLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; BLACKLISTING IN
AUSTRALIA; VENEZUELA UPDATE; BRITAIN TODAY; ITALIAN LABOUR NEWS;
UKRAINE CRISIS; BOOK REVIEW CORNER; RW APPEAL; UPRISING IN BOSNIA;
NEWS & NOTES;**

Rebel Worker is the bi-monthly Paper of the A.S.N. for the propagation of anarcho-sindicalism 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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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

AUSTRALIA: \$12 a year

OVERSEAS

\$25 (Aus.) by Air

\$20 (Aus.) by Sea mail

Free to Prisoners

Supporters Subs. \$40 pa

Receives copies of RW & ASN

Pamphlets as published. Send to the above as. Postal Orders only, made out to Rebel Worker.

the rich in this country, at the very expense of the country itself. The old cliché about re-arranging the deck-chairs on the Titanic holds even so true now. When these people talk about freedom of speech and democracy, they really do speak, as someone once said, with corpses in their mouths. It's strange how those who derisively dismiss class-war are those who actively pursue it.

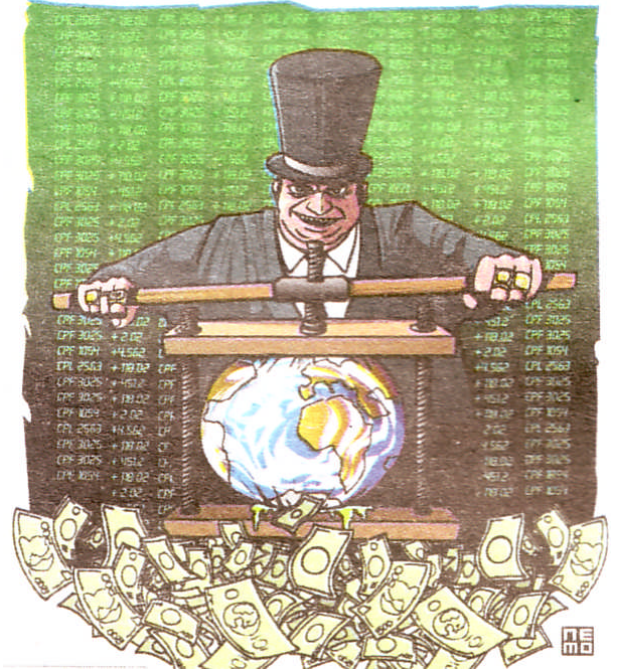
In today's modern world capital has permeated everywhere. Its persuasiveness is so omnipresent that people can't seem to see beyond it anymore. All that exists here, is all that is. It's now revolutionary to even imagine an alternative world. Are we at a stage in this prescribed world, where even having an imagination can be subversive? All power to the imagination may have a more sinister connotation in our epoch that it originally had, if that is all that is left.

Our contemporary existence in this capitalist world is spectacularly fragmented, labelled and ordered into specialised categories, which at first appear informative; yet never communicates with anything, but facts completely emptied of their authenticity. This is journalism today.

Under the control of power, language always designates something other than lived experience. Our freedom is a temporary abstraction in which we are described in the language of power by the roles prescribed for us; with the space of our au-

thentic realisation completely reduced to silence. Power has parasitically interposed itself, as an indispensable mediation between us.

That's exactly what our masters of propaganda would like. But, does anybody really care anymore? Who still believes



what they read in the press or see on T.V.? There are no words left now to describe lived experience; except in a language dedicated to liberating itself from the domination of power. A world free of mediated representations. And there, journalism as we know it, will also finally disappear.

J.D.

Send in the Clowns

It's pretty safe to say that, with a few glaring exceptions, journalists are becoming increasingly the most universally despised life form in Australia (Apart from politicians, police and priests). What's so obvious is their banal predictability.

These court jesters juggle their vile opinions, as if they have discovered something new and vital, slavishly re-adapting, every startling discovery and slick slogan, but it's just the same old ideological crap dressed by the enveloping power of market force economics of modern capitalism. A society that expresses itself in this way must have much to hide. And we know that this one has.

What has become apparent these days, is that one has only to read the initial paragraphs, that some of these hacks produce and the rest will predictably fall into place. Just like the guest list gathered together at that beggars' banquet at the Lodge recently to congratulate themselves on what a fine propaganda job was done to promote the increasing wealth of

REBEL WORKER

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N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

Central News

Standing Orders

There are plans to remove chairs from barriers so that staff attending to ticket barriers have to stand for up to 4 hours. Not a problem you may think? It has been relayed to me that one manager has said that if a staff member can't stand for 4 hours then they "are not fit for duty".

This crazy proposition is part of the new Customer Service regime that pervades Sydney Trains these days. The new extreme regime management believes that customers will have a better perception of the organisation if staff greet them standing.

Do customers really want or need this? Will we be bowing next?

When I visit the doctor, solicitor or almost any professional person they are sitting behind a desk. I pay a service fee for their professionalism. They are not standing when they offer advice. The new Sydney Trains standing gimmick is about perceptions that are not even enshrined as social norms. They want us all to be mini politicians, one of the few professions that stand, smile and stoop to gain favour.

Some staff will have to go through pain to stand for such long periods. However there are other more insidious side effects to long term standing that you need to consider. Much research has been done on the long term effects of both standing and sitting for long periods of time. Both are bad for you. Keeping the body upright requires considerable muscular effort resulting in reduced blood supply to loaded muscles leading to fatigue and pain in various parts of the body. Standing requires 20% more energy than sitting. Blood tends to pool in the legs and feet. According to research on the effects of long term standing and poor health concerns include:

- * painful legs and feet and often swelling of feet and legs
- * painful bunions and corns on the feet
- * heel problems such as plantar fasciitis and heel spurs
- * Achilles tendonitis
- * varicose veins
- * other changes to the feet, including flat feet
- * lower back pain
- * restricted blood flow

* locking of joints, stiffness and immobilisation

* arthritis in feet, knees and hips

* stiffness and pain in the neck and shoulders

* medical problems in pregnancy and birth defects, spontaneous abortion

* elevated and high blood pressure

* heart and circulatory problems including atherosclerosis and hypertension

Also according to several studies, workers who are required to stand are usually in lower status jobs which do not allow them to raise issues of comfort. They fear that if they raise these issues customers and man-

cold, wet, windy) and travel times to and from work all contribute to deteriorating health exacerbated by prolonged standing. They act as a multiplying factor that increases the contribution to fatigue and poor health.

Fatigue and poor health combined with prolonged standing also increases susceptibility to injury through slower reaction times and poor concentration. This also results in poor performance, unhappiness and absenteeism. You can chart this using your own misery index.

We have mentioned that continuing to punish employees or disrespect their rights and health will lead eventually to



agers will think that they are lazy. So they will often put up with pain and discomfort which eventually effects their psychological health and well being. For workers to have to suffer in this way is both demeaning and degrading.

Management and some health professions just don't get it. This hangover from the master and servant relationship is outdated. Management of Sydney Trains need to respect, appreciate, care for and value the employees that they have.

Compounding factors can make health problems related to prolonged standing much worse. It is incumbent on us all to recognise that no two people are the same and that they have different histories. A combination of individual circumstances such as age, the amount of shift work and length of shifts, mental acumen, health (especially diabetes, cardio vascular and asthma), fitness level, weather (e.g. hot,

much higher absenteeism. It is much easier for staff to take the day off than raise health concerns and discomfort with a manager. Also the psychological effects of carrying out orders that devalue the rights of employees will lead to absenteeism and should not be underestimated. Is it any wonder that KPI's related to absenteeism are headed in the "wrong" direction.

So what can be done to ensure the health of employees remains paramount?

Management must:

- * implement regular breaks and rest periods (hourly) that include walking and some sitting
- * rotate staff through jobs that provide a variety of sitting, standing and walking
- * pregnant staff must keep standing to an absolute minimum - clerical or light duties could be provided

* ergonomically redesign the workplace so that it presents a customer friendly interface as well as looking after the health needs of workers providing the service.

* make it easy for staff to report health problems with dignity and respect rather than ridicule.

* allow seating at the workplace but encourage staff to stand when approached by a customer. Many of the ticket barriers are far too busy anyway for sitting to be practicable. The option of a chair or stool should always be provided.

* supply anti fatigue matting and explain its use

* consult with applicable employees to ascertain ways of ameliorating health problems and take into consideration concerns that are raised.

* include affected employees in any risk assessment. Employees have an obligation to do their own risk assessment if not satisfied and raise any concerns.

* explain the use of and supply correct footwear designed for prolonged standing

* make sure there are adequate workers to give breaks and share work

* provide a secure environment to limit stress

* make sure facilities such as toilets, hand washing, drinking water, hot water, tea and coffee making facilities etc are available nearby during breaks

* monitoring and review all work changes over a substantial period of time

Most health and safety laws contain a clause under management "duty of care" provisions. WorkCover laws state that "where a task can be done sitting down. A suitable chair should be provided"

Until consultation actually takes place staff need to defy the "no sitting" ban or call for breaks as they see fit. If management continue down the path of making employees stand when the work can be done sitting WorkCover can be called upon to issue a "workplace improvement notice".

By Concerned Rail Worker

Just 10 Questions for our Union Leadership.

1. Why is it that when I ring the union office for help or for information there are no Organisers available? Why are they on leave and unavailable at a time when people are losing their jobs and when EBA negotiations are taking place.

2. Why has no union member's meeting been called of transport workers in order to work out a strategy to save the jobs of those affected by job cuts?

3. Is there a plan to concede some jobs to win a moderate pay rise, despite members clearly voicing their opinion that they wanted no trade-offs?

4. Why have staff EBA briefings and meetings been called off in certain locations? What is the meaning of coming to convened briefings poorly prepared and with very little strategy or organisation?

5. What is being done to ensure job security? Why are the rail entities still hiring when some of the most experienced staff are losing their jobs? Why are displaced staff unable to fill vacant positions?

6. What is your view on the increasing numbers of part-time employees being employed in place of full time employees. Why is there no fight for full time jobs over insecure forms of work?

7. Why are negotiations on the EBA continuing while staff reviews, resulting in job cuts, are being rolled out across the entities?

8. Why have the Salary Maintenance provisions within EBA been ignored with some regressed employee's receiving less than the agreed (EBA 2010) 12 months Salary Maintenance?

9. What can we do about the confusion around job placement and recruiting? Many staff are frustrated that assessment processes discriminate against older workers who often have more experience and training yet perform poorly in written tests. On the other hand some staff are having to sit for assessment tests again even though they have passed within the valid period of 12 months. During this time the previous results are still valid.

10. Why should I remain a member of my Union if it can't protect my job or fails in the most basic task of organising to protect jobs?

