

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

***Baird NSW Govt. Sharpens Knives to Carve- Up Public
Transport for Privatisation! Only Direct Action with
Community Support Can Counter this Onslaught!***



**SOLIDARITY FOR IMPRISONED FRENCH GOOD YEAR WORKERS;
NSW RAILWAY NEWS; STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY
NEWS; NSW FIRE BRIGADE UNION NEWS; SOUTH KOREAN LABOUR NEWS;
GREECE; INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS NEWS; BRAZILIAN
SYNDICALISM; IRISH CADBURY WORKERS' STRIKE; BOOK REVIEW CORNER;
NEWS & NOTES; RUDOLF MICHAELIS 1907-1990;**

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Comments are welcome.

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Solidarity for French Goodyear Workers

France: 8 Goodyear Workers Sentenced to Prison

By the Editorial Board of The Organizer newspaper

Eight former Goodyear workers in Amiens, France have been sentenced to 9 months in prison in a so-called "boss-napping" during the occupation of the Goodyear-Nord tire plant in January 2014. The sentences were originally set at 24 months, but a portion of the terms were suspended. Philippe Martinez, a leader of the CGT, called the decision "scandalous and unjust."

Workers at the facility fought for six years to stave off the plant closing after bosses

had deemed the plant out of date and made modernization of the facility contingent on concessions in work rules and shift structure.

The fight came to a head when union members occupied the plant and temporarily detained two members of the plant management. The Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT) was able to negotiate a severance package for the almost 1,200 workers displaced by the plant closing. Fifteen percent of industrial jobs in France have been lost in the past decade.

The prosecution of the 8 Goodyear workers is politically motivated and comes in the context of a general offensive against workers in France, Europe, and worldwide. The "Socialist" president, François Hollande, used the aftermath of the Paris terror attack to impose a State of Emergency, which limits the right to speak and protest, as well as advocating for an anti-worker Labor Code "reform."

Claiming that the Code du Travail is overly complex and an obstacle to investment by foreign capitalists, Hollande is pushing for the gutting of traditional protections workers have won through decades of struggle.

Defending working-class methods of struggle

Factory occupations are a traditional method of working-class struggle, along with strikes, general strikes, and mass actions. In the United States, we look back to the Flint sit-down strike (1936-37), the Toledo Autolite strike (1934) and the Minneapolis Teamster strike (1934) for inspiration. Our class has to relearn the lessons of the past in order to reverse the retreat of our unions. We should also take inspiration

from the example of the workers at Goodyear-Nord, who were not afraid to confront the power of the bosses and the state.

Speaking at a rally in Paris on January 23 against the State of Emergency, Daniel Gluckstein, a national secretary of the Independent Democratic Workers' Party (POID), stated:

"If we do not succeed in imposing our demands from the top, in the National Assembly, we will impose them from below.

"Yes, we will impose them from below — that is, through the mobilization of millions and millions of people, through strikes, through mass protests around specific objectives. It will take the combat in unity in support of clear slogans and a clear objective — to defeat this government in the service of the reactionary forces and the European Union, and to defeat it as it seeks to impose each and every one of its plans.

"We must defeat this government to force the release of our Goodyear comrades, to preserve the Labor Code and workers' rights. . . ."

Demand justice

The Editorial Board of The Organizer newspaper demands justice for the Goodyear workers. No prison sentences, not one day in jail! We call on U.S. unions to show solidarity with the workers of France as they resist the State of Emergency and the assault on the Code du Travail. We say no to the prosecution of Air France workers, who are under threat of prosecution for an incident where bosses were stripped of their shirts and forced to climb over a fence to escape angry workers.

** Free the Goodyear 8! Not one day in jail!*

** No Labor Code Reform!*

ASN 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 & send to P.O. Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW.

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

A Hard Slog Ahead Unless We Fight Now!

by *Crimson Coconut*

In a fit of neo-liberal, privatisation, madness the New South Wales Baird Government is intent on removing the last vestiges of government services to the private sector. In their place we will have a privately owned, expensive, user-pays system of exploitation that will not be able to fully meet the needs of the community. As I write this article, N.S.W. Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian is about to deliver her case for massive job cuts to the public sector. When Liberal Government's talk about "leaner, more efficient" State Organisations they are talking about job losses.

We have already seen the gutting of the R.T.A. and other Government services which have been morphed into a Government Service Desk at your local Shopping Mall. Everything else has been moved into an online shop where you cannot interact with a human. **The system does not work well and requires a login that tracks your life history of interaction with the Government.** Much of what is being done is a sop to multinationals as proposed in the T.P.P. agreement (Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement, a secret trade deal between nations around the Pacific which puts huge multinational corporations in charge of workers' wages, privatisation of government services to pharmaceutical prices and everything in between). These Multinational Corporations are lining up to get their hands on State businesses such as Public Transport, Health etc. However large corporations do not need large workforces. The push by the Baird Government to pare back the government businesses to their bare bones is to make them attractive for privatisation.

Just this week a transport lobby group (T.T.F. a consortium of big business, Hotels, Casinos, Airlines, Bus and Coach companies etc) called for private operators to be allowed to bid for the operation of Sydney Buses.

This is the same mob that pushed the franchise at Sydney Ferries. They have been backed up by the Auditor General's report which said it was a good idea that could save N.S.W. \$500 million over 5 years. They pointed chiefly to the "success" of

the private operation of Sydney Ferries which is claimed to have saved the Government \$100 million since 2012. This is small cheese considering the wreckage that has been left behind in the aftermath of the move to private operation. The privately operated Sydney Ferries, now Harbour City Ferries, has become fragmented as time has gone on. Uneconomical services have been cut, large swathes of the workforce have also been cut. Other operators have entered the Ferry business and are managing the lucrative express runs such as Manly to Circular Quay. In the last month the N.S.W. Government announced plans to privatise the whole of the Sydney trains network. This should come as no surprise considering that already the North West Rail Link will



be operated via a consortium of private companies linked to M.T.R., the operator of the Hong Kong Metro. **The original proposal was to run trains without a driver or crew on the refurbished line. There has been some concessions granted to allow a driver/observer on the single decker trains. However this will probably be a temporary measure. New technology will also be introduced that does away with most station staff jobs on this line. The eventual completion of the North West Rail Link will see it stretched out to include the Bankstown Line.** For those working in Sydney Trains the future of holding down a job with similar conditions looks grim. **Over the last few years casualisation of the workforce, introduction of new technology that has done away with jobs, cost cutting and intensification of work have built a culture of insecurity and inevitability into the workforce. This could have been overcome had there not been so much inertia within the public transport unions.**

According to the Government, efficiency, customer satisfaction and productivity has been massively improved in the rail network. That is a very subjective opinion. However, if we hold them at their word, then the sackings of 2000 people since the introduction of the last E.B.A., has been for nought. If things are on the up, as they say, it shows that State run enterprises can be as "efficient" as those in private sector. Then why privatise or outsource?

If the truth be known the whole exercise is not about improving the running of railways or the buses, it's simply about flogging them off. For the Liberals (and Labor) the "profit motive" is the ideological fulcrum around which these decisions revolve. Nothing else matters. They couldn't give a frig about workers conditions, nor about providing a public service. The only concern is that corporations and their mates get their own way and shareholders get a dividend. For the public, privatisation is a bad deal. In the long run there will be less people to give customer service. Many are already finding this out when they go to the station ticket window, if it is open, to be told to go across the road and buy an Opal Card. Public security will also suffer on stations that will be unattended and on dark suburban streets when buses do not come. **There are already proposals before the Government to lift transport fares beyond the C.P.I. Pensioners will have their fares lifted by something like 30%, and the \$2.50 Sunday Sunday tickets are to be abolished if, as predicted, the proposal gets adopted.** A massive rise in general fares from outlying suburban areas is also proposed. Some estimates of train fares after privatisation suggest that they could be three times the current value. If you take the example of fares on the privatised Airport Line and those that have been put forward for the North West Rail Link then a tripling of the current fare after privatisation is feasible. **Privatisation of railways around the world have been an unmitigated disaster. If you lived in Melbourne you could read constant accounts of safety breaches, poor maintenance standards, cancelled services and a system that is dysfunctional by world standards. Likewise, privatisation of British Rail led to the fragmentation of the railway into different sections owned by different companies. Workers in the rail system**

are under constant attack from unscrupulous bosses and there have been calls from disgruntled commuters to re-nationalise the railways to lift standards.

The beginning of the privatisation of British Railways was marked by a string of serious rail accidents leading to an unacceptable loss of life. Essential maintenance was not carried out because it ate into the profits of the private operators.

That is the bottom line of privatisation. In N.S.W. privatisation of Sydney Trains and Sydney Buses will be a disaster for the public transport workforce which will definitely be under the pump once the privatisation is officially announced. There will be attempts by the Government to water down any obligations to workers in the upcoming E.B.A. to align themselves with a transition to private management and operation. The wage freeze of 2.5% P.A. is also still current so don't expect the Government to be generous either.

What do we need to do?

Rail workers and Buses have known for years that all of the take-backs of management were leading down the path to eventual privatisation. It has been clear for a while now as we have watched successive sections disappear from the workforce from Cleaners to Ticket Clerks, Station Support Officers, Duty Managers, Senior Managers, Station Masters. Now management want to sell the core, the rotting carved up carcass of the railway and the buses, for a song.

But those of us that are left are worth more than that. We kept the rail system running while management was sabotaging and throwing spanners in the machinery in order to put the blame on us. We can't go down without a fight. While all the other jobs were lost, not a finger was raised by our union to organise a widespread fight back that could have stopped the haemorrhaging of valuable jobs. **Except for a few cronies that sucked up to management or the union, not one decent job was saved. If we had fought with the**

help of the Union Leadership things could have been different. But that help never came, and workers on the job failed to organise, so the job losses went on and on. We cannot wait for our unions to act on the proposed privatisation. By the time an official announcement is made it will be far too late. The support of the Union may be helpful for us to put up a decent fight. We will have to make the first organisational moves though, it may mean we have to drag them screaming and kicking into a confrontation with the Government. Alex Claassens, R.T.B.U. Secretary has already stated that the Union will fight the privatisation of Sydney Trains. We need to make sure that he keeps his word on a fair dinkum fight that involves us all rather



than a few union bureaucrats. We have to get the public on side. The public must learn how much different a privatised Public Transport system will make to their daily commute. Air your views by writing to the letters section of the daily and local newspapers, engage the public in conversation and win their support for a campaign against privatisation. I believe that most Australians are against privatisation if it is going to cost them more or they if they are to lose services. Hold regular impromptu meetings of workers in your workplace and work out strategies that you can use to educate the public, to defend yourselves, to make and distribute leaflets and to educate your-

selves about the issues of privatisation. Solidarity and respecting other viewpoints and working together is essential. There should be some goal setting at such workplace meetings with tasks divided up amongst attendees. Hold public leafleting days against privatisation on your days off. Turn them into a social event with lunch, a few drinks or a get together afterwards. Bonding sessions are good for the struggle and for building solidarity. Picket, public transport depots and offices with placards and produce tee shirts against privatisation. Produce buttons, that you can wear when you are not working, asking for support for a campaign against privatisation. Ask the union for support for a campaign of this nature. We at Sparks will help where we can to produce leaflets and other paraphernalia against privatisation. Just drop us a line. All in all you must deny the momentum that the Baird Government has for privatisation. In the end everything may be on the line and there may be little to lose. The time to prepare for that eventuality is now, not later when it will be too late. For this reason it is important to make links with other workers in the public sector who are also organising against job cuts and privatisation. The bigger you are, the stronger you are.

