

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

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THE ALP & ACTU FAKE CAMPAIGN WON'T HALT PENALTY RATE CUTS! ONLY DIRECT ACTION ON THE JOB CAN HURL BACK THIS LATEST GOVT. & EMPLOYER GAUNTLET!



NATIONAL NEWS: PENALTY RATES - THE NEXT TO GO; NSW RAILWAY NEWS; STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; IRELAND TODAY; INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' NEWS; GERMAN LABOUR NEWS; BRITAIN TODAY; DIGITAL DEAD END; BOOK REVIEW CORNER; DISCUSSION OF RETAIL & FAST FOOD ORGANISING; MERINO MARTINEZ, JULIAN (1897 - 1977); NEWS & NOTES

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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National News

Penalty Rates the Next to go

In a move, we have come to expect from the Turnbull business over-friendly government, they are now after removing penalty rates from thousands of weekend working Australian's who rely on the loading to prop up their already light pay packets.

This is not a new direction for the government as their mates in the retail sector have been trying desperately to get weekend and night time loading removed for years now. They have made application after application arguing that these are just normal working hours for thousands of Australians. After all, if it's a normal job for people to work these extraneous hours why should they get special pay. Of course, they omit to mention that the very reason they want to stay open all night and all weekend is to increase profitability. OK. This is a valid excuse but why shouldn't they share those extra profits with the workers doing the work? (Sadly, the world doesn't work like this).

This is the same government who said to hundreds of thousands of pensioners who on a daily basis rely on pain killer's paracetamol and osteo paracetamol you now have to pay full price for the very thing that makes your life bearable, the same government who said to hundreds of thousands of people with Type 2 Diabetes they will now need to pay full price (a price

them little work place rights. It then came to light that Malcolm Turnbull our esteemed prime minister actually owned significant shares in seven 11. So hastily the underpaying was fixed and a blight on a prime minister who should have stood down at the time was hastily tidied up. Of course, that's what we read in the press.... I know two young workers who work for

seven eleven in Queensland: one works night shifts the other day shifts. Curiously they both earn effectively the same amount. They are allowed five minutes for the toilet and if they exceed it they get a warning. They work under constant camera supervision and in an eight-hour shift get precisely no breaks. Ignore



increase of 600%) for the testing strips they need to measure blood glucose. Indeed, the Turnbull government seems to be able to justify any type of cuts whatsoever all in the name of a failing budget. A budget they seem quite happy to expand spending money in safe liberal seats and in those areas traditional to liberal national voters like defence.

This government who penny pinch from those who can least afford it has spent three times as much as the previous two governments! A year or so ago a scandal involving Malcolm Turnbull came to light: Seven 11 stores were routinely underpaying their workers and allowing

what you read in the press, very little has changed at Turnbull's seven eleven.

So, it comes as no surprise that he is pushing for the same draconian working conditions for other out of business hours workers. We must look to a solution to resist this push, sadly the unions that are involved here are in line with the rest of Australian Unions; corruptly making deals and selling out their working people. It is only with grass roots control of the unions in the retail sector, that workers can hope to keep penalty rates.

Sean

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

"Top Secret" Rail EBA 2017 Negotiations

Some of the most important and sinister news "behind the scenes" is continuing secret negotiations conducted by the union officials of the Rail Tram & Bus Union and management over Rail EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) 2017.

The union bosses have brazenly thrown out the window their usual fake consulting with the grass roots ritual and log of claims which gets rapidly disregarded. These secret meetings are being held on a regular basis in Pitt Street (Transport NSW Office). Why not visit them en masse and demand a full report? Why be kept in the dark? One certain item on the agenda which has met massive opposition amongst drivers in the Loco union section in NSW Trains is DOO (Driver Only Operation) on the new interurban trains to be introduced in 2019 and now no doubt off the menu. Other likely items are the watering down of redundancy provisions pointing to big job losses with many on a trip to the dole queue and the trimming of penalty rates. A possible dirty trick of the union officials as part of the railroading of the EBA is the provision of only selected sections of the EBA document, rather than the full doc. prior to any ballot due to the "explosive" nature of some nasties. An important precedent is a similar trick played by the NSW Teachers Union officials in regard to that union's EBA last year.