By Angry Unionist

A Case For Change in the NSW Railways

Dear Howard (RailCorp CEO)

Thank you for the letter that you sent to my home address. I have to disagree with you on a number of matters contained therein.

Firstly you have given employees some erroneous information that is just a confusion of the facts. It's the issues that are not explained that is the problem. Is the confusion of facts intentional?

Management's Crazy Logic

You claim that it costs \$10 million a day to keep our trains running and that this amount could build 21 regional hospitals. That is all well and good, but the NSW

Health budget is in the vicinity of \$20 billion a year, almost 5.5 times of that allocated to rail. What is the point though of comparing the number of hospitals with not running the railway? Bizarre!

Who's Ripping Off the System?

Perhaps if they cut the salaries and generous perks of the executives within RailCorp it might be a good place to start reducing running costs. Executives, (and there are many), say on, \$400,000 p.a. earn nearly 10 times the annual salary of those that take the brunt of abuse for the failings of the rail system, the Customer Service Assistants.

Executive salaries are roughly 4 times the wage of a train driver that is away from home all hours of the day, often working shift-work around the clock.

Some Realities

When you do your comparison with the costs of running the railway here in Sydney with those overseas it is akin to comparing oranges with elephants. Let me first state that Sydney is one of the most expensive cities (rated 4th most expensive in a new poll) in the world.

It's also one of the most sparsely populated cities as it is spread out in all directions across the Cumberland Plain and beyond. Because of that, passenger densities per square kilometre are not what they are going to be in cities such as Hong Kong, Singapore or even large US cities. So we end up with a metro system that travels relatively large distances without having the passenger densities that are experienced in other cities such as Singapore.

On the "Economies of Scale" Sydney's rail system almost does not rate. The Hong Kong MTR for instance has an annual revenue of H\$334.24 billion, bringing in an annual profit of HK\$148.48 billion.

Who's Getting the Cash

Mr Collins, when you talk about costs being 50% higher than comparable railways, I think that if you took into account all of the variables, that this is not such a bad figure. Poor management practices such as cost overruns on infrastructure and bailouts such as that which occurred on the Airport Line and the generous rescue package for the building of Millennium trains, then the same again for the Waratah train rollout, have cost commuters and taxpayers \$millions, if not \$billions.

You Really Think That We Earn too Much?

However, I don't think that this is what you are referring to in your "Case for

Change" document. I think that you may be referring to wage rates being too high. I strongly disagree that that is the case though. Considering the cost of living pressures in Sydney would you like rail workers wages here to drop to the wage levels of rail workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia or the US for that matter? If that is what you want you won't get excellence, you won't get productivity and you will never get your "World Class Railway".



Investment, Investment, Investment

To get to your "World Class Railway" the Government will have to invest much much greater sums of money. Massive investment in rail in China, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore is what lifted them into the modern era. If we spent on rail that which was targeted and spent on tollways and other roadways we might see some changes for the better in rail. Alas, politicians are about short term lucrative returns

for investors. Our politicians have no vision of what it takes to have an efficient, friendly and affordable public transport system.

Invest in Employees

The other investment that you lack is the investment in your employees. From management's point of view, employees are the scapegoats for everything that is wrong with rail. Employees are hounded instead of praised, de-skilled instead of trained and now they are blamed for the cost blow-outs and lack of efficiencies in rail. From your point of view, it is employees who must change and bear the brunt of draconian work practices.

Petty acts such as removing car parking spaces that are necessary for the well being and safety of staff will not endear them to your program or earn you any credibility. Instead it will be a further pointer to the way that you view staff.

Just like at Qantas, it is loyal employees who you show the way to the door because you are charged with reducing the transport budget by 5% pa. It is also loyal employees that lose their homes or can no longer afford to send their kids to get a higher education.

Yet in this country the rich have never had it so good. Neither have their direct servants, the CEO's and politicians who take us for fools and trot out garbage like that contained in the document "Case for Change".

Our Urgent Need for Change.

Yes, we also have a Case for Change. We need radical change, one that does not need the touts, grovellers and servants of a Master Class that has no time for us. A change where workers are treated with dignity and respect and no longer have to put up with the puerile drivel with which we are daily bombarded. Surely as the sun, that change is coming and sooner than you think.

By Concerned Rail Worker

State Transit News Flash

SYDNEY BUS NEWS

By The Transport Scrutinizer

It appears that once again the State Government is preparing to unleash its wrath on Transport Workers. In the case of Bus Employees, it appears that more new draconian rosters are to come into effect in May this year. This will result in the reduction of straight shifts and the overall in-

crease in the number of broken shifts. Some of these will have 13 hour spreads which is totally unfair to those who live some distance away from their depots.

The alleged reason for this is cost savings which is utter lies. Broken shifts actually cost more than straights. Think why the Railways, since they began in 1855 to now, have always employed their staff only on straight shifts. All this proves is that the STA wants to make its Employee's lives a misery, further reducing time to be with

partners and families and more importantly, THUMBING THEIR NOSES AND TOTALLY IGNORING FATIGUE LAWS THAT ARE CURRENTLY IN PLACE FOR HEAVY VEHICLE DRIVERS.

As a result, if the Union does nothing to fight this form of official bullying, Drivers will, after doing day after day of 13 hour spread shifts, become that fatigued due to inadequate time away from the workplace that bus accidents will sharply increase. Drivers' health will greatly deteriorate, due to loss of sleep, stress, high blood pres-

sure, increased sick leave, family and/or spouse pressures for Drivers to have time away from work which might well lead, God forbid, to violence and alcohol abuse.

It appears that these genuinely proven psychological possibilities are about to be totally ignored by a Nazi style STA management team that has been brainwashed by a government that absolutely HATES its hardworking Employees. This erosion of Workers Rights needs to be stopped NOW before it happens. **THAT IS WHAT WE PAY OUR UNION DUES FOR!**

We pay our Union dues NOT for them to waste on delegate junket classes, NOT for them to waste on Depot BBQ's, NOT for them to hide in the toilet when the STA or the government wave their truncheons at us. NOT for them to cringe when the government threatens them with laws hastily made up to defeat them. **WE PAY OUR UNION DUES FOR THE UNION TO STAND UP AND FIGHT FOR WORKERS RIGHTS AND TO PRESERVE OUR HARD FOUGHT CONDITIONS AND NOT TO BE SCARED OF THE LIBERAL PARTY!**

In yet another attack on workers Cleaners and Mechanics have been told by official letters that their services will no longer be required due to their jobs being privatised. Now what will the Unions do about that? Fight or do nothing?

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's been happening on the road?

Waverley Busie: On New Year's day afternoon, there was gridlock on Vacluse Road near Strickland House involving a build up of a host of cars. There were 2 buses on each side of the road, blocking the 325 route, due to a medium 4 wheel drive being parked in a non stopping zone. It took 45 to 50 minutes, for a tow truck to show up. It did a 10 point turn and towed away the vehicle. Consequently, passengers had to get off and walk. I observed no inspectors intervening. Again we see the short sightedness of the bosses' cutbacks and the mayhem it causes. Whilst I didn't notice any police response to this serious traffic problem. Again we see a case of poor liaison between the STA, the police and workers.

RW: How have bus services been faring over the holiday period?

WB: There is an open question, whether with an eye for a bigger bonus, local management cut Eastern suburbs bus services to save some dollars during the

Xmas/New Year period, or was it just a matter of mindless general corner cutting by higher STA bosses? Causing thousands of people to be waiting for buses.

I noticed that buses coming out of the city to the Bondi Junction Interchange, were constantly full. I was dismayed to see a huge crowd of passengers milling around in the interchange waiting for buses to Bondi Beach. We were unable to help them. Where were the extra X81's to meet this increased demand?

Many of the angry commuters complained to TfNSW and the STA has subsequently focused more attention on the interchange. Resulting in increased services to Bondi Beach and even queue conductors. This latest episode exposes how the bosses corner cutting can backfire on them.

RW: How are you finding "Route Opti-

mined by TfNSW bureaucrats. Apart from the buses, they are also deployed in the railways to check tickets. I have noticed them patrolling such places as shopping centres, railway stations, around universities and in the poorer working class and middle class areas. They gave the impression to me, that they are very dogged in the pursuit of their prey. Whilst, they have no affiliation with us and don't take account of our suggestions. It seems that the TfNSW bureaucracy has determined that well off areas such as Edgecliff, Rose Bay and Vacluse are a no go zone. Is the reason for this discrimination, that the TfNSW bosses who control the inspectors don't want to upset people in Liberal Party electorates with \$200 fines and face retaliation by Liberal politicians?

RW: What's the latest at the depot?



misation"?

WB: Around the holiday period, I was doing a 370 and despite 30 years plus on the job I was unfamiliar with this route to Leichhardt. Passengers provided me with some help and I was able to complete the route. I was also lucky it wasn't peak hour and was in the holiday period. However, it was a very stressful experience and would have been much worse under normal conditions. I was recently speaking to a private bus driver who mentioned, they also are facing "Optimisation". Whilst, their jobs are continually put up to scrutiny.

RW: What are your views on the new ticket inspectors?

WB: They are possibly not employed by the STA or Transport for NSW, and are employed by a private company on a contract. Do they get reimbursed by TfNSW if they are unable to fund their operations from revenue raising? However, the areas on which they focus their patrols is deter-

mined by TfNSW bureaucrats. In recent weeks, a notice has appeared in the depot, stating that children of drivers' families are prohibited from being on the premises. This is quite a change from the previous policy, which encouraged the depot to be a family friendly place. I remember this policy was in place until at least Chris Mansergh, who had been elected as union rep at Port Botany was sacked, due to a fit up by the bosses and the union hierarchy. This hard line approach by STA CEO Peter Rowley, indicates to me, his ever increasing moves to gain absolute control over our conditions and undermine our morale.

RW: What's new on the union front?

WB: Recently, we received a pathetic pay rise of 3.75% pa. This is the last rise until the next EBA is in place. Latest news, is that TfNSW bosses had reneged on this

rise for productivity. However, the Industrial Relations Court over ruled this TfNSW decision. The TfNSW are up in arms over the court's action.

Another issue on the union front is the changed role of union reps, I've noticed over the years. In the 70's and 80's union reps exerted a leadership role on the job in the fight against the bosses. Chris Mansergh, who was elected by 200 or so drivers at Pt. Botany was a very good example of this type of union rep. Whilst, one of our previous union reps, Zivko, at that time, was known as a fighter. Now many union reps seem to me to be playing just an advisory role, particularly in regard to what we can't do! Certainly, a factor intimidating many from taking effective action is repressive changes to IR legislation. One way to change the role current reps to be more effective in the fight against the bosses, would be for shop steward training courses which emphasise a leadership and pro-active role in the workplace.

"Here I sit. Here I preach. Here I lay. Here I lie!"