Despite what the union tells you about strike action being "illegal", when the battle gets down to the wire and you are faced with losing your job or your standard of living is under threat, strike action, carefully planned and communicated may be an effective weapon.

However such a course of action must be thoroughly evaluated for its effect at the appropriate time. Wildcat strikes without agreed aims or a fuzzy objectives have little chance of changing things and can demoralise those involved when they fail. Organise, talk, and organise for the best chance of success. Just remember "if you don't fight, you lose" and "If you don't try, you will never know if you could have won." Working together, create your own luck and your own destiny. We'll be in touch.

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

Madam Lash: State Transit Dominatrix lashing out with her crop!

RW: What are your impressions of the current situation at Randwick?

Waverley Busie: Originally the site of Randwick depot was a foundry, subsequently it became a bus depot. On several occasions over the last thirty years, its location was moved. It was the depot where I was first trained for the job many years back. It's to be closed by the Baird Gov-

ernment. As according to latest information received, the contract for the sale of this valuable land has already been signed! It's likely the Government's developer mates will construct 4-6 storey apartments on the site. The light rail extensions in the Eastern Suburbs is providing the pretext. Associated with these extensions, the bosses announced, there will be an excess of 220 STA buses on the road in the city. Implying in their state-

ment that at least one depot must close and many runs will be cut. Associated with this move, the bosses want to “cull” many drivers at Randwick, which they regard as “surplus to requirements”, particularly the older drivers and those who aren’t expected to put up much resistance. The rest are likely to be transferred to Waverley or Port Botany.

“Madam Lash” has been assigned the task of targeting certain drivers for the sack by higher management. She originally was a STA bus driver. She never pulled any punches, became cosy with the bosses and was promoted into a management job. Her technique for doing the dirty work, is to access data from the Global Tracking of bus movements, surveillance camera footage, checking times when drivers sign off. She also goes around in a van following certain drivers on their routes. It’s likely she has others also doing this on the road surveillance. In all this monitoring, she looks for patterns, which she can use to build up cases for the sack. Involving say drivers sitting a bit longer than necessary in the bus before signing off to get some overtime and constant shortages. So far, she has managed to have a group of drivers sacked and others have been driven off the job. Consequently, spare drivers from other depots are continually being sent to Randwick due to the staffing shortage, associated with Madam Lash’s mayhem. No one so far is standing up to fight it.

When this new monitoring technology was first introduced, we were told by management and the union officials it was not going to be used for disciplinary action. Just to help with say handing such issues as difficult passengers. However, this latest episode and many subsequent cases, has shown this is a brazen lie! The union bosses appear to be doing nothing to tackle the legality of this misuse by management of new technology and data accessing for its nefarious agendas. Whilst, they haven’t even the guts to reveal to drivers, the depot closure master plan and its ramifications!

Grass roots controlled industrial action such as a “work to rule” away from the tentacles of the union officials, needs to be considered at Randwick and across the STA over the issue. Madam Lash needs to be found alternative and more appropriate employment where her “bondage techniques” can find a more wholesome outlet, such as in the dungeons of one of those exotic clubs in Kings Cross! Where perhaps she can make more “intimate” acquaintance with the aid of her slashing crop, of some of those big STA bosses, she so admires!

Another worrying aspect of management at Randwick, is that it has knocked back offers from other depots

to improve amenities for staff with such flimsy excuses as lack of space or on OH&S grounds. It seems they don’t expect Randwick to be in operation for long.

At Waverley, we are now seeing management putting pressure on Admin. Staff to nail drivers for a disciplinary dividend on bogus grounds. It’s been noticed recently in regard to sickies. Despite drivers clearing the sick leave with the Roster Clerk and supplying medical certificates, drivers are being called into the office. On the basis that they turned off their mobiles/phones, and so were not contactable for an interrogation by Admin. Staff about the sickie. We have to put our foot down and stop this harassment! We need to impose a ban on going into the office. **RW: What are your thoughts on the latest rampage by the Baird Government?**

WB: The Baird Government is drunk with money making to help out their business mates in their profiteering. They seem to be acting like the Bjelke Peterson regime in Qld. They are a law unto themselves and their Big Business backers, seeking to squeeze the poor, every way they can. **Their strategy in pursuing these attacks appears to be based on wedge politics. It involves targeting isolated groups, one by one, relying on a lack of solidarity on the job and in the community, with many just keeping their heads down.** Latest news has been its cutting down so far of 80 trees, half of which are figs which have been cut down near the Eastern Distributor, along Anzac Parade and along Alison and Wansey roads, close to Randwick Racecourse, as part of the light rail extensions. **One area where the trees have been cut is near the Randwick TAFE building. Despite nearby land being available without trees. It looks terrible. Some of the trees to be culled are part of the ANZAC WWI memorial. Overall, the Government plans to cut down approximately 425 trees. Despite land being free of trees available along the Randwick race course area. However, the Racecourse didn’t want to supply this land, as it has other plans for it. Cunningly, the Govt. has commenced cutting the trees in early January, when many people in the area were on holidays.** Consequently, initially they have been able to avoid mass protest action by the locals and

people from other suburbs. Only a tiny handful made it along to protest. However, on Sunday 14/2/16 there was a large protest near the trees, with the crowd spilling onto an affected street.

In the case of Daceyville, where a relative of mine lives, the housing commission residents are facing huge uncertainty. Ominously, she and other residents have recently received a letter from the Baird Government advising there will be major changes in the area associated with the light rail extension in the area. It’s likely the depot for the light rail will be constructed either near South Sydney Juniors Leagues Club or East Gardens Shopping Centre. However, at the moment the location is not certain. We believe a likely scenario is that the Government intends to bulldoze down most of the WWII veteran’s small garden provided heritage housing commission cottages in the area and construct 4 storey units by their developer business mates. Other cottages in the area will just be sold



off. Some current residents will be given the option of purchasing their houses.

Whilst in the case of Waterloo, the Govt. intends to demolish housing commission high rises, with the excuse of complaints about drug addicts and the need to construct a new metro station. In this way, developers can construct high rises within 800 metres of the station, according to legislation and then proceed to buy up properties in the neighbourhood to build more high rises. The new station will also assist the commuting needs of the new apartment owners in the area.

In the case of the WestConnex construction in St. Peters, where 100,000’s of vehicles per day will spew out from the exit, some residents will have their backyards next to the expressway. The locals have been given no say in this development. In such suburbs as Haberfield, many heritage homes will be demolished.

Recently I spoke with a lady who had previously lived in Toronto, she mentioned that since 1976 it’s government had ceased

all freeway development and focused on improving public transport. Today, its public transport system is of an excellent standard with very good connective services. In contrast, various NSW Governments, since that time have constructed a whole stack of freeways/Tollways such as the M2, M5, Cross City Tunnel, Harbour Tunnel, culminating in the current WestConnex. Whilst private companies have financially benefited from operating these tollways. However, the Govt. is wasting public money on "white elephant" transport infrastructure such as the construction of the foot bridge over Anzac Parade to the Stadium at Moore Park. **No one seems to use it and was over budget. It's failing to spend money on urgently needed infrastructure, such as a new large bridge at the Spit in Mona Vale on the North Shore, to replace the existing small bridge. Access to the Domestic Airport is currently a disaster with traffic being very slow and needs urgent expenditure to remedy the problem.** Over this period, bus and rail services have become rundown.

RW: What other tactics of the Liberals have you noticed on the job?

WB: One tactic I have noticed has been to impose "bumbling" bosses, to wreck up the operations of Govt authorities to facilitate privatisation moves. I believe this tactic is being used across the NSW public sector. Lately at Waverley we have been seeing this wrecking graphically with the critical state of bus maintenance with many bus break downs on the road. Whilst, the bosses blame the mechanics. **Lately I've noticed running times on many routes are being tightened up. If you complain, there is a lot of buck passing going on. With the Radio Room, and the schedulers being unable to do anything to remedy the problem. The union officials, as usual have their hands tied and will do nothing. The hidden agenda of the bosses looks to be to do this dirty work to supposedly increase productivity, so when the Government's business mates takeover, they don't need to do anything regarding the running times.**

The 400's Gauntlet Hurdled Down

An example of this process is the recent changes to the 400 going from Burwood to Bondi. In the past drivers fought for a ½ hour layover time, as the run is very long taking normally 1 ½ hours.

Suddenly out of the blue, the layover has been cut to ¼ hour. Now when you get to the end of the run, its already time to leave! This cutback is completely unsustainable and will cause a crisis in STA operations. Both Waverley and Kingsgrove drivers, who share the run are up in arms over the change. I've had brief conversations with many drivers from both depots who operate the run. They have all said the time has been cut and they all find it difficult to stay on time. We urgently need a meeting of drivers from both depots to discuss the changes to the 400 and tackle the problem. Many in Depot Admin are becoming fed up with Rowley and his path of carnage in the STA. The STA is being set up to fail.

My wife who works in another Govern-



ment agency, has had a similar experience. Her new boss has been creating havoc and running down the service, by finding pretexts to sack professional staff vital to the service operation.

Another method is for the Government's media mates to rundown public owned facilities over its deficiencies. The Daily Telegraph has been playing this role in regard to the STA. It recently ran a story where it listed 460 commuter complaints. However, when these complaints were individually examined, most turned out to be quite trivial. This technique was used on the Sydney Ferries, prior to its privatisation. The media was full of stories about ferry accidents. Following the selloff, the media has been very quiet. However, if you ever go down to the Quay, you can see the ferries are now being run on the smell of an oily rag. It's very unwelcoming without anyone to greet commuters and has a very dilapidated appearance. When I last travelled on trains in South Australia, I noticed a marked decline in the quality of private train service. In comparison with the fantastic meals on offer with the Gov-

ernment operated services, the standard of food was quite poor. A very restricted and dull menu was supplied. As we have said in Sparks over the years, when public transport is put in private hands, it gets run down. As the company can't afford to do adequate maintenance and will cut corners to make profits. Workers lose interest in their jobs and leave. In the case of Adelaide buses, which have been privatised, many casuals are being put on, to fill spaces, due to the old timers leaving. Whilst, commuters are discouraged from using it due to poor services. With the loss in patronage, the bosses are encouraged to cut back the services even further in the interest of maximising profits.

RW: What's the latest developments with Newcastle Buses?