This treacherous "back room" sell out wheeling and dealing and likely nasties in the EBA and the openness of any internet ballot to rigging via hacking, lack of independent scrutineers, no name check off, etc highlights the importance of a grass roots campaign based on direct action to secure some goodies. The last RW presented some good ideas for a log of claims. An important precedent is the campaign based on direct action waged by "Drivers for Affirmative Action" in March 2004. It secured large bonuses without any giveaways. In the context of such a campaign, there needs to be an eye for setting up a new union based on grass roots control principles. It would inspire and link up with other such initiatives in other sectors.

BEAT THE BOSS TO BEAT THE HEAT

Another extremely hot year, in fact one of the hottest on record. Yet public transport workers toil in unbearable conditions and do their best to keep trains, buses and trams running.

While bosses were cool in the comfort of their offices, staff were running around putting their bodies on the line in a genuine effort to get customers home. Trains, buses, trams and other infrastructure fail in heatwaves but workers are not allowed to fail? However is it right to continue working in such overheated condition? Is it right for your boss to expect you to perform miracles when you are heat stressed?

Safety Ignored

It is well known that people are more likely to commit mistakes of judgement and for accidents to happen when they are

as anger – and even combative behaviour”

(<http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/effects-of-heat-stress-on-workers-2>)

Of course shift work and the inability to sleep due to high temperatures exacerbates errors of judgement. If there is a prolonged heat wave over several days or weeks the accumulated effect will make things even worse.

Clothing

For a couple of years N.S.W. public transport staff have raised issues with management about the inadequacy of the uniform provided. The unbreathable, clingy, polyester shirts/blouses and long trousers are totally unsuitable for the work performed in them. The supplied clothing make employees uncomfortably sweaty and hot. Some people have developed rashes as a result. More importantly unsuitable clothing raises the body temperature of a wearer



under stress.

"A NASA study concluded that when the temperature is 95° F - (35 degree Celsius) for an extended period, people can make 60 mistakes per hour – without realizing it. When the ambient temperature reaches 95° F, almost half of the blood moves to the skin to produce moisture (in the form of perspiration) to naturally cool the body. The heart is pumping up to 150 beats per minute with less volume to get the blood to the skin. That means the rest of the organs, including the brain and muscles, are only operating on half the blood they normally need. This interferes with cognitive thinking skills and can provoke emotions such

and puts them at risk.

Health Effects on the Body

A human body's internal temperature is something close to 37 degrees C. When the body's temperature varies by even 1 degree major changes take place that puts a person's metabolism and biochemistry into a spin.

People who are made to stand excessively will experience dilated blood vessels that cause blood to pool in the ankles and lower limbs causing swelling to the extremities. Blood pooling is the body's natural attempt to rid itself of heat but it is not a natural healthy condition.

Confusion and dizziness are symptoms of heat exposure along with muscle cramps. It soon leads to the affected person losing their ability to do mental and physical tasks safely. Overweight people are more prone to the effects of heat stress and may become physically sick because of it.

The extra strain on hearts can cause palpitations and affect the ability to work. Have no doubts about the seriousness of heat stress, it can and does kill. If in your opinion a colleague is suffering from heat stroke call for first aid or where there is none apply your own skills to cool them down. When it is serious and the person can't function, has vomiting or diarrhoea, call an ambulance.

Customer Service or Employee Punishment?

Management's imposed unrealistic work program does not allow workers to adequately make effective decisions about their own health and well being, let alone that of the public. Bosses are usually thought of as fools and their directives should be ignored where possible.

The directive to have employees on stations stand for the duration of the shift is cruel and unusual punishment, especially in hot weather. It leads to well documented illnesses and physical and mental pain for most employees.

Likewise the removal of control rooms on some platforms, where an employee could rest at intervals, is an act of bastardry that is unparalleled. Here the employees had the ability to safely and securely discard clothing as the day heated up or store some water for a water break when needed. This is now, in the interests of "Customer Service", not possible. In fact employees are "bunded" with "please explain" notices for not being at their "point of duty" despite the needs for refreshments from time to time.

It's so bad that employees have to contact a Duty Manager before they go to the toilet rather than making a judgement themselves about a convenient time to go.