RW: How have you found the situation with the bosses, since O'Farrell and Abbott have come into power?

WB: I have recently come to the conclusion that our jobs are on the line, with Tony Abbott and O'Farrell and other staunch minded liberals in power. There is now a big shift in the bosses' thinking about workers. We are the pariahs of the world, and are not entitled to a living wage. We are looked upon as taking away income from the Government, so it's unable to provide jobs for others. I have noticed that the outlook of the STA bosses toward us has worsened. There are very few in management who acknowledge our concerns. The rest are definitely out to destroy our conditions and have no connection with us.

This situation was highlighted to me recently in a number of ways.

When I was down at the Quay. I met a group of newly employed Ferry workers. They mentioned to me, the outrageous situation, they are now in. On being employed in the Ferries, they expected to get permanent, full time jobs. However, since taking up the job, they are being employed as part time, casuals for one day a week and are at the bottom of the list for more shifts. They don't even earn \$1,000 per week. No one can survive on their wage in a city like Sydney.

In the STA, the bosses appear to be getting up to the same caper. On buses lately, they have put up posters for hiring part time and full time drivers, with the emphasis likely

to be on part time. Will these drivers be faced with similar below the poverty line wages with few shifts offered to them, when called into work?

Whilst, recently cleaners in the STA have been given their marching orders. In typical vicious, neo-liberal style, the bosses have out sourced their jobs to a private company.

On a personal level, my other half who works in a Government department in the health field, has noticed the tactic of restructuring by stealth, as is occurring with us. The organisation in which she works is being successively hollowed out and reduced to a shell and ready for privatisation.

The Manus Island detention centre situation also highlights the rightwing shift. With the contract for its operation, previously held by the British based G4S, now being given by the Abbott Government to Transfield. To make profits, such private concerns will be encouraged to ensure there is a never ending flow of detainees.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW, we will discuss various changes at V/Line and current issues around the job. In this issue Drivers, Conductors, Station Staff and Head Office staff will talk about these issues. As in previous issues of RW, names have been changed.

RW: I hear there has been further belt tightening at V/Line.

Clarence: Yes, you are correct, the first casualties are the V/Line staff magazine which has now gone on-line. Too bad for employees who are computer illiterate.

Jethro: The regional Christmas Parties at the end of the year have also been cut out this year.

Rastus and Roscoe: Not only that, but the annual DINNER to long serving employees has been suspended.

Sheona: This was a function for employees, who served V/Line for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40 and even over 50 years service and it was held annually.

Clarence: A fair number of people were looking forward to this dinner and now

this has been suspended, morale will drop in the organisation. At least the previous Chief Executive was appreciative of the service of long serving employees.

Sheona: We wonder if any long serving employee will be presented with an award for long service, now the dinner is cancelled.

RW: This new Chief Executive is a GRINCH.

Rastus and Roscoe: You can say that alright. We don't care if the Christmas Function was stopped, as some of the drivers, who went to previous functions saw a number of employees crawling up Human Resources staff at these functions, but cancelling the award function is low.

RW: What about the issues of employees on fixed contracts?

Sheona: This issue with budget cuts is going to be an issue which will raise its head with job cuts for employees on fixed contracts.

Rastus: In other words, employees on these contracts will be told their contract will not be renewed.

Clarence: This will happen amongst conductors, as a number of conductors have been seconded on a fixed contract to be booking clerks, staff clerks and movement officers in the CARS office and covering people on maternity leave.

Jethro: A number of people, when vacancies occur in the salaried positions are hoping to find a permanent position. Thus conductors who are on a fixed term contract will obtain a permanent position.

Clarence: Unfortunately, one conductor who was appointed on a fixed term, kept applying for a permanent vacancy and was unsuccessful each time. He had to compete against outside applicants.

Roscoe: This happens a number of times, as when you go for job interviews, if your supervisor has dislike to you, you are out of the interview.

Sheona: Take the case if authorised officers. Over the last five years, a number of conductors have applied for the positions and with one exception, none of the conductors have been successful.

RW: Why?

Sheona: I will tell you why. Human Resources reads the resumes and says we don't think these people are any good, so we go to METRO TRAINS or YARRA TRAINS and recruit authorised officers.

Rastus and Roscoe: One conductor told us about this and he said no wonder morale is low. Also V/Line thinks they can save money as training an Authorised Officer is expensive.

Clarence: If a number of conductors had been accepted as Authorised Officers, then a number of vacancies would have

RW: Are these fixed term conductors still on the job?

Clarence: Yes, but some conductor who is a whizz kid had bright idea about how these people on contract can keep their jobs.

RW: What did he do?

Clarence: He went to management and suggested they get rid of long serving conductors and station staff, saying these people were not part of the team. In other words, if these people were dispensed with, a person on a contract would be of-

Clarence: This person is always asking for overtime. He hates the union and he thinks he is better than the other conductors. In fact, he says some conductors are not pulling their weight.

Rastus and Roscoe: Do you have an overtime roster?

Clarence: In theory yes, but in practice, no. In fact with the running of Heritage Trains, a number of people who are trained for them, get all of the overtime. The rest of conductors miss out. When V/Line regained the running of Heritage Trains, management promises that all conductors, who wanted to run the trains would be trained. It has not happened.

Jethro: In fact, some conductors who come off this job at say 10am in the morning are known to have worked until 7.00 pm in the evening. This has happened during shut-downs due to track work. Also it has happened in reverse where some conductors have commenced work at 12pm, then gone on a next job where the sign off at the Country Destination is at 10pm.

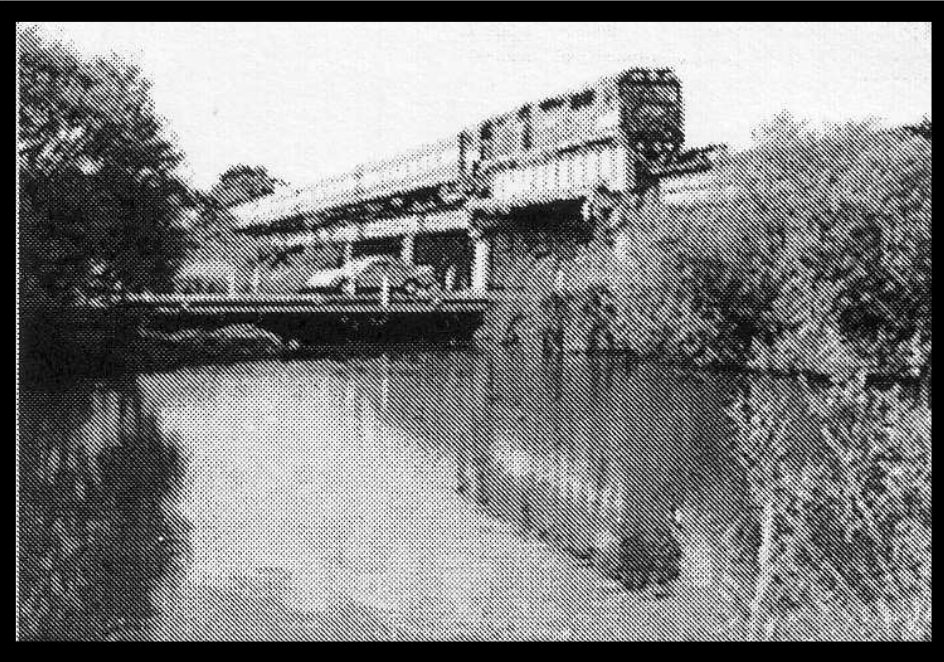
RW: What is the Union doing?

Clarence: The delegate, when he heard, went to management and they promised to stamp out this practice.

Jethro: Some of the STAFF CLERKS ignore the management direction. Yes, the ones who are anti union do. The way it could be enforced is conductors and STATION STAFF monitor the sign on sheet. If this particular STAFF CLERK tells the conductor to move, ignore it. This practice has to be stomped out.

RW: We must conclude, but you can see there are problems over contract employment. This could be solved, the following way. If the person cannot be employed at the end of the contract. Then if a vacancy occurs for a conductor's position, then this person be offered the position. It is wrong that the person has to reapply for a job, that they have performed for the term of their contract.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the fixed contract system is immoral. People on these contracts should not be put under stress come option time. As for the conductors in the 100K club, YOU ARE A GREEDY AND SELFISH GROUP. The same for the conductor, who went to management suggesting long term employees be terminated. As for the cancellation of the long term employee dinner, we won't comment, as our readers will judge for themselves.



occurred, then a number of conductors on fixed terms would apply for permanent positions.

RW: Back to the conductors who was applying for a full time position.

Clarence: This conductor was told his contract was not going to be renewed, as there were no vacancies.

Sheona: Mind you at least five more conductors were appointed on fixed term contracts to cover conductors, who were being retrained for the MYKI ticket system which was being introduced at the same time.

Jethro: The conductor became a platform supervisor on a contract at the Platform Supervisors rate of pay.

RW: At least he had a job.

Clarence: Yes, but eventually, he obtained a position full time, at a country location.

Rastus and Roscoe: The conductor had to go to a country location to keep his job. What chance has he got to return to Melbourne?

Sheona: He will have to apply again and go up against outside appointees.

ferred a permanent position.

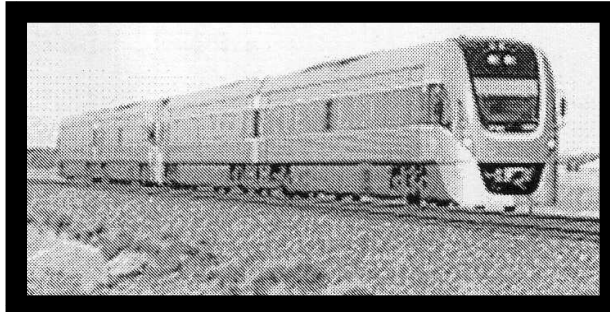
Roscoe: How low can you go?

Rastus: This is the kind of person being employed in the industry. Selfish with a don't care attitude toward others.

RW: Finally, we must move on.

Rastus: Have you heard of the \$100K club?

RW: What's that?



Rastus: One of our drivers who was at a training course at Spencer Street, overheard a conductor crawling to a Staff Clerk for overtime. He was disgusted to see this person asking for overtime.

Blacklisting is Alive & Well in Australia!

Recently claims have been made in Scotland of offshore oil workers being placed on a confidential blacklist which affects their future careers. The Rail Maritime and Transport union has suggested the blacklist also affects workers in the rail industry. The GMB, Unite and UCATT are taking legal action on behalf of construction workers, many of whom fear they have been denied employment because their names were on the list.

A lot of blacklisting in Australia is thought to be internal with large employers like the railways maintaining blacklists in the form of retaining employment histories in the long term. This falls behind better practice in other countries: In Hong Kong for example work histories can't be held after 6 months, or by recruitment agencies 6 months after the process of job placement has finished. In Australia your employment prospects are also subject to the "old boy" network in a lot of industries.