WB: According to information received from the union, with the completion of the Light Rail in May of this year, it together with the Buses and Ferries will be sold off by the Baird Government to one of its business mates. **Newcastle people are very angry over the sell off and aware of the corporate rip off which is being perpetrated against them. The local council is also up in arms over the issue. Intriguingly, the Newcastle area, just prior to the last state elections was the focus of a wide web of corruption amongst Liberal politicians, which was exposed by ICAC investigations.**

RW: What is the latest in regard to the Opal System?

WB: Unlike the previous green machine ticketing system, the Opal system and equipment installed on buses isn't owned by the STA. Its owned by Cubic, the company which supplies the technology. This is weird! If our manual updating of the Opal doesn't fix a problem, the company techs have to be called in. However, there is no regular maintenance being done. **The Opal system's constant malfunctioning is causing buses to run late and ever more stress for both drivers and commuters. Many commuters regard the Opal as rushed in and there is widespread and growing anger in the community about the system. It's currently also losing millions in revenue. Whilst over charging many due to technology malfunctioning and commuter error.**

Other news is that the STA is short changing commuters by not issuing new timetables. Whilst on say the 440 to Bronte, there are plans for a major cut to bus tops. There is a likelihood that on the part of the route along Norton Street from Leichhardt Town Hall to Parramatta Rd, the number of bus stops is to be reduced from 3 to 1. Definitely, in comparison with 3 to 4 years ago, we are now seeing a very inferior bus service.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

Once again V/Line employees will discuss ongoing issues around the job as regards to Human Resources and other issues mentioned in previous issues of Sparks. Once again names have been changed.

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

Clarence: You are correct, Human Resources has been merged with Security and Health and Safety into a new Super Department.

Rastus and Roscoe: The head of Human Resources finished a couple of days ago. We do not know whether she was pushed or resigned.

Sheona: You can see the tension around the place.

Clarence: We have no sympathy for anyone who loses their job in Human Resources, as these Bastards have caused stress amongst employees who were stood down and had to front these people for disciplinary reasons.

Rastus: We think the head of Human Resources was removed over a number of issues where managers picked on employees at various country locations.

Roscoe: Yes, certain employees were victimised and placed under stress, as various managers alleged these employees breached V/Line policy.

Clarence: What policy? They make up policy on the run.

Sheona: A number of these cases were settled at huge cost to V/Line, as compensation and legal expenses to employees was paid out. We wonder whether the V/Line board got wind of the these huge expenses and decided heads would roll to save costs.

RW: A number of our readers were watching A Current Affair, saw a video of a passenger and a V/Line conductor involved in an altercation at a Country station.

Rastus: You are correct. The location was Broadford and the conductor was provoked by a passenger and he retaliated because this passenger said personal things about him and his family.

Roscoe: The conductor has been stood down pending an enquiry. I also saw Current Affair and most of the viewers who rung up supporting the conductor.

RW: Some of our NSW readers, say the film clip was on news bulletins around the world.

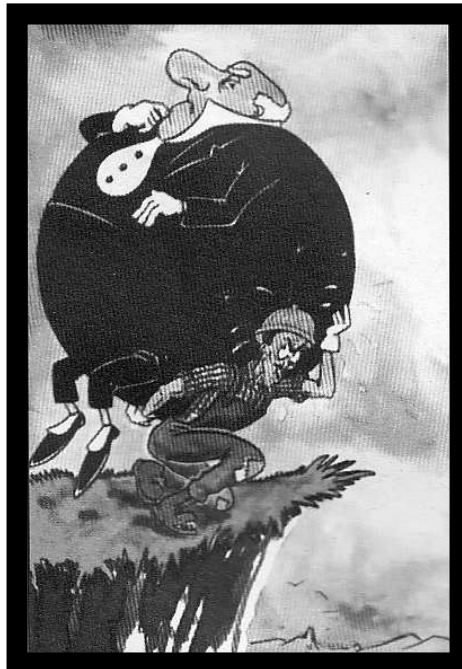
Rastus: The union cannot support the conductor.

RW: Why?

Rastus: Because he was not a Union Member, so the conductor may have to obtain the services of an industrial lawyer.

RW: There is a lesson for all. Join the relevant union or you are on your own if you are in trouble.

Sheona: The unfortunate thing is some new employees will not join a union. One of the reasons could be lack of knowledge about trade unions. But the other reason could be that some employees think that if they join a union, they will be overlooked for future promotions.



Ichabod: When I was in the conductor class, the instructor was bad mouthing the union.

Isabel: Only recently has the union been allowed to talk about the union in conductor classes in Introduction sessions.

Ichabod: As this issue goes to press the conductor involved in the incident at Broadford is still stood down.

RW: What is the BAN on employees in the traffic grades from wearing shorts.

Penrod: A few months ago employees were given a glossy four page colour book on uniform presentation.

Penelope: The book would have been expensive to produce, Professional Models were used to promote the uniforms. The book stated SHORTS were not part of the Uniform. There was no mention in the book about FEMALE CONDUCTORS wearing SKIRTS.

Roscoe: The Drivers are also banned from wearing shorts. We think the book is a waste of tax payers' money. The amount saved on producing this book

could have been spent on fixing up locomotives and carriages. A number of trains are cancelled day by day due to faulty equipment.

Penelope: Although the book did not mention SKIRTS, a couple of days before the new rules were to take effect, a female conductor was called before a CSM and was told that SKIRTS were not part of the uniform.

Penrod: What a joke, this Ban was only introduced because a certain manager thinks shorts and skirts are unprofessional.

Ichabod: The date of enforcement came and went and a number of conductors still came to work in shorts and skirts, then V/Line pounced. The staff clerks were given instructions to send employees home, if they were not in the correct uniform.

Rastus and Roscoe: They were lucky, trains were not cancelled as a driver still continued to wear shorts, but he wasn't stood down. You see, they may have had to cancel a train, as we drivers have a policy. The Policy is, if the drivers think the stand down is unjust, then no one covers the driver's shift.

Isabel: An article appeared in the Herald/Sun about the ban and the shock jocks on 3AW discussed the ban. They made V/Line out as a bunch of idiots, resulting in the ban on female conductors wearing skirts being rescinded.

Penrod: The ban on shorts still applies but what will they do if the temperature goes over 30 degrees and a number of conductors turn up for work in shorts? They will have to let these conductors work because if they stood down the conductors and replace the trains with buses, they will be made to look like idiots.

Ichabod: Finally V/Line is conducting a witch hunt to find out who rang the Herald Sun.

RW: In the last issue, mention was made of a conductor stood down over a van door being open when departing a train. What is the update?

Penrod: One word SACKED!

Rastus and Roscoe: Not only sacked but was humiliated. Certain conductors, AKA the crawlers spread malicious rumours about the conductor's work record.

Isabel: The work record is not the issue. The law relating to the closing of the Van Door of the train whilst departing is a bad law and must be repealed.

Ichabod: The conductor went to Fair Work Australia and there was a Confidential Settlement. Unfortunately, the conductor did not get reinstated.

Penelope: V/Line has a new policy on disciplinary issues.

RW: What?

Ichabod: The policy is: If you have to face a disciplinary hearing, you can take a Union Representative, but wait for it. The Union Representative is only allowed to observe, but not defend the member.

RW: Is this a Kangaroo Court?

Roscoe: They will try but in an incident at a country location where the union representative was told he was only there to observe, he and the person being disciplined got up and walked out of the meeting, leaving the Line Manager with egg on his face.

RW: Once again, we have run out of space. I hope the restructure of Human Resources, results in better understanding of work issues. As regards the wearing of shorts, employees should be allowed to wear them if the weather goes over 28 degrees. Thank you for the conductor coming forward.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say. The employee who fought back at Broadford deserves a medal, but was foolish for not being a union member. Finally, if you have to front a LINE MANAGER for disciplinary reasons, don't turn up!

STOP PRESS

As this issue is going to press, it has been reported that the Chief Executive of V/Line has resigned. The reason, he resigned is over wheel defects on VELOCITY TRAINS. A full report will appear in the next issue.

NSW FIRE BRIGADE UNION NEWS

Me Myself and I

Jim Casey's (current NSW Fire Brigade Union State Secretary) course into Parliament (should he win the seat of Grayndler) has been a torturous one. A case of lots more snakes than ladders and a string of broken organizations and very disappointed people left in his wake.

Jim was born in Lithgow. A bleak little town over 100 kilometres west of Sydney. With little going on in Lithgow Jim was sent to boarding school in Sydney. Not just any school Jim was sent to one of the most expensive private boarding schools in the country – Saint Josephs Catholic College Hunters Hill. Twelve years of indoctrination and discipline left Jim deeply averse to conflict and with a pathological need to be liked. Jim was never going to be a man whom wanted too much change to the order of society.

After finishing his geography degree Jim worked for the university students union for a few years. This allowed him to continue his involvement with the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) a Trotskyist communist social group. Before Jim was booted out of the ISO he had spent close to twenty years studying how to be a politician.

Jim applied for a job with the NSW fire brigades but couldn't make the grade. Instead he was employed by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) fire brigades and after a couple of years was able to arrange a 'temporary' exchange to NSW in this way he became a fire fighter in NSW

without ever passing the minimum entry requirements every other fire fighter had passed. A number of years later Jim approached the fire brigade union's leadership and had himself placed on that team's ticket for a looming election. Just weeks before that union election Jim switched camps – leaving his team in disarray and was subsequently elected union vice president.



Over the next three years the fire brigade union was rebuilt with a democratically elected union representative in over 60% of all NSW fire brigades. Union journals and minutes of all meetings were regularly published, the number of organizers was tripled and delegates were trained resourced and actively participated in running the union. Thousands of members regularly attended meetings and

the fire brigade union was the first public sector union to break the Labor party wages policy of just 2.5% wage increases per year.

Over these three years Jim had been quietly working to undermine the union's leadership. Having aligned himself with a fat union bureaucrat and a two bit law school graduate aspiring to be a Greens party hack Jim was able to undermine a second union leadership.

Jim promised the world to fire fighters claiming he could win even bigger wage rises, new fire stations and a better promotional system. The 2010 Fire Brigade Employees Union election was one of the dirtiest fire fighters union elections ever held. Petitions calling for the leadership's resignation, anonymous motion's of no confidence and completely spurious claims of a breakdown in communication between management and the union. Just months earlier Jim had been given a lavishly funded overseas 'study' tour. The only requirement being a report to management. Management then granted Jim leave to travel the state selling himself to fire fighters as a viable candidate for the union's state secretary.

Jim was elected secretary in July 2010 but things didn't slow down for Jim after the election. Within weeks of taking office Jim was called into the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) and asked to explain himself following the publication of an article he had written for the fire fighters union journal. In this article he went to great lengths to criticize the IRS's decision to grant fire fighters a 12.6% pay rise. The hierarchy of the IRC was infuriated. Just months earlier the former union boss turned politician Michael Costa had very publicly threatened to shut

down the NSW IRC if it granted any public servant more than 2.5% increase in wages. Jim was now wedged by his own rhetoric. The union's lawyers told him he had to give a written apology and tell the IRC he wouldn't complain about their decisions ever again.