There are still plans afoot to demolish most control rooms on platforms as far as I know. Management has been banging away for some time now about the need for employees to stand out in the public arena on the platforms for the duration of their shift. So far most attempts at getting employees out of suburban station control rooms have proved impractical for operational reasons. In summer being able to re-

treat to an air conditioned control room where there is water and a comfortable environment is a sensible policy that offers a chance for employees to recover from the extreme heat. Employees still go out to despatch trains and give passenger information and perform duties as they see fit. So what more do they want? On platforms where the control rooms are removed, or forbidden to be used, there is no respite from the intense heat.

Although water in bottles is provided in hot weather to commuters, management has always frowned on the practice of providing water bottles to employees. Sure employees know where and how to get their supplies of water, but there have been times when the powers that be have put locks on the fridge.

Management has made no contingency plans for heat breaks or water breaks during the high temperatures of the afternoons, which regularly coincide with the



afternoon peak transport period. As the temperature gets higher during the day breaks should become more frequent and of a longer duration.

The UNIONS SAFE pamphlet recommends that at a temperature of 32-32 degrees a 10 minute break every hour is probably adequate for heat stress recovery. While at 32-35 degrees 15 minute break is required. Any temperature above 35 degrees would in all likelihood require a 30 minute break every hour depending on the workload and the environment that the work is performed in. This strategy to promote good health and combat heat stress is never considered by public transport management.

Why Damage Your Health?

It's your health and it's up to you to protect it. If you become ill through continued heat stress you will get little sympathy from management. They're best at counselling you for "time lost" and "Return to Work Plans". They are not interested in your reduced tolerance to an abnormal heat that you must bear through their unnatural work practices and bullying.

Exposure to long term heat can cause lasting deleterious health problems long after the heat has gone. Fatigue and real physical problems may not be recognised as being related to the stint of work that you did some time ago during a heat wave.

More importantly, why should you damage your health when the Boss has a legal obligation to ensure your good health. You and your colleagues have the right to approach your manager to help maintain a healthy workplace and a healthy body. You should never be expected to put your health at risk simply because your manager or the public requires it of you.

Meet with other work colleagues doing similar work and come up with a ways of make sure that you are not continually under heat stress. Collectively you will have more power and influence over bad management decisions.

What to Do?

While other unions, such as the building unions, suggest that their members stop work when the heat gets too much, the public transport unions have never made the information about heat stress available to their members.

An old UNIONS SAFE pamphlet from 2013 is instructive on workers' rights under the OH&S provisions of the law in N.S.W.

"Section 8(i) of the NSW Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 states that an employer has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.

If workers are suffering from any of the above symptoms, then it is clear that your employer is not complying with the law. But the law does not state any precise temperature at which workers should stop work, or any specific actions that must be taken by the employer at certain temperatures."

Therein lies the dilemma for workers. There is no legal definition of unbearable heat, at which point workers should stop work for their own health and safety. The conditions or temperature at which workers are to stop work are also not generally included in enterprise agreements.

Considering all of the facts, including the work to be done, the work environment, the temperature and humidity, the age of workers and other relevant factors, workers have to make their own assessment about when to stop work. Hold an impromptu meeting with your comrades on the job then decide what you want to do. At least this will pressure management to provide the necessary facilities, water, rest breaks and so on.

At this time they couldn't give a shit about workers except to say "job well done". Blood sweat and tears are expected from you no matter the cost to your health. The accolades of "job well done" are empty phrases which reinforce the job that they expect from you time and time again.

As Climate Change increases temperatures into the future this type of decision making is going to become more critical to maintaining your health and that of your fellow workers. Don't expect your boss to protect you, even though it is their statutory obligation.

One positive aspect of the "Stop Work to Beat the Heat" campaigns is that they affect the bosses and business owners who worry about the loss of productivity. These campaigns can also bring power to bear on politicians and business owners to help stop climate change, particularly when we refuse to work in the extreme temperatures. "Stop Work to Beat the Heat and to Stop Climate Change" I say.

Management has an obligation to protect you during hot weather. You have an obligation and a right to work in an environment which does not harm your health or that of anyone else. You need to insist on a few things.