There is more so a more subtle system of blacklisting engaged in by the recruitment

agencies that provide labour to some of the major companies. To date there is no legal regulation of "blacklisting" or unfairly influencing peoples job prospects.

At one prominent Sydney recruiting agency for example they use an A to D system of rating your performance in things like interviews. It is not unknown for someone to be placed into a D category simply because they don't like your resume. To make this situation worse there is a constant consultation between various agencies in respect of individual applicants for jobs they advertise.

This method of blacklisting is not however entirely the case and increasingly university qualified consultants are being employed to formally penalise workers who are members of unions, or in some other way are not the perfect employees, expected by large employers.

In Western Australia there is a blacklist database in the mining and construction industry called ERMS (Electronic Management Recruitment System), it is used by large companies such as Rio Tinto,

BHP, Lend Lease and NRW. When you complete a job your line supervisor who does your exit interview nominates on form CPM028 "Demobilisation Evaluation" 1. Re-employ, 2. Possibly, 3. Never to be re-employed. Sometimes this exit paperwork is done with you present, other times you are completely unaware of it.

This then determines your future employment prospects within the industry in the form of a coloured dot on your file with ERMS. It has not been unknown for an employer to want to employ someone on a site, but they have not been able to because they don't have an "ERMS Clearance". ERMS (Bright People Technologies) was forced to answer awkward questions in 2010 when the WA Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union produced numerous examples of people being blacklisted from work at the 11th hour due to union membership.

Sean

VENEZUELA UPDATE

Article originally written in Spanish for the latest issue of the Chilean anarchist paper Solidaridad.

The recent events that have shaken Venezuela reflect not only the level of interference that the USA maintains in the region or the pervasive coup-mongering trend in the Venezuelan elite which knows by heart the manual of the Chilean coup strategy. It primarily reflects the latent tensions in the Venezuelan model which should start to work themselves out from below, through struggle. Today more than ever we need critiques to be the essential tool of revolutionaries, rather than the attitude of passive approval of everything the Bolivarian leadership does.

The genesis of Bolivarianism

An event that marked the recent history of Venezuela was the Caracazo, that gigantic, spontaneous popular mobilization the structural adjustment measures decreed by the Social-Democratic government of

Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1989, which was drowned in the blood of between 500 and 2,000 Venezuelans. It is surprising to note that to date there

are no reliable figures on the number of dead, which to some extent reflects their status as "nobodies", "disposable", "marginal". After earning a reputation for his coup attempt in 1992 - in direct response to a government widely seen as illegitimate by the working classes - the retired officer Hugo Chávez Frías stood in the 1999 elections, an outsider in the circles of power which, during the so-called Punto Fijo period, divided up bureaucratic quotas between two parties. His populist, direct speeches, his denunciation of a status quo increasingly tired out by the oil crisis which eroded the corrupt networks of clientelism, immediately captured the fascination of the majority, alienated by the political-economic system.

Although his first redistributive measures were timid, Chávez immediately alienated the elite because for the first time in the history of the republic they were displaced from the circles of power. This abrupt

change was ratified in 1999 by the constituent assembly, where the old parties ended up disappearing. The new Constitution, which even the Right led today by Capriles lays claim to, has established certain social guarantees and rights that have benefited sectors previously excluded from access to health or education, counter to the neoliberal trends that dominate throughout the world. Principles of participatory forms of democracy are also experimented with through the institutionalization of Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power). From the point of view of guarantees, this Constitution is almost unique in recognizing the right of civil disobedience in cases where the government violates the Constitution.

The years that followed the Constitution were turning points in the leftist turn of the Chavista political project; at each attempt to remove him from power, the masses at the grassroots of the Bolivarian project responded with increased demands. Some of these measures included the April 2002 coup and then came the bosses' lockout from December 2002 to February 2003, both decisively defeated by popular mobilization and support from the Army for the process. The lockout, which was centred on a shutdown of oil production, saw workers self-manage sec-

tors of that industry so as to keep the economy running. In this process, the rentier capitalist class became worn out and important areas of it were ousted from a significant centre of power when Chávez fired 19,000 technicians, directors and middle managers. The Bolivarian project thus took control of oil revenues and set about a series of social programmes called “missions”, through which the newly conquered social rights were extended to the most marginalized areas of the country. But even in this process, the experience of self-management came to an end and albeit with new faces, there was a return to the same labour dynamics as before.

But it was only after the victory in the recall referendum of 2004 and his overwhelming victory in the presidential elections of December 2006, that he dared publicly to describe his project as “Socialism of the 21st Century”.

Socialism of the 21st Century

Chávez now defined the five motors of the construction of socialism: the nationalization of telecommunications and electricity; control of 60% of *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.* (PDVSA, state-owned oil and gas company) of the multinational oil operations; constitutional reform to declare Venezuela a Bolivarian, Socialist republic; political education and ideological struggle to overcome capitalist prejudice, a new system of territorial administration of the country in line with the people’s needs; and the development of organisms of community power. It was intended with these measures to move from developmentalism to *poder popular* (people’s power).

The first measures to promote people’s power, such as urban land committees, invariably came from above, while the main emphasis continued to be redistribution through the missions, which were skillfully created by-passing the structures of the State’s administrative bureaucracy, mixing social mobilization with Army participation. These bodies provided perhaps the most spectacular achievements of the Bolivarian project, such as the virtual elimination of illiteracy.

Other initiatives yielded more mixed results due to distortions caused by the oil-rentier economy and Dutch Disease, together with the persistence of the clientelist, bloated State. Land reform is a good case in point. Venezuela imports 70% of its foodstuffs, 12% of its population is rural and 5% of landowners in 1997 controlled 80% of the land. Since 2005, various farmers have received land and migration from urban areas to rural

ones has been stimulated; however, it has not been easy to achieve the goal of food sovereignty because the distortion of the oil economy makes food production more expensive than that of Venezuela’s neighbours. Paradoxically, Mercal, the subsidized stores, sell most of the imported food because it’s cheaper price. And to the slow expansion of food production (lower than demand), the problem of sabotage and stockpiling must be added.

Workers’ control too is contradictory. The first expropriations by Chávez came about up to 2005, when some companies went under the control of the workers, alone or



together with the State. But radicalized workers who were demanding the abandoning of old-style management patterns, consideration of not only profit but the need and sustainability as productive criteria or an end to the division between manual and intellectual workers, found their bitterest enemies in the Labour Ministry itself, while Chávez distanced himself from the “radicals” until in 2009 his interest in them was reborn with the need to fight against the “corrupt”. Many companies were left isolated in the swindle that was “socialism in one factory”, while sectors of the left denounced this adventurism, opting for purely statist schemes. But beyond the existing industries, the dream of economic diversification remained elusive: the economy continued to be dominated by oil revenues and the creation of initiatives such as cooperatives fell into a vicious circle - the exchange rate distorted by the rentier economy did not help competitiveness in the market in accordance with the capitalist laws in force in Venezuela and the region, and the subsidies and support for these diversification initiatives depended on oil revenues, which reinforced the structural weakness of the productive economy.

Communal State?

An important aspect of how the Bolivarian project understood people’s power is the development of community councils,

which would be the basis of what Chávez called the transition from the Bourgeois State to the Communal State. Inspired by the participatory experience of Porto Alegre, these councils are community mechanisms for the development and implementation of community projects. But they faced opposition from local *caciques* (political bosses), State agencies and even the banking system which was supposed to fund these projects. Clientelistic structures of traditional politics and bureaucrats were wary of communal experiences that became too independent.

Although poverty has been reduced and malnutrition and illiteracy have been eradicated, the question of power continues to be the driving aspect on which not only the furthering of the “process” depends but also the maintenance of what has been achieved so far in this decade through social experiments. Despite the interaction of initiatives from below with those from above, the contradictions between the State and the communities remains the defining element of the political dynamics of the process. Particularly because the State, starting with the removal of the old *Punto-Fijistas* from power, has become

the niche of the traditional ruling class, while those who have newly arrived into State circles have quickly acquired the corrupt, vertical and clientelistic practices that have been a feature of it for decades. From these niches they boycott change and get rich, while wearing their nice little red shirts. Most of the time, Chavism has granted privileges to the obedient bureaucrats, corrupt as they are, and has turned a blind eye to the kickbacks that they take. Closing one’s eyes to this strengthens the Right, even though it means silencing the popular sectors that have denounced this. The worst thing about a clique is not being a part of it. So goes a well-known saying in Colombia and Venezuela.

The absence of collective leadership, *caudillismo* (strongman politics) and verticality, represented in the logic of the State, have been the main enemies of this process of social change. This was evidenced at the death of the “comandante” in March 2013.

The current situation: go on with the “process” or end it?

After the local elections in December, which the rentier Right used as a kind of referendum and which the Chavists came out of with flying colours, the latest devaluation has given an opportunity to those sectors to take back the streets after a decade of keeping their heads down.

Those who have profited with the flight of capital through the diversion of oil revenues worth millions into private accounts abroad by means of the Commission for the Administration of Currency Exchange (CADIVI) have sounded the alarm with the announcement that this system is to be replaced by a new one (National Centre for Foreign Trade - CENCOEX), and squeal about inflation and shortages that have been created largely by them. Let us not forget that in this economic war more than 50,000 tons of stockpiled food staples have been requisitioned since early 2013, while entrepreneurs of all sorts have been speculating with international trade, as is the case with household appliances, with profit rates of 1,000%.

The problem is not that they are raising their heads - it is that their privileges have not been touched and from their strongholds they still have the resources and organization to defend their absolute privilege. The problem is that the popular sectors who want to increase their power, their control and their autonomy are contained, even repressed, while the usual suspects see their privileges threatened but not touched, in a situation that will eventually have to be sorted out. The problem is that control of the bank for foreign trade has not been taken away from financial capitalism, that there is no popular control over trade, nor sanctions for the hoarding that threatens the people with hunger.

The problem, in the words of Roland Denis, is this: "The model of rentier, parasitic State capitalism, which under its policies of control, concentration of power and replacement of social control by technocratic or bureaucratic functionaries; it has not only made the rich richer, despite the charity and the social justice policies, but it has crushed the productive forces, the creators of a workers' society and one of small, private and cooperative produc-

ers (...) It reduces the productive middle classes to despair, it drives increasingly unsatisfied consumer demand crazy, it makes all too evident its inability to respond via the State economy (whether they import or produce, State enterprises are being bankrupted because of this useless mentality which is bent on destroying social productivity). It is reactivating the impoverishment curve through inflation and increasing unemployment, because of economic non-productivity, thus diminishing the labour value day by day, regardless of the nominal wage"[1].