At Jim's first test of nerves he buckled. Sending a snivelling letter to the IRC Jim promised he would be a good lick spittle and not dare to offend the court again. With his confidence rattled management ramped up the pressure and threw dispute after dispute at Jim. Overwhelmed and out of his depth he then started throwing long held conditions and entitlements out the window. A sleazy deal allowing management to stand over fire fighters taking their own sick leave was established. Physical standards for new recruits were lowered and a number of crippled fire fighters were sacked.

With a long list of election promises to live up to he quickly set about putting his stamp on the new job. Jim was very proud to announce union and management bipartisan support of the 'Workplace Standards Branch' (WSB). An internal secret police type organization established to investigate and prosecute internal policy breaches. As time has unfolded the WSB has been carrying out secret investigations some based on anonymous accusations and compiling secret files on fire fighters including union representatives. The WSB is now a menacing shadowy organization monitoring social media, mainstream media, sick leave and non-compliance with work routines.

Less than five years after the establishment of the WSB Jim was once again proud to have pushed through changes to promotional systems allowing management complete discretion to pick and choose who is and is not promoted. After more than four decades of an open and egalitarian system of promotions Jim had both handed it over to management and helped create the very tools used to pit fire fighter against fire fighter. Worse still fire fighters now have a glass ceiling for promotions with no prospect of promotion to station officer or duty commander for many, many years.

With the WSB under his belt Jim then moved on to staffing. Logistic Supply Vehicles (LSV) throughout Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong were shut down. These LSV's had been used to move hose, foam, uniforms and equipment to and from emergencies. They had also served as alternate duties jobs for fire fighters recovering from injuries. Eight LSV's staffed by operational fire fighters 24/7 were privatized overnight. Jobs were lost and the operational capacity of the states fire brigades undermined.

Two of four communication and dispatch centres were shut down and the staff tipped out onto the street. While up until that time each of the four communications centres had been staffed 24/7 taking 000 calls and coordination fire engines across the state. Negotiations have now started on lowering staffing levels in these centres and concerns persist that nearly all the fire fighters will be tipped out and replaced by call centre workers on minimum wages. Once again positions for sick and injured fire fighters are being outsourced.

Perhaps the biggest impact Jim has had on fire fighters outside of the lowest wages in two decades, the wholesale loss of jobs and conditions has been his union busting activities. While Jim was getting his arse caned by management he needed a distraction to stop fire fighters looking too closely at what was happening to their jobs. Egged on by the personal animosity and bile of the fat bureaucrat working in the union office Jim kicked off a character assassination of the national union secretary.

Jim contacted the Murdoch press – always keen on a union bashing story Jim announced that the national secretary was corrupt and had been misappropriating money. The national union launched defamation action against Jim and only dropped the action when Jim managed to get the union to cover his personal costs.

The union then started its only organizing campaign while Jim was at the helm. Teams of union officials were lined up to call every fire fighter individually and try to talk them into resigning from the United Fire fighters Union of Australia (UFUA). Terrible lies were told to get fire fighters to resign. Thousands did and the money saved from the union dues previously forwarded to the UFUA still remain unaccounted for. The mass withdrawal of the union's seven thousand members has done enormous damage to the only national fire fighters union in Australia. While the UFUA has been kicking goals and winning wages and conditions fire fighters in NSW have been going backwards. Jim had now managed to undermine a third union leadership.

With Jim now well on the nose with fire fighters he put to practice what he had learnt in the Catholic Church Jim needed another distraction. A medal was minted for fire fighters whom had been members of the union for more than 25 years. While jobs wages and conditions were lost Jim was out pinning medals on fire fighters' chests. A shameless and shallow way to distract a unionized workforce from really important issues at the very time activism was most needed.

Jim then created more layers of bureaucracy. The fourteen member leadership group was increased to seventeen. This allowed him to swallow some of his most vociferous opponents, blow out any capacity to have the group make any strategic decisions and empower the fat bureaucrat rather than the membership. Three of the union's organizers were sacked, the delegates starved of information and then directly undermined in an attempt to make fire fighters much more dependent on the union's employees. Minutes of meetings were withdrawn and the union journal was eventually only issued before union elections.

After six years of ruin and loss for members of the fire brigades employees union fire fighters had finally had enough. A last minute campaign by just four members came within 6 votes of toppling Jim. Had it not been for the huge amount of money thrown into supporting Jim he would now be gone. Six weeks after a wholesale campaign to keep his job, Jim was chasing endorsement as a greens politician. Seeing the writing on the wall Jim is now jumping ship.

Jim's decision to cut and run has left fire fighters high and dry. Management has clearly stated that it intends to completely outsource fire fighter training. It has stated it intends to have fire fighters carrying out the work of paramedics without an increase in wages. Fitness standards and now being developed which will see many fire fighters booted after decades serving the public and the wholesale closure of fire brigades in Sydney and Newcastle is on the way. Jim's legacy for fire fighters has been nothing short of a disgrace. He has left us high and dry and is now (once again) looking after his own self-interest over and above that to which he was elected.

In order to boost his chances of defeating the incumbent (Anthony Albanese) federal member for Grayndler Jim has been 'temporarily transferred' to Balmain fire brigade as a supernumerary fire fighter. Having trashed the fire fighters union Jim is now hiding behind the uniform of a fire fighters and stepping away from his track record as a union boss. The only chance he stands in winning the seat is by relying on conservative (Liberal Party) preferences – so much for progressive politics. Ironically if he does succeed in winning the seat he will be taking out one of the more effective 'left wing' members of the house of representatives.

Karma – Not Happy Jim

SOUTH KOREAN LABOUR NEWS

Recent months have seen a variety of attacks on trade union powers, and members, in South Korea

South Korea does not immediately spring to mind as a hotbed of union activism, but it is currently in the grip of a huge conflict between the president of the country and the main trade union confederation.

Conservative leader Park Geun-Hye, who has been in power since 2013, has been attempting to pass through a raft of changes to the which has caused outcry among the organised labour movement in the East Asian nation. The strike

held on the 16th of December was the 3rd such action of the year, and brought in the region of 75,000 workers out, from 26 different unions, including those of the major car manufacturers Hyundai and Kia Motors. The proposed changes to union law are somewhat specific to Korea, but fall in line with the wider trend toward permanent precarity and insecure work situations within neoliberal countries.

Traditionally, South Korean workers, particularly those at the huge, family-run conglomerates that dominate the economy of the country such as the car manufacturers, and other industrial giants like Samsung, could consider themselves as part of the furniture once in position at a firm, allowed to learn a trade and then progress up the ranks internally.

Since the accession of Ms. Geun-Hye and her ruling New Frontier Party to power, they have sought to undermine the rights of workers through measures that would make it easier for companies to fire workers, and would extend the amount of time for which temporary workers can be employed without a permanent contract from two to four years. **This would effectively allow the major companies known colloquially as chaebol to hire workers as temporary staff, employ them for four years, lay them off and then subsequently re-hire them for another four years, drastically reducing job security, decreasing the ability of Korean workers to fight for their rights and handing ever more power over to the bosses. The**

changes would also allow bosses to summarily change the fundamental day-to-day conditions of a worker's life: how and when they are paid, the number of holiday days allowed per year. **It would also phase in a scheme of cutting wages once an employee reaches 55 years of age. Unions were understandably angered by these proposed changes, and have been increasing the level of protest since they were announced. Strikes have been a major weapon used against the government, with three general strikes already this year, alongside major street demonstrations on a scale not seen in almost a decade. The militancy of the strikes, however, has been undermined**

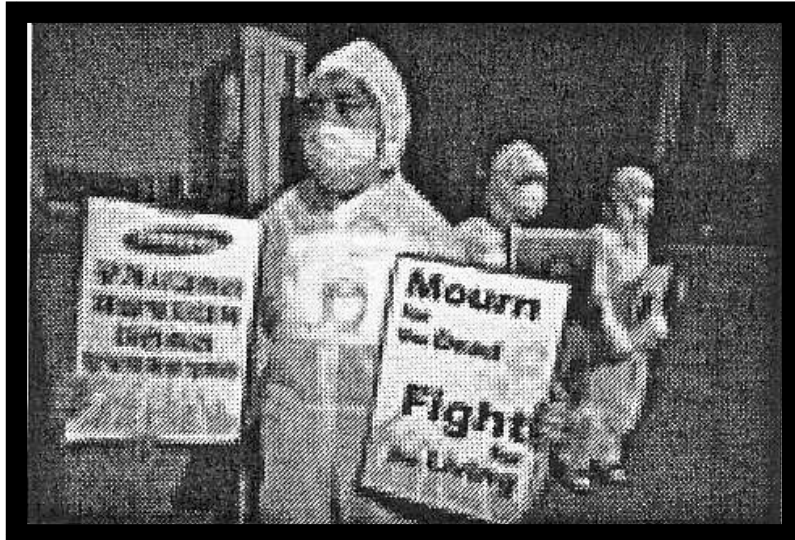
The strikes have also been accompanied by protests. Police attacked a demonstration of an estimated 100,000 workers in Seoul in November, injuring many, including a 69 year old farmer who was critically injured after being shot at close range by a water cannon. Union activists have faced persecution and arrest since the demonstration, which was declared illegal by the government. Han Sang-Goon, the leader of the KCTU, had an outstanding warrant for his arrest after demonstrations in May were also declared illegal, and later gave himself in after the Buddhist temple in which he was holed up for almost a month was surrounded by armed police. He faces up to ten years in prison. Union offices have also been raided.

As the crackdown on trade union activity in South Korea continues, there is also a growing movement against proposed changes to the country's history textbooks, which many union activists are linking in to the current strikes. President Geun-Hye is the daughter of the former dictator Park Chung-Hee (who was assassinated in 1979) and has been attempting to replace the history textbooks used in schools with one, government-authored book, a move which has obvious parallels to the regime of her father. She has also been behind the jail-

ing of opposition parliamentarians and the banning of an opposition party. The Teachers' Union in South Korea, as has been reported on previously in DA, was outlawed in 2014, as was the union representing civil servants. The trade union confederations, on the back on the December 16th strikes and demonstrations, are now attempting to broaden the movement against the president, and continue to call for her to step down.

Meehall Maguire

<https://www.direkteaktion.org/233/vicious-crackdown-on-trade-union-powers-in-south>



by the leaders of the major trade union confederations.

WEAK LEADERSHIP WITH MAIN-STREAM UNIONS

The largest confederation, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, has refused to take part in the strikes, and although it initially also refused to enter talks with the government, later relented and is now discussing the proposed changes. It is widely known that the rank-and-file of the union, particularly those working in heavy industry and for the chaebol companies, oppose the actions of their confederation. The second largest trade union confederation, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) is resolutely behind the industrial action, and has been co-ordinating it, after their leader was elected by the membership on a platform of calling a general strike.

GREECE TODAY

Many volumes will be written over the coming years about the rise and fall of SYRIZA, but the immediate lessons are simple.