Get your manager or OHS reps to regularly take temperature and humidity readings in various parts of the workplace during the day, recording them in a log book. This will aid your case for proper and safe work practices as well as better amenities. It also aids the case for stopping work when you can prove that it is just too hot to work.

Get used to writing in the OHS Incidents Register any symptoms of fellow employees or near misses that are related to heat stress. Note the time and temperature carefully.

Insist that air conditioned control rooms and rest centres be kept or supplied where they are currently not provided. That also means negotiating regular recuperation breaks with the boss. This may mean that job rotation becomes an option. Call your union for support in the negotiations when the going gets tough.

In what is a rerun of a past issue and what still remains a recurring blockage from management, that most of you are fed up with, you need to keep asking for suitable clothing for the high temperatures. Ones which allow for evaporation (not nylon) are needed to take heat away from the body.

Make sure everyone in the workplace is familiar with the signs of heat stress and how to deal with it.

When it comes down to it you need to protect yourself. The OH&S Acts gives some protection from harm during hot weather. Generally though the law does not give you definitive protection. That's where it comes down to you. You either put up with poor working conditions which damage your health or insist on your rights to work in a healthy environment.

You are unlikely to be dismissed for walking off the job with your colleagues when temperatures in your work environment are extreme. If you plan carefully and have the ambient temperature records, times, and the duration for which you are exposed to extreme heat (depending on the job), then what is there to stop you and your colleagues from protecting your well being? Building workers and others do it when they need to, why can't you?

Penalty Rates Under Attack

So the Fair Work Commission decided that Penalty Rates should be cut for some sectors of the workforce. Mostly the cuts affect the lowest paid and most precarious of workers which make up a substantial proportion of the workforce. Women and young people are the main victims of the stolen wages decision

In his public address about the changes Iain Ross, Fair Work Commission President, announced that there may be a further review into the possibility of extending cuts to penalty rates beyond just the hospitality and retail sectors. The recent decision is only the thin edge of the wedge that they have on their wish list to reduce wages and costs to business.

This has significance for all of us working in the Public Transport Sector since overtime makes up a substantial proportion of our take home pay. Because we work weekends, public holidays and out of normal work hours any cuts to penalties would lead to a reduction in take home pay of anything up to 50%.

Now Pauline Hanson (a racist Liberal Stooze) has proposed penalty rate cuts "across the board". So much for standing

up for people with no voice! Turnbull and Co love to hear this type of talk and are trying to ride on her supposed popularity by co-opting her support for an attack on workers for the bosses. The bosses of course are always sharpening their knives against workers and will not miss any opportunity to cut wages. They see this as



their chance to plunge in the knife.

If ever there was a time that the Union Movement as a whole should have come together and taken some action on the decision to pare back wages in the form of penalty rates this was it. What could be worse than taking wages from your members? Alas there is a nothing but a whimper from

the unions with murmurs of a strategy leading up to the National Election. They are encouraging you to vote for a Labor Government. Is that all there is?

A general stop work meeting with national strikes would have sent an immediate message to the Government not to mess with our pay. Without such a strategy we are all vulnerable.

The pressure will now be on to alter existing Enterprise Agreements seeking cuts to penalty rates and to employ more part time and casual workers rather than hire full time workers. After all Unions such as the S.D.A. have already set a precedent by bargaining away the penalty rates of retail workers who have been working weekends and public holidays without adequate penalty rates for some time now. This had some influence on the outcome of the Fair Work Commission's determination.

We have to be on our guard against such clauses in any new proposed E.B.A. Many Enterprise Agreements are up for renewal in 2017. Will there be attempts to tinker with our penalty rates?

Make your voice heard during the bargaining period. Let all and sundry know that you will not accept changes to your wages and conditions. We also all need to insist that full time work remains as the dominant and principal type of work.

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the situation with the management's cutbacks to mechanical section staffing and plans to cut auxiliary staff jobs in the STA?

Waverley Busie: The Liberal Govt. is putting pressure on every Govt. department to find new ways to make savings. Associated with the job losses, 1/3 of mechanic jobs at the depots have been lost. Currently at Waverley, the mechanical section area has the look of a ghost town. With mechanical staff struggling to fix problems just to keep buses on the road. Whilst small problems with the buses which aren't fixed in a timely manner due to the staff cuts, will develop into major problems later on.