There are only two ways to deal with the current situation: one is through repression of those who have mobilized while calling the organizers of the protests to dialogue. That is the path Maduro has taken so far. The other is to unleash the force of the people and further the social transformations in a socialist, libertarian perspective to remove the parasitic rentier elite that is bleeding the country and will not be happy until it sees the more imaginary than real threat of the abolition of that privilege definitively dissipate.

Apart from the immediate measures (such as harmonizing the price of petrol, curbing the flight of capital, speculation and hoarding), it is essential to understand the real nature of the social contradictions facing the "process". It is not enough to recognize that it is not perfect or that it naturally has contradictions. These contradictions and limitations must be identified, discussed, critiqued and corrected. We cannot just close ranks around them, justify them, nor even less so make a virtue of them and close our eyes to the impeccable "leadership" of the leaders.

The people today cannot be a passive agent nor nothing more than government shock troops: they must take back their capacity for political action, for acting themselves, with their own agenda, because socialism will not be built by the State. De-

centralization, the autonomous development of the organs of people's power and social control is an essential task in the present moment. There must be a transfer of power from the State apparatus to the popular movements and their organization. The old power class survives in the State and the newcomers are developing the same bad habits. It will not be from there that the egalitarian society will be built, since by definition the State actively reproduces inequality and asymmetry in power. As journalist Iain Bruce puts it, analyzing the Bolivarian process, "how do you get around the existing apparatus, when you first came to power through it. It has also become increasingly clear that a number of those inhabiting the old edifice are very happy with their new home and are quietly inclined to thwart anyone who suggests it should be torn down and replaced with a wholly different kind of construction"[2].

Today, the discussion cannot be reduced to smashing coup tendencies. We also have to crush inertia, bureaucratism and the cult of the State. They mutually reinforce each other. We must struggle for a socialist, libertarian alternative, because half-victories are nothing more than eventual defeats.

José Antonio Gutiérrez D.
26 February 2014

Translation by FdCA International Relations Office

Notes:

[1] "Desactivar el Fascismo", 22 February 2014

[2] Iain Bruce, "The Real Venezuela", 2008, p. 184

BRITAIN TODAY

CWU ENDORSES WORKFARE

Worrying news comes from the fine folk at Boycott Workfare in the form of a letter issued to branches of posties' union the CWU (Communication Workers Union) in which they appear to endorse Workfare at the Royal Mail.

A 'work experience' programme is being rolled out which will see around 130 unpaid workers per region. There is no sign that these workers will be offered jobs at the end of the four week period.

The scheme is aimed at young people who will face benefit sanctions if they have "given up or failed to attend a place on a Work Experience without good cause" or have been dismissed for misconduct. No pay is offered for the role and young people will work alongside paid workers for the pittance available to under 25s on Job Seekers Allowance.

That a major union should appear to endorse an unpaid labour scheme in this way is troubling particularly as the TUC have stated that "compulsory workfare schemes are in contradiction to the notion of welfare rights."

Reports have already been received of workfare candidates at ASDA being forced to work on Christmas and New Year's Eve for no pay whilst waged workers were sent home. The creation of a two tier workforce, with one group of workers having no employment rights or pay, should not just trouble the consciences of union leaders.

With Royal Mail privatisation on the agenda this year industrial action seems inevitable. Workfare staff may find themselves in the unenviable position of being

forced into scabbing or face dismissal without even the safety net of benefits. This is the thin end of the wedge that could ultimately be used to break any strike action by the CWU.

Already workfare staff have been spotted on the London transport network, presumably in an effort to quieten public concern about unstaffed stations due to station staff being laid off. CWU members, who themselves may face redundancy, must resist this assault on working conditions at the Royal Mail. Workfare will doubtlessly be used to justify layoffs, undermine industrial action and in the long term lead to lower pay and poorer working conditions across the Royal Mail.

Young people need and deserve support with beginning a career at the Royal Mail should they choose to do so. However these positions should come with a living wage and full Trade Union rights. Whilst the CWU has said that all Workfare placements will be introduced to the role of the Union in the workplace, this is of cold comfort when even if they join, they will face crippling poverty and immediate dismissal should they fail to cross a picket line.

Boycott Workfare have issued a call out to contact the CWU and challenge the Union's support for this forced labour scheme. Contact: dward@cwu.org whilst the General Secretary Billy Hayes is active on Twitter at: https://twitter.com/BillyHayes_CWU

Day 4 of 7-day strike of Medirest workers at Ealing Hospital, 17th of March 2014

Workers were being told by the GMB regional secretary to stay united and that the management were sweating about this seven day strike - the length of which is unusually long in this day and age. While it signals a combativeness and willingness to mean business on the side of the workers, it's obviously a risk: losing a weeks wages makes life difficult, even if the union do offer the workers some strike money, and if the management can withstand the hole in staffing for seven days without giving the workers what they want, they could probably do so again.

In this sense the 'encouraging' words of the GMB official can end up creating illusions. Before entering the seven days strike the GMB had a negotiation meeting with management on the 10th of March, announcing that they would reconsider the strike if management made a decent offer. Entering the strike and having seen the ability of the company to bring in workers from other places, the GMB does not seem

to have contacted other unions which organise Medirest workers at those hospitals, from which Medirest sources the 'scabs'. And it is quite a step for workers to do this independently.

The Medirest workers at Ealing Hospital face a considerable opponent. After all, Medirest is part of the Compass group, a very large corporation that has mass NHS contracts, as well as caters for high-profile sporting (horse race course etc.) and entertainment events. They are managing to get scabs into the hospital, but probably not enough to keep things on usual standards: one patient coming out of the hospital that we spoke to said the toilets hadn't been cleaned and things were looking a bit worse for wear.

A central plank of the strategy of hope that the union is invoking is based on the finan-

quieten down and gather around to talk to each other, the dynamic of them listening to outsiders, somehow as an audience, was difficult to break. We suggested that some of them think about putting pressure on management in other ways e.g. going to the high-profile glitzy events the Compass Group caters for at FC Chelsea stadium, at Wembley Arena or the Queen Elizabeth Conference Hall and doing a demo there. As long as management can keep the workers on the roundabout, 20 meters away from the hospital, getting signatures for their petition, they can contain the struggle and isolate the workers. Showing up the company and talking to other Compass workers could break this impasse.

We went into the hospital to hand out flyers to the patients and staff. Everyone was supportive of the strike. We spoke to one

scab who was a porter from Kings College Hospital and he claimed not to know what was going on outside as a justification for his being there. He said he thought that the minimum wage was a 'government issue' and that he is just here to 'save lives'. If anyone has any contacts at Kings College, please get in touch so you can distribute flyers to Medirest workers there, telling them about the strike at Ealing and that they are not contractually obliged to work as scabs. We have attached a flyer that can be amended as necessary, or drop us a mail and we'll send



cial burden of the shipping in of the scabs and their vastly increased pay: the figure doing the rounds was £18 an hour. This is almost 3 times more than the Medirest workers on strike would normally get. Add on the transport costs to ferry them from various other parts of London and the meal tickets, times seven days, you get to a pretty large sum. The only trouble is 1) Is £18 actually what is being paid to the scabs? There are varying accounts, the scabs we asked said they weren't getting paid this much, just their regular wage, which, while is more than the minimum wage (£7-9), is not £18 an hour. But of course, they could be lying. Who knows? We tried to find out but couldn't. At any rate, there is uncertainty, which means relying on the fact that management are taking a big financial hit needs to be reconsidered. 2) Compass is huge and it's highly likely that even if they were paying £18 an hour for a reduced staff for 7 days, it will not make as much of a dent in their overall finances as we'd like to think.

So we suggested a kind of assembly meeting, which was difficult somehow to make happen. When we finally got people to

it. This flyer was distributed by workers at Homerton Hospital before the strike, because the last 2 day strike saw quite a few scabs from Homerton. We don't know if these flyers had an impact, but the fact that one of the porters was from Kings, a hospital from which no scabs came to the last strike, shows that they are having to be bought in from other places this time around. Another 'scab' we spoke to was a young guy from Czech Republic, very sympathetic towards the strike. it was his first day at work at Ealing Hospital, he had been hired on a 1-month temporary contract by Compass Group.

The striking workers had attended a rally against the closure of Chase Farm hospital two weeks ago, making contact with workers there, telling them about their strike. Some scabs had supposedly come from Chase Farm during the last strike, so maybe this had an effect too.

The strike will end on Friday 7 am. We will go to the picket on Thursday at 10 am and see what workers made of the strike and what they think about further action.

angryworkersworld@gmail.com

Italian Labour News

POLITICAL TURMOIL IN THE CGIL

The CGIL is Italy's largest confederation of trade unions (secretary: Susanna Camusso) and includes as a member FIOM, the metalworkers' federation (general secretary: Maurizio Landini; former president: Giorgio Cremaschi). Tension has been growing between CGIL and FIOM for some time and although there have been reassurances that all is well, it is obvious that all is far from harmonious.

What are the areas of contention?

The infamous agreement on representation regulates relations between big business's Confindustria and the three confederal unions, CGIL, CISL and UIL, and limits workers' trade union rights severely. Clashes started when Landini disagreed with Camusso about how the new agreement was approved. Although it was initially supported by both Camusso and Landini, Landini denounced a lack of internal democracy inside CGIL, and pushed the matter with Camusso. He eventually declared that unless CGIL undertakes a democratic consultation of all members of the trade union, FIOM will not recognize the agreement.

Landini's position has led Camusso to ask the CGIL's constitutional authority which sanctions could be eventually be taken against Landini. This has resulted in a deep and wide crack opening up between CGIL and FIOM. Despite Cremaschi's reassurances that Landini still supports Camusso in her bid to renew her mandate as secretary (that is, he has not withdrawn his signature from Camusso's nomination document), a large amount of uncertainty hangs over the future of the relationship.

Two further incidents have contributed to the widespread feeling of uncertainty amongst the membership.

On 14 February, a group of protesters close to Cremaschi interrupted a speech by Camusso and asked to take part in the debate. There was a serious confrontation between the two groups and it ended in a brawl, shaking union members throughout Italy.

On 7 March, the CGIL's Turin federation approved a document, initially proposed by FIOM and later approved by other federations, which openly criticises and opposes the use and value of the Val Susa TAV project. This directly challenges Camusso's endorsement of the project.

Gruppi's decision came after his final motion was approved, 227 votes for and 110 against. The strength of the opposition led to the modification of some key points. Delegates voted in favour of the public school system (in line with the results of the May 2013 referendum), common



Final papers presented in December 2013 for CGIL's 17th National Congress in early May in Rimini sum up the divisions. The work drives the future is supported by Camusso and a large majority of the national board. The trade union is a different thing was presented by Cremaschi and is supported by a minority of the national board.