Capitalism is sustained in part by the Left. From European 'social democrats' supporting imperialist slaughter in World War One, and the French Communist Party winding down the 1968 General Strike, to SYRIZA rescuing the euro with Greek austerity, parliamentary Leftists have helped stabilise capitalism and defend war for over a century. **With the euro teetering in the balance, it took Europe's most radical government to save it.** When people have had enough of the 'tough' anti-worker, anti-poor talk of the right, there is always somebody waiting in the wings to carry out much the same policies with a new face and a leftist sounding program. — When elected leaders say they are going to sell out, believe them. **Even on the eve of the OXI referendum, SYRIZA leader Tsipras insisted that he was only going to use it to negotiate a better deal in order to remain in the Eurozone.** He was doing everything he could to avoid a Greek exit and was very open about it. The numbers in the eventual austerity deal were even worse than expected, but ultimately this is not a maths problem but a political problem.

Electing radicals into powerful positions disarms them

Taking a radical, giving them an enormous amount of power, media attention, a generous living stipend, a free car, etc. is a formula for turning them into just another politician. This should be obvious. They become accustomed to

their position, to their own self-importance, and to playing by the rules of government and business. Even worse, once they are in power, others on the left suddenly become toothless and placid, unable to stand the thought of fighting their own friends.

Leftists will consistently cling to power rather than dismantle it



Only two members of SYRIZA's 'Left Platform' voted against Tsipras's proposal. Many even voted for it, or like many in Labour's recent parliamentary votes simply abstained. They could have

used every parliamentary tactic they had to sabotage the deal that the Greek people had voted against. **They could have split their party, brought down the government and done everything possible to pull the emergency break on this disastrous plan. Instead they chose to maintain SYRIZA's hold on parliament and their position in it.**

In spite of what they consistently say, Leftists throughout the world are waiting for a messiah to rescue them

Various self-described left-revolutionaries the world over looked to SYRIZA to break the euro and defeat austerity in Greece and beyond. All they had to do was realise that a few dozen left-wing MPs were not up to the task and would, as always, succumb to the pressure. In spite of all the talk of working-class self-organisation, many still believe that electing radical leaders into parliament is a good strategy rather than a disaster waiting to happen.

There is a bright and necessary future for radical and revolutionary organising, but it is in the workplaces, the prisons and the streets, not in parliament

The problem is not that we have bad people, but bad strategies. Even the best people falter when they take parliamentary power. The more radically working class and left-wing they are, the more everyone around them believes they are immune from the pressures to compromise their principles and sell out. The solution is not to find better people to elect, but to use different strategies.

These unsurprising sellouts will continue happening until there is a revolutionary struggle powerful enough to fight for something else

So let's build that instead.

Adapted and abridged from an article originally posted to Libcom.org by Scott Jay in July 2015

International Transport Workers' News

BELGIUM

6/1/16

Rail workers began the strike late Tuesday in protest against planned reforms, which the government says would aim to streamline services and make the sector more efficient.

The CSC-Transcom and CGSP-Cheminots union argue, however, that the government is imposing austerity measures that will lead to job losses, budget cuts and a dismantling of railway infrastructure, at a time when environmentally friendly public transport is essential.

Unions across Belgium initially planned to hold a five-day rail strike, but a backlash

of consumer outrage led to a restricted two-day walk-out. As a result, unions in northern Belgium withdrew from the strike.

The Federation of Belgian Enterprises criticized the strike action, calling it "unacceptable, irresponsible and counterproductive," while arguing that it would have an economic impact and harm the country's image.

Disruption to reach London and Paris

As well as affecting national transport, the walk-out is also set to affect international

rail services to and from Belgium. The French Thalys network is expected to be completely shut down, and German high-speed ICE trains will not travel to Belgium.

French high-speed trains will stop before reaching Belgium, while rail services between the Swiss city of Basel and Brussels will end in Luxembourg.

Belgian Rail (SNCB) also said on its website that Eurostar connections to France and Britain will be either cut or severely affected. Rail operators have advised passengers to check online for updates before travelling.

Strikes and labour protests are not a rare occurrence in Belgium. In recent years, thousands of people have taken part in anti-austerity rallies, while road and rail transport has been repeatedly paralysed due to numerous rounds of industrial action.

ksb/rc (dpa, AP)

CANADA

Toronto taxi drivers defy mayor as anti-Uber protest rages on

11/12/15

TORONTO – Toronto taxi drivers ignored Mayor John Tory's pleas to abandon their traffic-snarling protest Wednesday, continuing to block at least one major downtown intersection Wednesday evening.

As many as 2,000 taxis converged on downtown Toronto, driving as slow as five km/h on major roadways en route to city hall in a protest against the city's stance on ride-sharing service Uber.

The protest paralysed downtown traffic, even impeding ambulances around the hospitals on University Avenue.

Tory condemned the protest as "dangerous and disruptive," and asked drivers to call off the protest before the afternoon rush hour.

He encouraged drivers to continue protesting at City Hall but leave traffic unimpeded, a plea that apparently fell on deaf ears as cabs continued blocking the nearby intersection of Queen and Bay streets.

"The point has been made," Tory said. "I don't think it was made in a necessary or appropriate manner, but the point has been made."

Police Chief Mark Saunders said police are allowing protests to continue, but said Wednesday's tactics are self-defeating for tax drivers.

"I'm strongly suggesting that the taxi industry change their playbook," he said. "If they're looking for negative attention that's what's happening right now. I un-



derstand the frustration, don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to dismiss that, but there's a proper way of going about it."

<http://globalnews.ca/news/2389591/tr...-against-uber/>

IRISH LIGHT RAIL STRIKES

11/2/16

LUAS (Dublin Light Rail) staff are taking industrial action to win higher wages. This follows a 99 percent vote in favour across four different grades.

When LUAS was set up in 2004, drivers' wages were deliberately set low because it was predicted that there would be 20 million passengers paying a €1 each for the journey.

By 2009, it was already clear that LUAS was a commercial success. Passenger numbers had grown to 27 million passengers who were paying a lot more than €1 a journey.

The workers at LUAS have never been properly rewarded for their efforts. They were stuck in long five year collective agreements and were denied a right to take industrial action because of a no strike clause.

After waiting patiently for years, the staff finally decided to press for a significant improvement in their wages. The owners of LUAS, Transdev, have made no efforts to meet the workers claim.

The LUAS company can well afford to pay its staff. It is owned by a subsidiary of the giant Viola corporation which has made a fortune from the privatisation of water in other countries.

STATEMENT OF LUAS DRIVER

"First of all, Luas drivers sympathise with the Luas passengers for the disruption and inconvenience strikes might cause. They all have families and big mortgages so this decision was not taken lightly!

However as Transdev have refused to engage on cost increasing claims for the past 18 months drivers were left with no option but

to take this action.

Transdev's refusal to negotiate a claim set them on the inevitable path to this dispute say the drivers.

That strategy is akin to the ostrich who sticks its head in the sand. If TII are aware of this strategy and condone it, then as owners of the LUAS system they are equally culpable for discommoding 100,000 passengers this Thursday /Friday.

Luas drivers have stated from the outset that there was room to compromise on all aspects of their claim. so now they need to act responsibly as the operator of Luas and take their head out of the sand and engage productively to negotiate the best possible outcome for their organisation."

Cllr Gino Kenny said: 'I fully support the striking Luas workers. They set a great example for other workers who have been denied pay increases and faced pay cuts over the past 7-8 years. Since the beginning of the recession public transport costs have increased for customers while private companies such as Transdev are making huge profits.'

Thanks to

People Before Profit

BRAZILIAN SYNDICALISM

COB (Brazil Workers Confederation) was built by the Brazilian people, to resist capitalism, in the period when we were a liberal country (1889-1930, United States of Brazil). COB/people won all the social rights we have now, and the free social fight culture, from the time of massive revolutionary syndicalism. It remains in the working class.

Numbers of members in the COB?

You affiliate a hundred workers in the free union, next day they are all fired, not to say all kinds of repressions... it is very dangerous! since 1930. We resemble in some ways a fascist country.

Give us real liberty and we will give you thousands of membership cards... but it is not gonna happen. The State takes the workers' money (part of our salary) and puts it in a national centralized bank. Then gives some of it to fake-syndicalists, who will do anything to keep this fascist style industrial relations system working. A lot of money goes in corruption, to private banks and to bosses (and to the fake-syndicalists). Of course all this is done with State armed forces "pointing their guns" at the peaceful working people. You know, it is a great assault that keeps going on and on and on... till we have no money anymore and they call it "a crisis"

So you see the situation, how it is: it is a huge force against freedom of organizing, with bad people who are really interested in keeping this fascist style system working, and who would do anything to keep it going.

Maybe that's why there is a lot of punks in the anarchist and specially in the revolutionary syndicalist movement. These people free themselves and then can do protests and other things in the name of those who can't because of all the repression

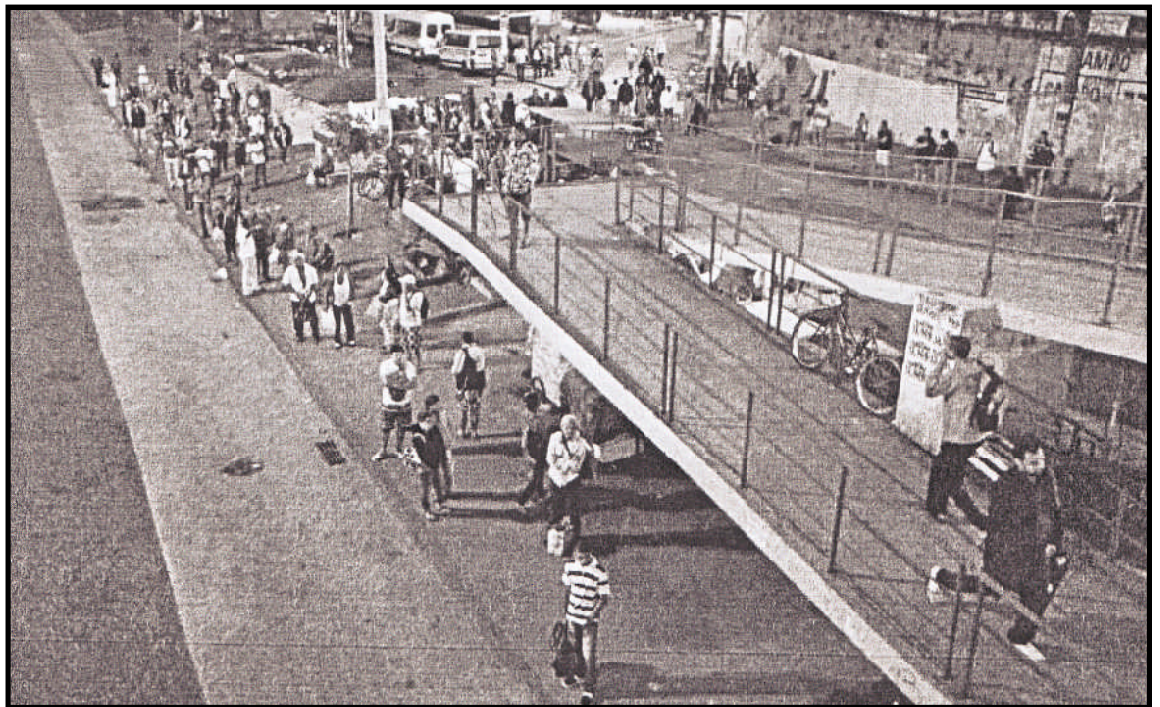
Anyway we are active as always. In 2013 we participated in the June demonstration. Massive all over the country using pretty much our ways of protesting (no political parties, black flags, anarchists flags, free expression) and with our participation/organization; we got 1/4 of no-votes in last president election too; and in Rio we influenced the trashmen's organization and strike, also the bus drivers strike, some beach workers' organizations, we commemorated the death of Edgar Rodrigues (active anarchist in Rio), with the support but no contribution by Rio anarchists themselves. They are somewhat traumatized with organizations because of their recent past experiences with the pseudo-anarchists there...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDpUAtd8Km0>

Here trashmen say they were fired because of this free movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6lviHzav6g>

All these free movements started outside the official State unions and political parties, and nobody seems to know why it happened that way. If you can start a great fire with one match, maybe you can start mass strikes and demonstrations with a few revolutionary syndicalists distributing COB newspapers with texts explaining to workers how to organize freely and outside the bureaucratic unions.