I have also noticed a lot of broken down buses on the road. Some of the thinking by the Liberal Govt. and management behind the cutbacks and the increased likelihood of break downs, is that in comparison with say airplanes, there is little risk of fatalities and associated bad publicity. All that happens with the bus break downs is that the bus stays on the road until fixed or towed away and the passengers get another bus. However, there has recently been some very serious incidents involving 3 buses bursting into flames.

It's likely a major contribution to these incidents are buses overheating due to a lack of adequate air conditioning maintenance. Whilst the modern buses we drive lack windows for passengers to open. Consequently with the poorly maintained air conditioning in much of the STA's fleet and the recent extreme heat wave, drivers and passengers are adversely affected.

In regard to these important OH&S issues we must be prepared to strike to exert pressure on management to resolve the problem. As such industrial action is over an OH&S issue we are covered as "legal" industrial action. In regard to auxiliary job losses, we have been advised that 200 of these jobs are to be culled. It's likely to have dire consequences for STA operations.

One important sector being targeted is the roster clerks. At a recent union meeting I attended, we were advised by the union officials that management wants to replace the roster clerks with a computer system. Following being issued with our line of work for the month, if we require swaps,

we will have to do it on-line. There will be no one we can speak to about it. There was great concern amongst the grass roots that such an initiative will have severe consequences for us, and a willingness to take strike action over the issue. Unless Jamie Sinclair tells us exactly what will happen in the event of difficulties with this on-line system such as computer crashes affecting its on-line operation. Another sector of auxiliary staff being cut is OH&S (Occupational Health & Safety) nurses. In regard to senior management redundancies, Peter Rowley STA CEO has taken a golden handshake. His replacement is likely to be hell bent on further restructuring of the STA for privatisation prior to the upcoming NSW elections.

"The Dirty Dozen"

Other news is that our former illustrious leader "Mr Hercules" who relished providing exhibitions of various menacing poses in flexing his super sized steroid en-



hanced muscles to intimidate a "captive audience" of his underlings and in the hope of appearing in a centrefold in "We are Moving Sydney" magazine, is now a member of a marauding "dirty dozen" pack of bosses. They have been parachuted into various depots causing a path of carnage and shell shock amongst drivers under the iron heels of their Stassi style jack boots.

RW: What is the impact on drivers of the increased money gouging and speed up in the job stemming from NSW Liberal Govt. and management new initiatives?

WB: Associated with the deployment of the Opal system and generally ticket less fares, management has seized the opportunity to tighten running times. Imposing a further speedup in our jobs. The union executive is refusing to take any action to oppose this move. The job of the union rep these days seems to just handle drivers' personal problems akin to a social worker.

They don't seem to do any organising to help us fight these new attacks by the bosses. To cope with the worsening unrealistic running times, drivers are being caught out by the Liberal Govt. revenue raising measures such as speed and red light cameras when speeding and going through red lights. According to latest media reports a new generation of cameras will be deployed by the Govt. later down the track. These cameras are likely to be quite sophisticated being able to focus on separate vehicles going across a bridge. So hold on to your hats. Your job is on the line.

The bottom line should be the imposing of fines and the use of cameras as a safety measure, not a revenue source. If you lose your 14 driving points, you lose your job. Non professional drivers get 13 points, but as professional drivers we get an extra point. You have no recourse. The union hierarchy washes its hands of you. To get your job back you have to resort to a court case. This recourse can be costly, but if successful you may get some points back and be reinstated on the job. Consequently, a new pressure is being imposed

on us in regard to the threat of losing driving points. Years ago we never faced this problem. Only on rare occasions would you get booked. Now, we are being put in a very precarious situation. We always have to be below 14 points. Let me tell you, you can never be careful enough to avoid traffic infringements.

We are continuously in limbo with our jobs.

RW: What solutions do you see for this problem?

WB: Some remedies would be to exert industrial pressure so that we can get back our licences and associated points in 2 years. As unlike non-professional drivers, we have driver/instructors who can pin point our driving problems and so help resolve it. Whilst we could be awarded reward points for good driving assessed by a panel which has information about our driving record.

RW: What are the latest developments with the Light Rail Extensions in the Eastern Suburbs?