For members today, it is clear that the CGIL is no longer as cohesive and strong as it once was, and also that the situation is very fluid. No-one knows how things will develop, either before or after the National Congress.

After a huge split emerged in the union during the Bologna congress, Danilo Gruppi, the current local secretary and close to Camusso, announced that he would not stand as a candidate. Bologna's Camera del Lavoro (the local CGIL centre) is the biggest in Italy and this is the first time that its secretary will not be re-elected for a second mandate. The union is now at risk of a temporary period of 'compulsory administration' from central office.

goods (such as publicly-owned water) and – most of all – rejecting the agreement about union representation. These votes indicate the strength of delegates' opposition to Camusso's and Gruppi's approach over recent years and were possible because many of the local Camera del Lavoro's delegates are members of FIOM. Yet another example of the unprecedented fracture in the most important union in Italy.

By StrugglesInItaly

Mar 20 2014 22:09

CRISIS IN THE UKRAINE

Ukrainian anarchist analysis of the situation following the overthrow of Yanukovich, pointing out that the opposition in power alongside fascist groups will not improve the lot of the working class.

The overthrow of the authoritarian regime of Yanukovich by no means signifies for us the end of our fight.

New dictators hasten to take the place of the Party of Regions. They will not hesitate to rely not only on considerably weakened security agencies, but on the far right militants as well. The regime of police and prosecutorial arbitrariness deserved its overthrow unconditionally, but now there may come a time for a new terror that will justify itself ideologically.

At the moment, the main power is concentrated in the hands of the opposition party "Batkivshchyna" ("Fatherland"), which has managed to rally a substantial part of the ruling class. Its leader, recently released from prison Yulia Tymoshenko, has obvious presidential ambitions. It should be remembered though, that when Tymoshenko's sentence was pronounced, the rally in her support in Kiev gathered no more than five thousand people, and all the mass demos of this party had to use paid-for extras. Batkivshchyna as well as the Party of Regions has virtually no serious grassroots support or activist base, but it has large enough material resources.

In order to stay in power, Yulia Tymoshenko's team will have to appease the far rightists, the Right Sector in particular. Two such attempts have already been made – the fascists who had been imprisoned in cases not related to the Maidan were released after the enactment of the according law in the Parliament. New Interior Minister Arsen Avakov has promised to introduce representatives of the RS in his ministry. Now we'll be able to call the cops "Nazis" with a good reason. But Batkivshchyna is clearly frightened of such a passionate and uncontrolled element in power. So they will try to get the far-right on the hook, not only by buying but also by tying them with blood. Right Sector dreams of settling old accounts with subcultural anti-fascists, so they were carefully supplied with the Security Service or police dossiers containing personal data. Probably in the near future the authorities will close their eyes to violence

against the left or racist attacks, but will recall it a few months later, when they will need an excuse to reign in the uncomfortable allies.

Right Sector leads its own game, and has been doing so for long enough. Today its leader Dmitry Jarosh claims entry into power at a very high level, as a deputy prime minister for law enforcement agencies. At the same time, as reported by the journalist Mustafa Nayem, according to the records found in the Presidential Administration, Yarosh was communicating with Yanukovich or his representatives on February 20. Even before that, on January 28 the negotiations between the Right Sector and Security Service / Ministry of Internal Affairs were officially announced. A day later representatives of the right let this fact slip, declaring "the desire



to join the negotiation process." Probably such negotiations actually has been taking place since much earlier, especially when one considers the background of all the organizations that were a part of "Right Sector": "Tryzub" ("Trident") as well as SNA, and "Bely Molot" ("White Hammer") have in various forms actively interacted with politicians from both system parties, and with the security forces since the 90s – 2000s.

"Svoboda" ("Freedom") Party is a competitor for both Batkivshchyna and RS equally. The latter will actively infringe on Svoboda electorate and by the time of the election the standoff between these political forces will escalate. Now Svoboda has a chair in the prosecutor's office. It is symbolic, because the cops and prosecutors always work closely and at the same time

hate each other; their interests are very similar, but occasionally come into conflict. This is the type of relationship that exists between Svoboda and Right Sector.

Security Service is headed by Nalivaychenko who already held the post under President Yushchenko. Chief security officer of the country is famous not only for the posthumous prosecution of Joseph Stalin for the Holodomor (which looks like a particularly dark joke), but also the fight against "Kremlin-sponsored terrorist organization Antifa." After losing his job, Nalivaychenko worked with the ultra-right (including future Svoboda activist Eugene Karas, known under the pseudonym "Vortex"), trying to create a movement "Otpor", but this project was not successful.

At the same time, in the regions that have not yet submitted to the new government, but renounced Yanukovich, their own fascist sentiments are ripening. The Party of Regions representatives, who failed to join the parliamentary majority, establish

blocks with pro-Russian far-rightists and Stalinists. Imperialists and Stalinists, Cossacks and Orthodox fanatics – all together fight against the often imaginary Banderovites, meanwhile cracking down on journalists and human rights activists. Brown center is confronted by at least as brown regions. The only difference is the historical tradition to which they appeal. All of them will focus on their "fight for traditional values", appealing to the social partnership and at the same

time slashing social expenditures.

We take no side in the conflict between the Ukrainian and the Russian nationalists. But many protesters against the regime of Yanukovich will be dissatisfied with both the rapacious policies of Batkivshchyna, which will hit the pocket of workers, and the "national revolution" of Right sector and Svoboda, which will try to take away the remnants of human rights and freedoms. It is these people who are indifferent to the ultra-right and critical of the system opposition, the "disgruntled members of the Maidan," who can soon fill the ranks of the left and anarchists.

AWU-Kiev, 24.02.2014

From <http://avtonomia.net/2014/02/27/fifty-shades-brown/>

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Pistoleros: The Chronicles of Farquhar McHarg By Farquhar McHarg Volume 1: 1918 Introduced by Stuart Christie. PM Press, Calif., 2011. Review by Graham Purchase.

Continued from last edition of RW

The Politics of War in Neutral Catalonia 1918

The war-economy of Neutral Spain had been a boom for the capitalist classes. The war's end inevitably caused economic recession. The workers knew that they would pay for it. Corrupt right wing politicians and capitalists raised Pistoleros or death squads and used them to suppress mounting labor unrest.

Pistoleros were indirectly controlled and illegally funded by pro-German agents and sympathizers. Spanish rulers feared a Bolshevik-like revolution. This fear was not unfounded in the wake of the failed Spanish General strike August 1917.

Spain, like Russia, was as an agricultural backwater in the eyes of the major European powers.

The Spanish state-capitalist, semi-feudal-agrarian and powerful clerical establishments feared Communism and anti-clericalism. German Catholicism and Imperialism were viewed by the ruling classes not as a threat, but as their possible salvation.

Neutrality was the Official position of the Spanish government whilst it turned a blind eye to clandestine support for German imperialism and Catholicism being the. This duplicitous unofficial arrangement emerged in part because of the Spanish upper-class/clerical hatred of republican-secular France—the perennial target of German militarism, aggression and misadventure.

The British sea-defense of Gibraltar runs the length of Spain from the mouth of the Mediterranean to where its coast meets the Southern French Pyrenees Mountain border.

Britain had to liquidate the pro-German elements active in 'neutral Spain' because of many acts of sabotage to British and American interests not only in Spain but Nth Africa and Sth. America as well. German-agent's were very effective in the dispersal of pro-German propaganda through a network of hundreds of local and national Spanish newspapers.

Most importantly were the pro-German outfits who were fueling and supplying U boats in Spanish coastal waters. U boats were inflicting mass casualties upon British merchant and military ships.

McHarg's own crew mates whilst leaving port perished in a German U boat attack. The author had jumped ship to join the revolution but was inadvertently saved from a certain and grizzly death. The sinking of this civilian ship prompted McHarg to join the war-effort against German Militarism: "I finally stopped being a pacifist, and the



war against Germany, for me, became a 'just' cause." (1: p.45). This view was shared most famously by Kropotkin whose position on the German menace the author strongly supports (1: p.190).

The British secret service in Spain fully cranked-up in the last year of the War in order to counter costly illegalities committed by Spanish and German war-criminals pursuing a proxy war in Spain through espionage, propaganda, state-capitalist corruption and hired thugs.

The CNT formed in 1907 in Catalonia spread its tentacles over the whole of the Iberian Peninsula and beyond. Members of the organized industrial working classes through their syndicates and militia cells could both identify and liquidate

proto-fascist traitors living on Germany's pay-roll. Hence the urgent need for cooperation between the CNT and the British Secret Service in the last year of the war for the Destruction of German Militarism.

McHarg came to play a key role in this relationship as a paid go-between with the British Imperial Establishment and the anarcho-syndicalists.

During his first year in Barcelona McHarg began to play a minor journalistic role for the CNT newspaper Solidaridad Obrera. On the 9th of June 1918 this anarchist CNT newspaper exposed the Chief Superintendent of police Manuel Bravo Portillo as Germany's top agent in Catalonia. By his agency the U boats knew all about allied ships leaving Barcelona. Evidence acquired by workers organized into maritime syndicates showed how U-boats anchored regularly in a secluded cove where uniformed German naval officers were entertained in the local office of the Harbormaster.

Portillo also funded and supervised saboteurs of British industrial and financial interests and death squads to protect capitalism and pro German Catalan employers. Following the report in Solidaridad Obrera Portillo was arrested and dismissed as the police chief but later released without charge.

Among his many other activities and adventures of 1918 McHarg relates his experiences of joining a workers Defence Group, attending boot-camps at the weekends and robbing an armaments train with CNT workers for procuring weapons.

Pistoleros, Volume 2: 1919

Christie Books, UK, 2010.

An upsurge in Catalan separatism in January 1919 led the Madrid Government to sanction the imposition of martial law in Barcelona. However the new powers were used primarily against the anarcho-syndicalists by outlawing the CNT and imprisoning as many activists as the authorities could round-up.

Barcelona was dependent upon hydro-electric power from water flowing down the Pyrenees. A strike at the beginning of February 1919 by the power generation workers, with whom McHarg worked as an engineer, halted industry and transport networks and plunged the city into darkness.

By March 1919 the prisons were overflowing with thousands of service industry workers and union activists. But the state of siege only helped to increase support and membership of the CNT. After 45 days and following a mass-meeting of the membership at the Las Arenas Bullring the workers agreed to end the strike, resulting

in: “national legislation confirming the eight-hour working day throughout the industry—the first law of its kind in Europe.” (2: p. 30).

However the Catalan authorities refused to release imprisoned all the CNT activists and workers as agreed. The strike recommenced 3 days later and Martial Law was once again imposed. The Madrid government sponsored an agreement with the CNT to end the general strike. But, Catalonia’s rulers ignored Madrid and proceeded to impose a lockout which lasted for many months and led to a terrifying escalation in tit for tat revenge attacks and wild-west like shoot-outs upon an almost daily basis.