There is no federation of COB in Rio. None of these workers were COB members... but their methods of organizing



Commuters wait for transport during 48 hour bus strike in Rio de Janeiro May 13, 2014.

Samples from Rio free Worker's Movements:

Teachers:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzpYixeUSow>

Bus drivers:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-xWpFwq6jY>

Trashmen:

only COB defends in Brazil: free, revolutionary syndicalism.

After the movements started, the official bureaucratic unions and the political parties tried to control them. They created a fake-revolutionary-syndicalist organization, tried to speak for them, but it didn't work. So they called the police to make it appear violent and not a peaceful social movement. To keep the system that pays them going.

Foscolo Thanks to be Libcom

Ireland: Cadbury Workers' Strike

Cadbury strikers resisting race to the bottom as parent company makes 2 billion profits

Date: Thu, 2016-03-03 12:14

Our solidarity to Cadburys workers who today begin an indefinite strike at the Coolock plant against the outsourcing of jobs. The company is trying to destroy 17 properly paid and pensionable jobs to replace them with minimum wage ones.

The outsourcing is seen as part of a pattern where the management from Mondelez International have been downgrading the plant, its believed they have no long-term commitment to the facility something confirmed by the company threat that "this action ultimately endangers the jobs of the circa 700 people who are employed within the business". **Right now in Chicago workers are resisting similar attacks by Mondelez International at an Oreo cookies plant where they want to lay off half the 1200 workers and move production to Mexico where workers are paid a lot less.**

Like the LUAS strike the background to this strike is also an attempt to resist the massive shift over the last two decades that has seen the share of profits going to owners rise massively and that to workers falling. This is reflected in the management statement, if dressed up by the PR department as "under intense pressures from international competition" and "with the aim of streamlining it to become more sustainable and competitive for the future." Both these are coded terms translating into a demand for a bigger share of the profits going to shareholders - this trend is why 62 people now own half the wealth in the word.

Mondelez International had revenue of 33.2 billion dollars in 2014 and made profits of 2.18 billion in that year. It was formally known as Kraft and as Kraft in 2012 it gave almost 2 million dollars to the US based "Coalition Against The Costly Food Labeling Proposition" which was set up to oppose a proposed law requiring GMO containing foods to be labelled as such in California. In

2015 the US Commodity and Futures Commission said Mondelez Global had made 5.4 million dollars through alleged price fixing on the global wheat market. Alexia Howard, according to the Wall Street Journal "a closely-followed food and beverage analyst at Bernstein" forecast last year that Mondelez should be able to increase its profit rate from 12 to 18%

The media prevent the mechanisms of this shift in the share of profits whether it be outsourcing to low wage areas or a refusal of wage rises as some sort of inevitable natural law that workers have to accept in a race to the bottom. The intention is to make workers in different countries compete to accept wage cuts and worsening conditions. In this case the Labour Court



followed the same pro boss logic but by 302 to 20 the workers in SIPTU and UNITE have voted to reject the Labour Court finding.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Dunne, said: "Union members voted overwhelmingly to take this action following an announcement by management that it intends to unilaterally implement a Labour Court recommendation and outsource the jobs of 17 directly employed store workers. The work stoppage at the plant will continue until management ends the attempt to outsource these jobs.

"The Labour Court recommendation had previously been rejected by a large majority of the 350 union members employed in the production plant. SIPTU and UNITE members proposed further talks on reducing costs and increasing flexibility in relation to the operation of the store facility at

the plant. This proposal was rejected outright by management leaving the workers with no option but to take the industrial action that will begin tomorrow morning."

Unite Regional Coordinating Officer Richie Browne reiterated the unions' call for the company to withdraw its plans to outsource key roles and instead to discuss the proposals put forward by the unions.

"Unite and SIPTU have made a number of proposals to management regarding alternative ways in which efficiencies could be delivered. Even at this late stage, we remain available for meaningful engagement with the company to discuss these proposals.

SIPTU Manufacturing Division Organiser, Gerry McCormack, said: "The attempt to outsource these jobs is seen as a further erosion of the viability of the facility. It follows the movement of the production of the 'Time Out' bar from this plant to Poland.

"Workers at the plant have over recent years agreed to the major restructuring of operations and changes in work practices. However, the attempt by the management of Mondelez International to further downgrade the plant's operations has caused outrage and increased fears among the workforce about its long-term commitment to the facility."

After a decade of defeats and low expectations its long passed time when workers need to act in solidarity not only to defeat these sort of profit grabs by the bosses but also fighting to expand our share, as the LUAS workers are doing. The boss owned media have done a very good job of setting us against each other instead. That needs to end.

Resolution of Cadbury's dispute in company's hands as Unite members prepare to down tools tomorrow

<http://unitetheunionireland.org/2016/03/02/resolution-of-cadburys-disput...>

SIPTU and UNITE members to begin strike in Mondelez Ireland tomorrow

http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2016/mainnews/fullstory_19660_en.... Thanks to WSM

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Living Anarchism: Jose Peirats and the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalist Movement by Chris Ealham. Published by AK Press

This book is a biography of a key Spanish anarcho-syndicalist militant and historian, Jose Peirats. It weaves a tapestry of the history of the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) in the 20th Century, highlighting its achievements, defeats and crises.

The Fake Anarchist & Syndicalist Milieu in the Anglo World

He is in stark contrast to those elements that infest the contemporary so called anarchist and syndicalist milieu in the Anglo world. Often workers with high levels of autonomy in their jobs, connected with the university milieu, students and demoralised workers looking for some pseudo church to join



and long term unemployed gone to seed.

This milieu is notorious for infatuation with oppression mongering, guilt tripping and grotesque formalism i.e. organisational navel gazing, unhealthy focusing on one's groups "very precious" internal organisation. Obsessions with "political correctness" displays i.e. salivating over "safe spaces policies", "indigenous welcomes", and associated enthusiasm for identity politics and other middle class leftist sub cultural rubbish. They are also often consciously or unconsciously affected by the Stalinist legacy – stemming from the predominance of mass Communist Parties, to the left of Social Democratic/Labor Parties for many decades in the 20th Century. Considering acceptable all manner of underhanded and shady practices. They are often quite hostile to scientific processes,

with aspects of identity politics being "sacred" and beyond debate and discussion. Just like the "lines" of the Communist Parties in their

heydays which were not subject to debate by the membership. They of course hypocritically deny this behaviour. Their so called "organising" in reality often being excuses for social occasions or tailing any workers' struggle and lack any strategy for building grass roots controlled unionism. As a result, they are often taken advantage by union bosses for "smoke and mirrors" performances and associated sellout moves. They are an inspiration to no one and more evidence of the success of bourgeois society in taming it's so called opponents into a harmless exotic subculture. (1)

Peirats displayed a consistent commitment to building a mass syndicalist union movement (favouring ultra democratic processes, direct action, industrial unionism and workers control of industry and community control of neighbourhoods, etc) in Spain throughout most of his life. He was involved in long term struggles against insurrectionary, guerrilla and bureaucratic/counter revolutionary tendencies in the CNT and the Spanish Anarchist movement. In his life of militancy he on occasion had to undergo terrible forced marches and when he found he couldn't walk any further, he had to start running. On

occasion he would need to work miracles and did so without any fuss. Aware the stern eyes of history were upon him. He could not afford to stuff up. He displayed this capability on various occasions such as in regard to his struggle against the CNT bureaucracy during the Civil War 1936-39 and subsequently in exile. In these years of exile he faced the dangers of clandestine organising against the ferocious Franco Regime in Spain and torture and imprisonment by the French police.

"Revolutionary Gymnastics" & "Anarchist Vanguardism"

The book throws new light on the factional struggles within the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) in the pre Civil

War period. It looks at Peirats role in the early 1930's opposing the radical tendency in the FAI favouring "revolutionary gymnastics" involving inciting a cycle of insurrections in these years to "achieve the revolution tomorrow" associated with vanguard/authoritarian tendencies, through his involvement in the Afinidad anarchist group, formed in 1931. Needless to say the group's activity is in sharp contrast to the navel gazing, oppression mongering middle class/student based leftist outfits, playing at activist "super heroes" of so called "anarchist groups" in the contemporary Anglo World. It was engaged in cultural activity in the rationalist athenaeum (workers educational) centre in their local community. Radically different from today's middle class leftist sub cultural hangouts of so called anarchist bookshops. The group also played an important role in assisting the CNT with various delicate initiatives associated with strikes and other forms of direct action waged by its affiliates.

Initially Peirats and his group supported an "anarchist workers association" orientation in the CNT, associated with certain prominent Hispanic American militants such as Abad de Santillan and the extremist insurrectionary tendency. He rapidly dropped this position and returned to a classic anarcho-syndicalist position, where the union is seen an economic combative organisation open to all workers regardless of politics, religion etc. His anarchist group joined the FAI to counter the influence of extremist elements such as the Nostros Group, with members such as the legendary figures of Durruti, Ascaso and Garcia Olivia. Despite many FAI members opposition to "revolutionary gymnastics", Peirats and his group were unable to effectively counter its influence. (2)

The CNT in the Civil War

In the author's discussion of Peirats reflections on the reasons for CNT-FAI collaboration with the Popular Front Government and bureaucratisation during the Civil War and the associated counter revolution in the Republican zone, he refers to Peirats criticism that the CNT lacked sufficient intellectuals grounded in anarcho-syndicalist culture. He criticises Peirats for not taking into account the lack of a CNT analysis of the lessons of the Asturias Uprising of 1934 and the death of CNT strategist Orobón Fernández.