WB: The NSW Liberal Govt. is facing more problems with the extensions construction costs. On Anzac Parade, where the extensions are occurring, you can see a maze of plastic pipes, under the Light Rail tracks. There are all sorts of telecommunication cables apart from sewage pipes. Whilst the overall cost of the extensions has blown out by multi millions over budget and growing. At Dulwich Hill the

Light Rail is being upgraded. The real agenda for the Liberal Govt. is not the project itself and the millions wasted on it, but hidden spin off's. Already at Pagewood, where the old Leylands car plant was located, Meritons is building a 15 to 30 storey apartment blocks.

With the close down of manufacturing in Sydney, various other old factory sites are being developed for Meritons high rise developments. It seems Meritons will have an endless supply of money from the real estate sales. Whilst there will be 12 to 15 storey apartment blocks constructed along the extensions. Each apartment will have a garage and no doubt the residents will buy a car to get around. Particularly due to the inconvenience of public transport. The Govt. will gain more revenue via car rego and traffic fines. These developments and others such as at Hornsby will contribute to ever more heavy traffic coming through the city. Already on such highways as the Eastern Distributor in the morning its choked with traffic for hours. Making bus drivers jobs ever more frightfully demanding.

Whilst the Govt's business mates in concrete manufacturing and construction will

councils being turfed out and replaced by Liberal Govt. mates. All the Liberal NSW Govt. wants to see is more and more cranes, so windfall profits can be made by its business mates before the construction and real estate driven bubble in the NSW economy bursts. According to a builder I spoke to recently and a recent TV news report, the Eastern Sea Board of Australia has now the highest density of high rise cranes in the world. More cranes than a dozen supersized cities such as Shanghai, New York and Mexico City. There seems no stopping the Baird and now Berejiklian juggernaut.

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the latest at the depot?

Burwood Driver: Some of the most important news has been the restructure in the STA affecting office staff. Drivers won't be involved in job losses. So far we have not heard which office staff have been offered redundancies. Latest news is that Peter Rowley who was STA CEO took a golden handshake. Rumour has it that he was forced to take a redundancy.

RW: I understand there has been some "mysterious" developments with the union rep at Burwood?

BD: Lately, he has disappeared from the scene. The union rep's roster has been marked "absent" for four weeks. This normally means he won't be coming back to the depot. According to a rumour he had words with one of the bosses and had been suspended. In terms of him returning on the job, he was advised that he would have to go to another depot.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: How is the new auxiliary job restructure affecting Leichhardt?

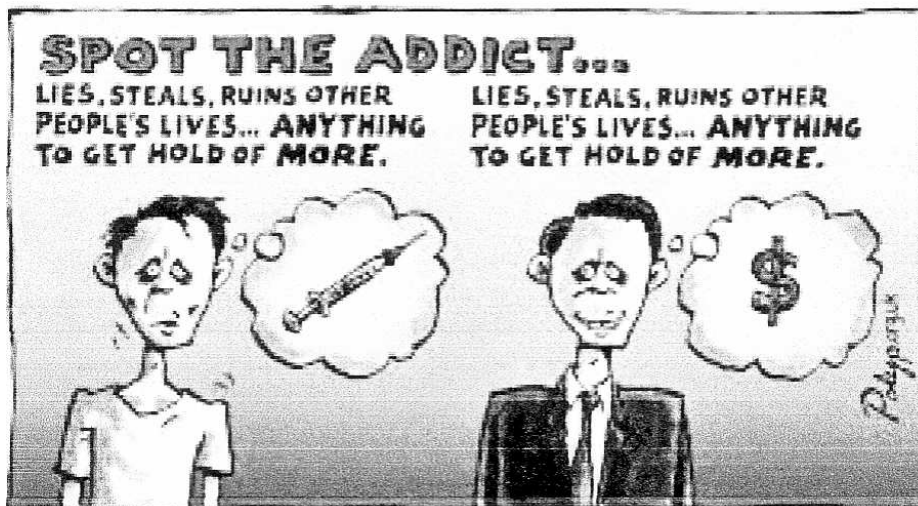
Leichhardt Busie: There have been some major changes associated with the restructure affecting the STA Administration. 60 STA office staff including the CEO will be based at the management area at Leichhardt. Whilst all the scheduler will be transferred to Tempe. Whilst POD2 which are engaged in training, will now be shifted around to different depots according to demand in regard to training new trainees. Many of us are uncomfortable with this influx of big bosses to Leichhardt and now looking over us. Other news which is of great concern for us, is the widespread tightening of turnaround times on various routes. On a positive note, the depot has been issued with 40 new Volvo buses, which are great to drive.