In addition to repression meted out by the regular police and army forces there were a plethora of powerful and well-funded organizations with extensive intelligence networks and private armies of Pistoleros whom targeted CNT activists and sympathizers.

The Patronal: Catalan Employers Organization

The Patronal “consisted of prominent old-money industrialists, new-money businessmen and entrepreneurial movers and shakers from across the right-wing political, security and religious spectrum...The Patronal was no ordinary business lobby or pressure group...Nor was it content to just destroy the CNT; it wanted to erase, totally, the idea of organized labor.”

The Patronal “recruited nearly 5000 members and had built up a war chest of nearly half a million pesetas with which it openly subsidized the Guardia Civil, the police and the Sometent.” (2: p.115-17).

“The Patronal—which funded the pistolero campaign, being desirous of the end, though it shrank from the means—was formed in 1910 to protect employers’ interests and had sufficient political clout to have the CNT outlawed in 1911.” (1: p.181).

The Sometent: Unofficial Patriot Army

A “parapolitical auxiliary police force composed of right-wing and primarily rural middle-class militia...By the end of 1919 Catalonia’s ‘White Guard’, as the Sometent Freikorps was also known, had around 20, 000 members...These men formed an elite ‘ghost’ squad...a private plainclothes army...Their role, as they saw it, was defending ‘civilized society’ against the masses whom they genuinely thought of as belonging to an inferior race.” (2: p.110-13)

Libre Unions—Rt. Wing Corporate Union

The Libre was “the first properly fascist-corporatist labor organization in Spain...and was funded by Catalonia’s largest employers. The Libre quickly acquired centres across Barcelona, and soon claimed around 10, 000 semi-militarized sympathizers. The Libre was a labor union in name only—and was anything but ‘free’. It was a Mafia-type confederation of gangsters, Catholic zealots and anti CNT unionists whose role was to protect the Catalan establishment by dividing the labor movement.”

(2: p. 93-95)

Private Mercenary Agencies/Armies

After being sacked as head of the Police “Bravo Portillo reinvented himself as a freelance gangster and professional ‘hit-man’. Portillo’s ‘detective agency’ was a private mercenary company contracted to the Patronal whose real function was industrial and political espionage, providing the army and the employers with information acquired by his spies, informers and provocateurs. Portillo focused on organizing his agents, whom he divided into small groups who specialized either in intelligence-gathering and malicious infiltration or in violence.”

(2: p. 49-57)

Following the assassination of Portillo by McHarg and others his organization was taken over by the sinister Baron de Koenig and became known as the Black Gang.

The “death squads did not disappear. As well as inheriting Portillo’s army of in-

formers, delinquents and killers, the Baron had his own retinue of ruffians and scoundrels” (2: p. 79). The Baron’s dark past caught up with him and he fled Spain. But other Pistoleros groups, such as those headed by Pedro Homs soon replaced him.

“Obsessed with destroying organized labor, Barcelona’s ‘men of order’ turned to the dregs of society and gave them free rein. But the demons quickly grew too powerful. They refused to return to the pit from whence they came. The oligarchs had given them the city—but lacked the political will to take it back.” (2: p. 100).

The workers defense groups were also composed in a nebulous and unstructured way. Because so many older activists had been imprisoned or killed younger and more hotheaded members began to form anarchist gangs to counteract the Pistoleros menace.

“The CNT defence groups—usually consisted of around five or six friends all of them well known to each other and trusted. These defence groups were completely independent and informal bodies answerable to nobody but themselves—and certainly not to any of the CNT’s higher committees, including the Defence Commission.” “Responsibility for the assassinations did not lay with the CNT [leaders or general membership], so much as to the local groups of mainly young, action orientation anarchists, who believed that the only way to resist the gross injustices of the time was by targeting those responsible...a way to settle accounts...showing that arbitrary and oppressive actions did not have abstract consequence, but direct, immediate ones.” (1: p. 153 & 175-6)

A situation arose which could only lead to a spiral of violence and tit for tat gang warfare between unaccountable and uncontrollable anarchist gangs and “a clandestine, parallel Catalan police state with a legion of informers, agents, provocateurs, thugs and killers—people who set themselves above the law and beyond all morality” (2: p. 43).

To Be Continued

The Urgency of building a Mass Circulation Syndicalist Media in Australia Today

Currently there is little in the way of any mass circulation alternative to the corporate media. Highlighted lately by the little countering of the corporate media’s propaganda campaign to facilitate the Abbott Liberal Federal Government and other State Government attacks and an intensification of the employer offensive.

A key transitional step toward the formation of such a mass syndicalist unionism in Australia would be an alliance of grass

One Hundred Years of Workers Solidarity: The History of
Solidaridad Obrera by Mateo Rello, Ferran Aisa, Carles Sanz.
Translated by Paul Sharkey. Published by Kate Sharpley Library.

Associated with the emergence of a new alternative union movement moving in a syndicalist direction favouring direct action on the job and ultra democratic processes, would be its establishment and financing of mass circulation media in its various forms.

Particularly print media, to combat the corporate media and assist syndicalist union campaigns and organising drives. Some have illusions with on-line media, websites and social media, but these mediums encourage workers atomisation, which the capitalist setup is so keen to encourage to prevent collective resistance.

roots friendly unions which were adopting various syndicalist features. It would create a much more favourable terrain for militants to organise. Such a bloc of unions with a base in strategic sectors would be critical to waging campaigns based on direct action, breaking out of enterprise bargaining, defying repressive IR legislation and launching strike waves throughout industry. Consequently, turning the tide against the employer offensive and wiping out the bases of bureaucratic unionism aligned with Unions NSW, the ACTU, the ALP and its various factions.

Australian Trade Union Media

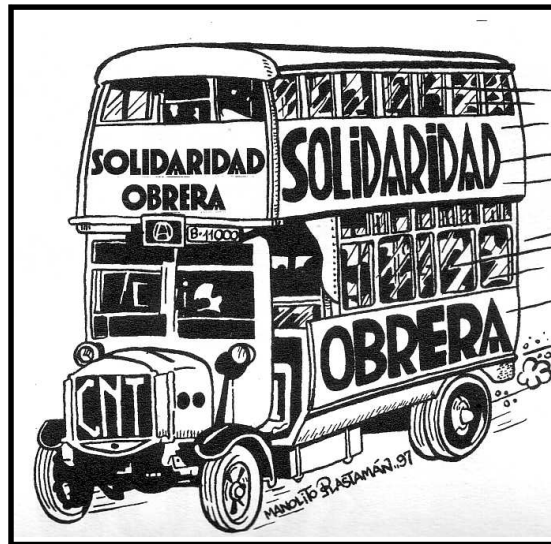
In Australia, until the late 1930's, there existed a network of mass circulation weeklies and dailies sponsored by the bureaucratic unions associated with different factions in the ALP. They proved unable to compete with the bourgeois media on the commercial level and were taken over by it, such as the case of the Sydney based "The World" and "The Labour Daily". Today, not even such a bureaucratic union controlled media exists. Apart from occasional journals, websites etc.

The Launching of SO

The pamphlet under review focuses on the history of the Solidaridad Obrera newspaper, which played a critical role in the development of mass syndicalism in Spain, in particular the CNT (National Confederation of Labour). The pamphlet looks at its emergence in the context of the federation of unions of different tendencies e.g. anarchist, republican, socialist party, etc, which culminated in the formation of the Solidaridad Obrera (SO) Union confederation in 1907. Important factors contributing to its emergence was the formation of the employer federation "Catalan Solidarity" and the influence of syndicalism within a faction of the Socialist Party. Associated with the emergence of the SO federation was the launching of the SO newspaper. By 1916 it has become a daily with a print run of 30,000. The wealthy, rationalist school educationalist, Francisco Ferrer played a key role in bank rolling the paper initially and purchase of its editorial premises.

The pamphlet goes on to examine its stormy history in the context of the emergence of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement. It had constantly changing directors. Whilst, many involved in the editorial side of the paper were manual workers, particularly with backgrounds in the printing industry. It shows, that fearing the influence of the newspaper in working class circles and its role in countering the capitalist press, Governments constantly

harassed and suspended its publication. Resulting in a certain irregularity at times and the creating of separate SO newspapers based in different provincial cities. The pamphlet, particularly looks at the critical role of SO as a mass circulation daily, in assisting the holding of the CNT's Santa Congress in 1918, via its exposure of the Bravo Portillo affair and so reducing the level of state repression, which the CNT was facing. Consequently, this Congress could be held which adopted industry rather than craft as the basis of CNT unionism. Contributing to its massive growth in its national membership from 345,000 in 1918 to 715,000 in 1919.



Whilst, the daily SO print run swelled to 100,000 per edition. Certainly, in the current Australian context, there is an absence of such a vitally important workers mass media favouring grass roots controlled unionism and direct action to fight the capitalist setup.

SO & CNT Factional Struggles

Another focus of the pamphlet is the factional struggle in the CNT in the early thirties in which SO was an important arena. It looks at how the tendency associated with the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) pushing an insurrectionary, revolution around the corner position was successful in seizing control of its editorial committee.

The pamphlet shows how the cycle of insurrections in the early thirties which the CNT was drawn into and encouraged by SO led to massive membership declines and reductions in SO's circulation.

In the pamphlet's discussion of the Spanish civil war and revolution period of 1936-39, it outlines how SO became swept up by the higher committees of the CNT into collaboration with the Popular Front Government. Associated with this development, editorial staff who opposed collaboration and pursuit of the revolutionary/workers control project

were driven out of their positions. Despite this collaboration with the Republican Government, the pamphlet shows that SO was still heavily affected by Republican state censorship and as the counter revolution progressed and the civil war lengthened, its print run was considerably reduced due to Republican authorities restriction of paper, justified due to alleged paper shortages. However, it was able to produce 3 daily editions.

SO After the Spanish Civil War

With the victory of Francoist forces in 1939, the pamphlet looks at the emergence of the CNT in exile and the formation after a few years of an extensive CNT and anarchist underground movement in Spain, which produced various editions of SO which played an important role as a means of counterpropaganda and assisting CNT organising and industrial activity. This activity, membership and regular publication expansion which reached 30,000 copies per edition, was stymied by a new wave of repression targeted at the CNT following the Barcelona tram strike of 1951 and reached a new intensity in 1957. With the death of Franco in 1975 and the turn to parliamentary so called democracy in Spain, the CNT was re-established by numerous leftist groups of different tendencies. It initially experienced explosive growth and involvement in many industrial disputes, but experienced tremendous internal confusion and became an expression of the Spanish youth counter culture to a large degree, similar to developments in Western countries in the 1960's. Unfortunately, the pamphlet does not really discuss this development.