However, a much more significant reason for this disastrous path taken by the CNT

was an absence of a climate in the organisation favourable for an effective debate on revolutionary strategy. Consequently a more realistic approach such as establishing a workers councils state, stemming from long term union building was not adopted. **It was contributed by the hysteria in the ranks of the CNT caused by the influential extremist tendency in the FAI purges of other currents in the organisation such as the Treintistas, which favoured a more long term union building strategy and the BOC (Workers and Peasants Bloc) later to merge with other groups to form the POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), based on wild slandering.** Whilst massive waves of repression accompanied the "revolutionary gymnastics" in the early 30's championed by the extremist wing of the FAI, making a wide and informed debate on revolutionary strategy in the CNT impossible. Whilst, the insurrectionary cycle of the early 1930's contributed significantly to a rightward shift in the ruling class, culminating in the military coup of July 1936.

The CNT in Exile

The author throws important new light on the bureaucratic character of the CNT in Exile and Peirats campaign against it. In the late 1940's it had 7 full time officials. Whilst prior to the Civil War it had only one paid elected official despite the membership being 30 times greater. The CNT newspaper had 9 full time staff and the FIJL (Young Libertarians) had 4 full time officials. This bureaucracy was funded by Laureano Cerrada. He had been involved in counterfeiting and smuggling activities during WWII and onward and had collaborated with the French Resistance and Allied war effort. **His financial support was vital in maintaining the supremacy of the Montseny family control of key committees and shaping CNT policy. The MLE-CNT (Spanish Liberarian Movement – National Confederation of labour) was divorced from any actual union and workplace activity and was more a National Liberation Movement focusing on exile politics and the guerrilla campaign in Spain.** The author shows that to a significant degree, Peirats who held the position of Secretary of the CNT-MLE on several occasions struck hard blows at the bureaucracy and its support for the counterproductive guerrilla campaign in Franco's Spain. However, he could never decisively counter Montseny family control of the CNT-MLE. In retrospect, Peirats considered that the MLE-CNT, should have been dissolved into the Spanish anarchist movement in exile.

Today, with the proliferation of sects in the so called anarchist/syndicalist mi-

lieus, particularly connected with the IWA (International Workers Association) there is an unwholesome flourishing of "micro" bureaucracies often dominated by "swell headed" gurus. These formal structures being "beautifully useless" or counterproductive in regard to assisting militants doing serious long range industrial work. Necessary to turn the tide against the employer offensive and establish the transitional steps toward realising mass syndicalist unionism in today's harsh neo-liberal climate. During these hard years of exile, Peirats wrote his 3 volume history of the CNT, for which he has become well known internationally. Following his expulsion from the MLE-CNT for his dissident activity, the author shows Peirats was involved together with others expelled from the organisation in the launching of the magazine *Presencia*, *Tribuna Libertaria* in Nov. 1965. It played a very important role in the re-construction of the CNT in post Franco Spain. It emphasised a reinterpretation of Marxism and anarchism, appealing to the "New Left" and encouraged



militants to be active in the CCOO (Workers Commissions). Subsequently it's network of supporters established the *Grupos de Presencia* Confederal in Sept. 1967, with 300-400 affiliates in both the interior of Spain and in exile. It acted as a pressure group in the CNT-MLE. **It launched the newspaper *Frente Libertaria* mainly contributed by interior correspondents, which was mostly distributed in the interior and saw a steady increase in its print run and readership from 2,000 to 5,000.**

A very valid criticism made by the author of Peirats militancy during his exile was his lack of emphasis on anarchists becoming involved in the CCOO (Workers Com-

missions) from its outset in the late 1950's. Given the decentralised character of these committees and relevance to the CNT heritage. In this way, it could have countered the takeover by the Spanish Communist Party of this organisation. The MLE-CNT bureaucracy also ignored organising opportunities in the CCOO.

The CNT in Post Franco Spain

The validity of this criticism became apparent following the death of Franco in 1975 and the legalisation and reconstruction of the CNT. It became entangled with the lifestylism of the youth cultural ferment of post Franco Spain, similar to the 1960's phenomena in Western Europe and elsewhere. Whilst enthusiasm for identity politics and regional nationalism created much confusion in the CNT and anarchist ranks. The role of the CIA in the disruption of the new left during the 60's and the Spanish post Franco ferment in the late 1970's must also be taken account. **It's been well documented that it played a key role in the spread of the LSD Drug subculture and less well known in regard to the spread of "identity politics", particularly the so called "women's movement".** (3) The author shows Peirats was particularly alert to the dangers for the CNT and the Spanish anarchist movement presented by these "poisonous weeds". The author details that Peirats was heavily criticised and censored by sectors of the organisation over his outspoken opposition to these regional nationalist tendencies.

State Provocation

At the end of March 1978 the bombing of the Scala nightclub in Barcelona, resulted in the death of 4 workers. It has subsequently been exposed as instigated by State agent provocateurs. The author shows apart from the Spanish secret service, the CIA also had some involvement in the affair. The Scala bombing provided the pretext for a major wave of repression against the CNT, which the author shows was the major opponent to the "Moncloa Pact" in Oct. 1977. It was a sort of Spanish version of the ACTU/ALP Accord. Involving an agreement between the moderate left parties – the Socialist and Communist and their union affiliates – the CCOO, and UGT and the employers and Government so as to hose down grass roots militancy and institutionalising the bureaucratic unions in the industrial relations game. **It particularly entailed Government sponsored elections for work place committees. The Government also promised social welfare improvements.**

As a result of the media hysteria and state repression over the Scala bombing, the

CNT underwent enormous membership losses. The author outlines how the CNT continued to decline due to a series of devastating splits. Initially over the issue of participation in State sponsored workplace committee elections, and leading to the loss of most of the organisation to form the CGT (General Confederation of Labour). Following the “official” CNT winning a court case over possession of the initials. The author shows Peirats became very demoralised by the factional struggle and splitting process, and catastrophic membership losses. Resulting in his cessation of active membership in the CNT. However, he still wrote articles for anarchist publications and engaged in literary work/historical research, until his death.

In conclusion, the author in his biography does a brilliant job in throwing new light on key phases in Peirats militancy, which assist us to be better understand the complex problems and crises faced by the CNT and Spanish anarchist movement during the 20th Century. Particularly, interesting is his discussion of opposition in the FAI to its extremist wing during the early 1930's and the struggle against the CNT-MLE bureaucracy in the exile years. However, his discussion of the causes of the CNT/FAI collaboration with the counter revolution in the Republican zone during the Civil War is grossly inadequate.

Mark McGuire

Notes

Germany's Revolutionary Workers of 19/18/19 Reviewed by Thomas Kliker, *Wild Socialism - Workers Councils in Revolutionary Berlin, 1918-21*. By Martin Comack. 97 pages, Lanham: University Press of America, 2012

Continued From Last Edition.

Despite significant theoretical anarcho-syndicalist figures like Kurt Eisner (1867-1919) and Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958), German labour never developed an anarcho-syndicalist movement beyond what emerged during 1918/19. With the absence of anarcho-syndicalist movements, Germany's early industrial relations were largely shaped by several factors: a working class milieu, party politics, trade unions, state repression, oppressive employers and management and perhaps three main political ideals:

1. social-democratic (majority),
2. independent socialist (Workers Councils), and
3. communist-Bolshevist (rising).

All this shaped the condition of the working class at the eve of World War One. The “Great War To End All Wars” started with the actively planned invasion of neutral Belgium by German forces. Germany did not sleepwalk into war as Clark's “Sleepwalkers” (2013) ideological account pretends. Instead, it was an ideologically motivated chauvinistic and imperialist aggression against Germany's neighbours. To support this aggression, the SPD quickly signed off on the – to be expected – maiming and death of millions of workers by ‘voting for the war credits’ (Comack, p. 31). Meanwhile,

the SPD also supported and sustained the ideology of ‘Burgfrieden or Civic Peace’ (Comack, p. 31). The infamous Burgfrieden ideology was designed to pacify trade unions at home and to guarantee a steady supply of cannon-fodder (soldiers), ammunition and war material (e.g.



poison gas). As the war produced battlefield misery after misery and starvation-level food shortages in Berlin, resentment against war, capitalism, and the ruling elite of Kaiser and military grew into a fight for a better world. Perhaps the key option for such a better world found its institutional expression in revolutionary Workers Councils beginning to emerge at shop floors of Berlin's factories.

Conceivably, ‘the origins of the works council movement were to be found in the clandestine election of shop stewards (Obleute) in the metal works and

1. See “Report on the Workers Control Conference” on the archive section of www.rebelworker.org for a discussion of the outlook toward the class struggle of these elements and also on the internet A-infos: “Feminism and Class Struggle: A document is distributed” regarding the impact of the Stalinist Legacy and Identity Politics on this milieu.

2. See “The Agony of Modernisation” by Benjamin Martin & “Red Barcelona” Edited by Angel Smith.

3. See “Gloria Steinem and the CIA” on the internet and “Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties and Beyond” by Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain.

ammunition plants of Greater Berlin in the middle of the World War’ (Comack, p. 37). Today, these early Obleute or ‘trusted individuals’ (Comack, p. 37) are union shop stewards who literally are “people of trust” representing the union side of the labour movement. **It has been a rather skilful move to split – and thereby weaken – the German trade union movement into two parts that shape today's workplace relations. On the one hand there are the Vertauensleute (elected by union members).** These are not legally protected and represent the trade unions inside factories. One the other hand, there are the legally secured works councils with limited rights and the strict prohibition of strikes. It is the works councils' function to pacify the – at times still – revolutionary tendencies of these shop stewards by converting their “wild socialism” often set against management and capitalism into the legal confinements of works councils. In short, today's works councils convert conflict from “about and against” the system to conflict “within” the system. **In that way, conflict often remains**

inside the labour side without bothering management and capitalism.

This structure assures that Germany's rather legalistic works councils remain non-union but legal based entities. At times these works councils develop even distinct anti-union tendency often expressed by the rather derogative term “Betriebsfürsten” [lord of the firm] for works council members. The hidden transcript reads: factories (Betriebe) are little feudal kingdoms that these Fürsten (lords) co-manage, often against the labour movement and trade unions. This is, of course,

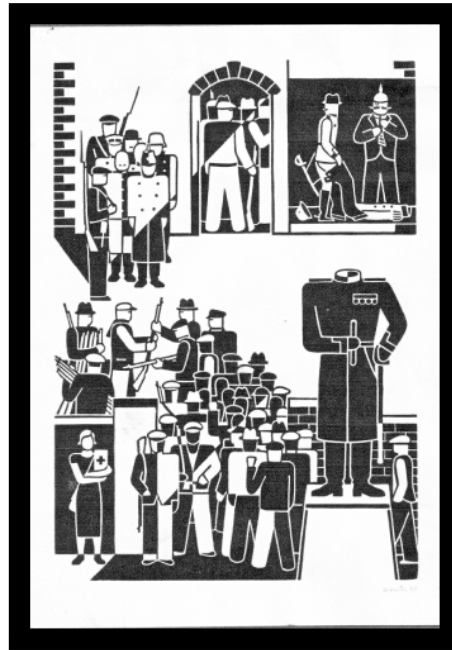
supported through the German industrial relations setup that legally secures works councils, making them independent of trade unions.

In order to understand today's rather complicated industrial relations setup, the history of the years leading up to the revolution of 1918/19 are highly illuminating. As such, the origins of both – today's works councils and shop stewards – date back to exactly the time when 'the first general strike in Berlin called by the Obleute was organised in defence of the Spartacist Karl Liebknecht, arrested at the anti-war rally in May 1916; [to protest against that] '55,000 workers from forty factories came out on strike chanting "long live peace" (Comack, p. 38). Shortly thereafter, 'the strike on April 16th brought out between 200,000 and 300,000 workers from hundred factories and workshops, with marches and demonstrations throughout the city and at workplaces. Trade union officials were shouted down or ignored' (Comack, p. 39). These were the "official" majority trade unions of the SPD.

Needless to say, the Russian Revolution of 1917 had an encouraging effect (Comack, p. 40). With strikes and demonstrations on the rise, the SPD intervened to 'bring these strikes to a speedy end as Ebert (SPD) later admitted' (Comack, p. 40). Meanwhile at the battlefield the 'Allies penetrated the Hindenburg Line in September 1918 [and] in November, revolutionary councils of sailors led mutinies' (Comack, p. 43). Shortly after that 'in Red Berlin, a general strike had been called for November 9th, to force the abdication of the Kaiser' (Comack, p. 44). A workers and soldiers convent at the Circus Busch elected a 'provisional government as the Council of People' (Comack, p. 45). Unknown to the Workers Councils, Ebert (SPD) and the army chief General Wilhelm Groener made a secret pact in which Ebert gave the military 'a free hand against all forms of Bolshevism and council nonsense' (Comack, p. 46). This secret SPD-army pact sealed the faith of the Workers Councils as well as the faith of many workers who were set to be killed in order to secure the SPD's "Will to Power" as the philosopher Nietzsche might have said.

Unaware of Ebert's secret pact, the council movement proclaimed an alternative to parliamentarianism that wasn't based on what the economist Schumpeter called "competition for leadership" but on the solidarity of workers. Perhaps many workers assembling at Berlin's Circus Busch realised that parliamentarianism is essentially somewhat of a modernised version of an ancient "leader-competition-selection"

method whereby men with big sticks hit one another until one kept standing and was declared the leader. Under parliamentarian democracy, the ancient stick is converted into a pen ticking a box. Today's so-called "democracy" represents no more than a quantitative "stick-to-pen" conversion (it involves more people) while no qualitative progress has been made. Set against that, Workers Councils sought such a qualitative move in the form of direct democracy. Today, the "stick-to-pen" system of parliamentarian democracy is engineered as a mass spectacle – guided by global me-



dia corporations – in which people are manipulated to vote accordingly. The revolutionary workers councils sought a radically different alternative to that by moving towards direct and deliberative democracy and by placing democracy into workplaces, not out of businesses, companies and corporations.

From there a council system would ensure that working people are represented at all levels. And here also lies the great shortcoming of Comack's book because it lacks of a systematic, theoretical and comparative analysis of the council concept as set against parliamentarianism. Nonetheless, the revolutionary Workers Councils were framed as 'wild socialism of factory occupations and workers militias that could not have been more threatening to employers and government' (Comack, p. 49) and capitalism in Germany and wherever such councils appeared. While today's industrial relations system is designed as a "problem-fixing" method that maintains capitalism, Workers Councils sought to end all pathologies of capitalism by ending capitalism itself and by replacing it with the democratic will of workers.

Taking capitalism and management out of the standard industrial relations equation and converting the state from being an auxiliary to capitalism as guided by corporate mass media, the resulting changes would have introduced a radically different picture of industrial relations. And this picture did not include the Bolshevik "super-state" picture that started to develop in Soviet Russia. But such a middle way between capitalism and Bolshevism was not to be and the majority SPD was set to make sure of that. The 'position of the workers councils in Berlin and in other large cities of Germany at this juncture was not comparable to that of the Russian version of soviet workers [councils] during the Russian Revolution. In St. Petersburg and Moscow there had existed a situation of dual power – the only effective political actors being the soviets on the one hand, composed mostly of committed revolutionaries, and a relatively weak provisional government on the other. Conditions in Germany were far more problematic. The SPD government, ruling under the banner of "socialism" had at least the tactical support of the army, the industrialists, and most of the working class and the population at large [meanwhile] on the streets outside, 250,000 demonstrated, demanding all power to the [council] Räte' (Comack, p. 49f.).

The anti-council (Räte) oriented SPD insisted that 'it cannot go on like this, Ebert is said to have kept repeating to his staff [while] the right-wing Gustav Noske set about hiring volunteer private armies or Free Corps' (Comack, p. 51). The SPD's Gustav Noske remains most known for his "one must be the blood hound". Noske's Free Corps – set to kill thousands of workers – were mostly uprooted ex-Soldiers, mercenaries, and brutalised leftovers from World War One. Hitler's deputy 'Herman Goering would later characterise the Free Corps as "the first soldiers of the Third Reich" (Comack, p. 51). And indeed these Free Corps not only liquidated the revolutionary Workers Councils, they were also instrumental in the failed Free-Corps coup d'état [Kapp-Putsch] of 1920. Later on, elements of the Free Corps made an even stronger showing as brutal thugs in Nazi-Germany supplying membership to torturing and murdering SA, SS, Gestapo and mass-murdering Einsatzgruppen (paramilitary death squads of Nazi Germany responsible for mass killings). that, the Free Corps later mutated – somewhat pacified – into the reactionary Stahlhelm section in the post-Nazi conservative-reactionary party, the CDU.

Continued Next Edition

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news lately is the big push by the NSW Baird Government to privatise Govt. services. One sector particularly being targeted is public transport. It recently announced plans to privatise the Sydney Trains Network. Whilst, it intends to privatise Newcastle Buses, Ferries and Light Rail in May. (See article Page 3.) In 2014 the ASN assisted militants' election campaign which resulted in the Govt. backing off from announcing mass sackings of rail workers, following the so called "approval" of an Enterprise Agreement. Now the ASN will be assisting militants to wage an anti-privatisation campaign. **Apart from commuter information, hard hitting direct action on the job will be critical to defeating this gauntlet hurled down by the Baird Government and its Business Mates.**

Associated with the privatisation agenda, running times have suddenly been tightened on various State Transit bus routes. Whilst, bus drivers continue to be fitted up for the sack by the STA bosses, particularly associated with moves to close Randwick Bus Depot. Typically, the Rightwing ALP union bosses have caved in to the onslaught and are beautifully useless in regard to union members being targeted. However, the ASN has been assisting the bus workers to fight back and save their jobs. (See article Page 4.)

In this edition, we throw intriguingly new light on the NSW Fire Brigade Union bureaucracy and its shenanigans. The Fire Brigade is another important target for Baird's privatisation push. (See article Page 8.)

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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.

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Rudolf Michaelis 1907-1990

Rudolf Michaelis was born on 31st March 1907 in Leipzig, Germany. His mother died shortly after his birth and he was lived with a foster family for six years. In 1924 at the age of seventeen he joined the Anarchist Youth group of Leipzig and subsequently affiliated with the anarcho-syndicalist Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschland (FAUD, Free Workers Union of Germany). He became responsible for the FAUD's cultural branch the Gilde Freiheitlicher Bücherfreunde (GFB, the Corporation of Libertarian Book Lovers) which he co-founded with fellow Leipziger Artur Holke in 1929 (see Holke's biography here at libcom).

By 1927 Michaelis had moved to Berlin. The following year he met the celebrated Spanish anarchists Francisco Ascaso and Buenaventura Durruti when they visited Berlin. He worked as an archaeological restorer in the Antiquities Department of Berlin State Museum. He undertook several trips abroad in relation to his job including a long stay in the Middle East between late 1931 and February 1932 when he was on an archaeological dig in Uruk in Iraq. In 1929 he met the anarchist photographer Margarethe Gross (see her biography here at libcom) and they established a relationship.

In 1933 he secretly took part in a congress of the International Workers Association (IWA) in Amsterdam. He had friendly relations with the noted German anarcho-syndicalists Rudolf Rocker and Helmut Rüdiger.

As a result of his anarchist activities and his refusal to recognise the Nazi authorities he was dismissed from his job and imprisoned by the Gestapo in 1933. The director of the museum, who had some influence with Hermann Goering, inter-

vened on his behalf and he was released five weeks later. Margarethe had also suffered an arrest on a trumped up charge of book theft. They decided to flee Germany and moved to Barcelona in November-December 1933.

In Barcelona Rudolf and Margarethe together with other German anarchist exiles formed the Gruppe Deutsche Anarcho-Syndikalisten (DAS, German Anarcho-Syndicalists). However life was tough for the couple, and under the pressures of poverty and harassment from the authorities, they separated in 1934.

Rudolf obtained a job at the Archaeological Museum of Barcelona and joined the CNT. With the outbreak of the revolution Rudolf joined the German anarchist unit Centuria Erich Mühsam (named after the anarchist murdered by the Nazis in 1934) which fought with the anarchist militia the Ascaso Column. He fought on the Huesca front between August and November 1936, operating as the Centuria's delegate.

Subsequently he operated in Barcelona. During the first days of the fighting in Barcelona against the attempted coup, the twenty members of the DAS, including Michaelis, had stormed the German Club, a Nazi bastion, where they captured a machine gun and other arms, which the Nazis had intended to use to help their allies, but also lists of Nazi members living in Spain. As a result, the DAS, working closely with the CNT and FAI, carried out a number of raids, paralyzing Nazi organisation in Spain. Between sixty to seventy flats and premises associated with the widespread network of German Nazi cells were confiscated by the DAS up until November 1937. Rudolf Michaelis played an important role in this activity.



He was then appointed political delegate of the International Group of the Durruti Column until April 1937, when he replaced Elly Büchner (Elli Götze) as president of the DAS.

After the May Days of 1937 Rudolf was captured by the Stalinists in Puerta del Angel, Barcelona and spent time in the prisons at Santa Ursula and Segorbe. At Santa Ursula he shared a cell with the German anarchist volunteer Helmut Kirschey. Conditions were bad and food was poor and in short supply. Security was lax at Santa Ursula and Michaelis was able to escape, informed the VCNT in Valencia about the plight of the German anarchists and then bizarrely returned to his cell and locked himself in, according to the reminiscences of Kirschey!

He was subsequently freed in February 1938 and joined the Republican People's Army (the now militarised armed forces of the Republic). He took Spanish nationality and fought on until the fall of the Republic in spring 1939. He crossed to France, but determined to carry out guerrilla activity in Spain, he returned to Spain in autumn of the same year.

He was arrested at the border and subsequently sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. He was incarcerated at the Carabanchel prison in Madrid. There he was regularly tortured. He was released after five years and put under libertad vigilada (punitive parole) in Madrid.

In 1946 he was repatriated to East Germany. He joined the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED, Unified Socialist Party of Germany) controlled by the Stalinists, with the illusion that he would be able to propagate anarchist ideas within it. He was appointed as managing director of the state museums in Berlin. Soon he was forced to write a denunciation of anarchism and in 1951 he was expelled from the SED. He then worked until his retirement in 1964 as an elementary school teacher in the Treptow district of East Berlin.

Nick Heath