SO in Post Franco Spain

In this context, the Barcelona based SO resumed publication, attaining a print run of 15,000 per fortnight with distribution at many kiosks and penetrating into the workplace. Subsequent state repression associated with the state provocation of the Scala Bombing Affair, the recalling of a director of SO who was accused of turning it into a commercial style paper and a splitting process in the CNT, initially over participation in State controlled union committee elections in workplaces, led to a major decline in CNT membership and later on the splitting of SO, into two different Barcelona based publications. Both declined in regularity and circulation. Whilst many unions left both CNT's.

One of the SO's associated with the "The Joaquin Costa Sector" CNT, was closer to the anti-globalist movement in its coverage and with an emphasis on producing "cultural supplements". Whilst, the rival "Medinaceli Sector" associated SO had a greater emphasis on reaching workers, as it was free of charge to workers, as the cost was entirely met by the organisation.

However, both publications were somewhat limited in industrial coverage, reflecting the lack of the rival CNT's significant presence in the workplace, particularly in Barcelona. The pamphlet ends on this note of decline in SO's fortunes.

To Stop a Whirlwind: Lessons for Syndicalists in Australia Today

In conclusion, the pamphlet generally provides a good sketch of the stormy history of SO and how it was affected by factional struggles in the CNT and the

important role of hostile employers and state repression in contributing to difficulties with its continued publication. A more detailed discussion of the Post Franco situation and the problems it caused for the CNT and SO would be welcomed.

Any contemporary similar publication in Australia or elsewhere is likely to be facing a similar onslaught and must be prepared. It highlights again the importance of building a mass syndicalist labour movement to establish this mass circula-

tion media and the hard yards it must require by militants, who are not just looking for excuses for social occasions to guzzle the "sacrament of Coopers" or micro pseudo churches with red and black colour schemes to join, to escape the alienation of Bourgeois society. Unfortunately, its going to be all about work, work and more work! It will involve establishing the transitional steps toward mass syndicalist unionism and pursuing the long range strategic organising aimed at slowing the employer offensive and turning the tide. *Mark McGuire*

Quarter-Centenary Celebration/Depression of Reviewing Books for Rebel Worker: A Farewell Appeal.

By Graham Purchase

2014 marks 25 years of researching and writing book reviews for RW. Because of ill-health next week I will be retiring overseas.

For me the end of an era. Book reviewing is an unglamorous and parasitic genre, but an integral part of a news service. Twenty-five years of seeking out the best and the worst of Anarchist books for 25 years, has been a life sentence in some respects. Even unpaid columnists sometime need to buy a new computer and a cup of coffee. Obtaining and then ploughing through obscure books in remote locations has involved considerable labour in often very difficult circumstances. Reviewing is an apparently modest effort but one which involves reading many more books than one feels inspired, able or deserving of being reviewed. It has been a rather thankless and not much respected. After all, book reviews are just some ones personal opinion about another's work).

Antonio Jimenez and How It All Begun:

I first met Antonio Jimenez in the spring of 1989 shortly after Jura moved from Newtown to Petersham. I'd only recently arrived and was making a living in Sydney building dry-stone retaining walls along a creek blocked by hundreds of tonnes of illegally dumped clay. Prolonged rain made the site water logged, so I often used to keep Antonio company at the shop on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. No-one visited the new shop, so we spent our days in the shop front talking politics whilst chain-smoking roll-up cigarettes and going halves on a new pouch from time to time.

During this time, shortly before his death, he often encouraged me to continue my work for RW. Antonio, a committed Spanish anarcho-syndicalist immigrant repeatedly made me promise him that: "Wherever I went in the world to keep on writing book reviews for Rebel Worker." I don't take promises seriously. But I have indeed consistently contributed a regular review column to Rebel Worker despite



only rarely being in Oz over the last 15 years.

2013 Eviction of Rebel Worker from Jura:

The anarcho-syndicalism of RW is what Antonio cared about most deeply and passionately. Antonio would turn in his grave if he knew how his supposed former comrades Leanne Mumford and Sid Parissi have shamelessly recently evicted Rebel Worker from Jura Books.

Jura Media and my Ambitions to develop anarchist book publishing and review service Unfulfilled:

Australian Anarchist Review 1991
Black Swan

Rebooted Anarcho-Syndicalist Rebel worker pamphlets of Monty Miller Press. Was planning to do another OZ anarchist review in 1996, but was prevented by Jura Media's demise at the hands of the executive (Sid Parissi and Leanne Mumford) of (Duress) Jura Books in 1997. What passes for an anarchist book service in Sydney, haven't promoted their books in 25 years and left it to Rebel Worker to inform the Australian public of what's new in anarchist literature.

Following our recent eviction by the Jura (Duress) executive members (Sid Parissi and Leanne Mumford) I wish to make a Farewell Appeal in the hope that Rebel Worker can continue to barrack for a Syndicalist union movement in Australia.

APPEAL

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Network requires suitable, cost-effective permanent premises. A\$750,000 is urgently sought to buy premises for the proposed Rebel Worker- Anarcho-Syndicalist Network Media Centre.

Please make out Cheques to Black Cat Media and forward to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW, Australia.

NEWS & NOTES

Lately the mainstream media has been full of revelations about the massive spying by the US NSA (National Security Agency) revealed by Edward Snowden. However it has been strangely shy about researching into the background of the new Opal Transport Smart Card being currently rolled out in NSW. Given the supplier of the Opal Card technology, Cubic, has also been a contractor for the NSA.

Another intriguing aspect of the Opal Card, which has not been delved into by the mainstream media, is its role in facilitating privatisation of public transport. As via this system an integrated ticketing system would be created, which would enable the carve up of public transport into franchises and private operations.

Currently in the NSW Railways, there are moves afoot by management to wreck up station operations, particularly booking offices to compel commuters to take up the Opal Card. Typically the ALP union hierarchy is caving into the whole onslaught. (See article Page 4.) Another prong of the management attack is focused on station barrier staff. (See article Page 3.)

In State Transit, there is a new attack on bus drivers' jobs with upcoming changes to drivers' shifts, which are likely to make their jobs more hazardous and contribute to more accidents. (See article Page 5.)

Rebel Worker has moved: Over a ten year period, Jura Books has mutated into a non-anarchist project resembling more so a Trotskyist group. After 10 years of bullying and lies, their final act of outrage was to use force to illegally remove us from the premises. Please note we (as Anarcho-Syndicalists) are no longer associated with Jura Books. Our correspondence address and email remain the same. We are now forced to seek donations for a space for Anarcho-Syndicalists in Sydney.

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 mornings, leave at the lunch room at work, and at your local café, library or cinema. Your assistance on the financial plane is also welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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www.facebook.com/pages/Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-Group/531249043571323?fref=ts

Grassland Infoshop

207B Nicholson St.
Footscray
3011 Vic.

Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name
Address.....
General Secretary
PO Box 106 Kotara 2289 NSW.

Popular Uprising in Bosnia

By Juraj Katalenac

The Appearance of Plenums

Since early February 2014, in Tuzla, Sarajevo, Bihac, Mostar and Brcko, popular plenums were organised. (To be honest, every minute, a new town tries to organise its plenum, so I've probably left some of them out.)

Plenums are direct democratic assemblies, which are inspired by the organisational model used by Croatian students during their university blockades in 2009. On the question of what is a plenum, activist Damir Arsenijevi? replies:

Quote: A plenum is an assembly of all the members of a group. It is a public space for debate. It has no leaders or prohibitions. Decisions are made publicly.... A plenum is not a political party, or an NGO, or a one-person association. A plenum is the real, and the only, democracy. A Plenum makes and adopts demands to all the institutions of state power by its own declaration. Everybody stands behind the declarations, because they are the words of us all and the demands of us all. All other modes of activity towards the institutions of state power are a continuation of corruption, party-political thievery, and the pursuit of personal benefit and enrichment at the expense of a robbed people.

But, although plenums are usually seen as a positive thing—as places where masses can finally be heard—I have to express a certain scepticism regarding the plenum in Tuzla. My scepticism comes from the persistent ignoring of the original workers' demands by the plenum. The plenum only called for peaceful demonstrations and technical government, instead for the original social questions regarding the five companies.

Quote: The workers of failed companies who have for years demanded their rights before the cantonal institutions, and orga-

nizers of the protests in Tuzla, organized a Plenum of citizens, in which they called on all citizens to join together and jointly strengthen and decide proposals which will today go to the Board of Tuzla Canton.

The organizers at the meeting stated that the fight for their rights must continue through democratic means and by listening to citizens' demands, and that support had been given by members of the academic community in Tuzla.

We have invited all the citizens of Tuzla and I'm glad that a lot of lawyers, professors, educated and professional people responded. Here we present three points which we propose, they are also expanded. Such is the situation that we cannot do nothing in a hurry, we want everything to be done expertly and according to the law.

As we can read from plenum resolutions, it looks like petty-bourgeois experts ran to help workers in their struggle, telling them what is best and realistic to do. Also, the plenum in Tuzla got the chance to propose their own people who will have mandates to form local government.

In Sarajevo, the plenum had more popular demands that can cover the type of demands people proposed:

Quote: - Lower salaries and compensation for political functionaries at all levels of government!

- End compensation with the end of the term!

- Sell the new car pool and invest that money into development of factories in bankruptcy!

- Reform and make transparent public expenditures and revenues!

- Pass the law on property origins!

- Process the suspects for abuse of power!

- Invalidate all illegal privatization contracts and establish the responsibilities of authorities.

- Form an independent anti-corruption commission.

- Damage resulting from protests cover with that part of revenue intended for compensation of government representatives.

From all this, we can see how struggle took another shape—from riots to plenums. We'll have to wait to see if any of these demands will actually be put into action. So far it seems that everyone is happy that violence has stopped. But the question of how the plenums relate to struggle still stand.

As we can see from the demands, they are popular demands that are rooted in opposition to politicians and political-economic elites. We can connect these demands to those of struggles in Egypt, Tunisia or Turkey, where everyone also demanded greater democratic liberties and social rights. These kinds of demands have become quite common in protests in ex-Yugoslavia. Let's just remember the Croatian "bando lopovska" (English: gang of thieves!) protests or protests against government in March and April 2011. They have always been an attack on arrogance, corruption and poverty. They have always been a demand for the rule of law and a welfare state—for "righteous society" within existing society. Sometimes, these demands are connected with nostalgia for Yugoslavia and the social security it provided. These demands are a struggle for better living conditions—for a better future.

But people should realise also that all these demands will never be fulfilled. Even when the bourgeoisie is pressed so hard that it has to bow to wishes of the masses, it only waits a moment when pressure is loosened up, so that they can go into counteroffensive. Nevertheless, movements like this help to shape up the consciousness of workers for future struggles. But workers should also think about what to do when the movement dies out. How will they continue their struggles? *Edited*