RW: What is the situation with the drivers?

LB: During one week in late February 6 drivers resigned at the depot. It is unclear as yet the reasons, but seems in line with the worsening situation of the job. Associated with the speedup with the job, we are constantly chasing our tails. It just goes to show how the STA bosses are incapable of running a business and be able keep long time drivers on the job. None of the trainees last long. What they are told at the induction, is shown to be illusionary when they go on the job. The bosses are running the STA into the ground. Interestingly they can splash out money on our new uniforms, but don't spend the money to adequately fix the buses.

PRIVATE BUS WILDCAT STRIKES!

From 8/3/17 for several days, 80 drivers at the Smithfield Depot of the private bus company, Transit Systems held mass sickies affecting 50% of services. Causing considerable chaos.. STA bosses have used its buses for strike breaking. The action follows TWU stop work meetings held over the lack of a pay rise for 2.5 years for the drivers.



enjoy a major boost to profits. The steel, wood and glass manufacturing sectors will also get a big boost with the expanding demand for apartment structural components.

RW: What are your impressions of the NSW Govt's pro-development policies on Sydney people?

WB: Most low and average income workers are being squeezed out of the city, as they are unable to afford rising rents and spiralling real estate prices, due low wage rises. Even for a two bed room unit, you have to pay \$500 to \$600 rent per week. These people are effectively trapped in Sydney with these spiralling costs. Whilst developers are being assisted by the forced merger of councils, with elected

Normally with such a restructure, the big bosses have already decided exactly who will stay on the job and those who will be leaving.

RW: How are the running times?

BD: We have not been affected by tightened turnaround times associated with the introduction of the Opal system. In fact there has been improvements to the running time for the M41. However, in the case of this run given its long length its normally very difficult to meet the time table requirements. So far the union officials have been keeping developments in the negotiations for the upcoming EBA 2017 close to their chests and unwilling to enlighten us.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In a previous edition of RW an article appeared about Bosses, Bullies and Crawlers in V/Line. In this edition we will discuss issues facing V/Line employees with these individuals. Once again Drivers, Station Staff will discuss these ongoing issues. Once again names have been changed.

RW: What is happening at V/Line particularly Southern Cross?

Clarence: Due to the introduction of MYKI ticketing extra Barrier Staff were employed to staff new Barriers. Before MYKI was introduced Southern Cross was an open station with ticket checking

Wilfred: That is not all. In winter the station can be freezing, so the Barrier Staff go to various kiosks to buy hot drinks to keep warm. In fact the only booth provided for the Barrier Staff is on the west end of the station on the western elevated walkway. It was only due to the union that a booth was installed by the barriers for shelter for the staff.

Wilma: It was quite cold working at the barrier.

Rastus: We, drivers use this walkway and it is quite cold. We don't blame the station staff having a hot drink.

Wilma: V/Line management does not like

Penrod: As a result of this interview the union has advised employees not to front him alone. Always take a union representative.

Jethro: And that's not all. Some customer service employees have said if he sees staff breaking the rules, he will put them on paper.

RW: At this point could we have a background about some of these employees.

Wilfred: Some of these employees previous jobs have been in a supervisory role in their previous employment. Because of these backgrounds, they will not join a union.

Wilma: Some of these persons think unions are out of date and think that by not joining the union, they will be not be considered for future promotions.

Rastus and Roscoe: Unfortunately this is the truth, at present times in most industries and in the railways, people will not join a union. What makes us sick is how these people take the benefits fought for over the last 100 years. When wage rises are granted, they put their hands out for all the benefits.

Penelope: It is the same with the conductors. Some of these people's jobs have been managers and these people think they can do without unions.

Rastus and Roscoe: In other words the non unionists are scabs.

Clarence: If they are in trouble, they are quick to join the union.

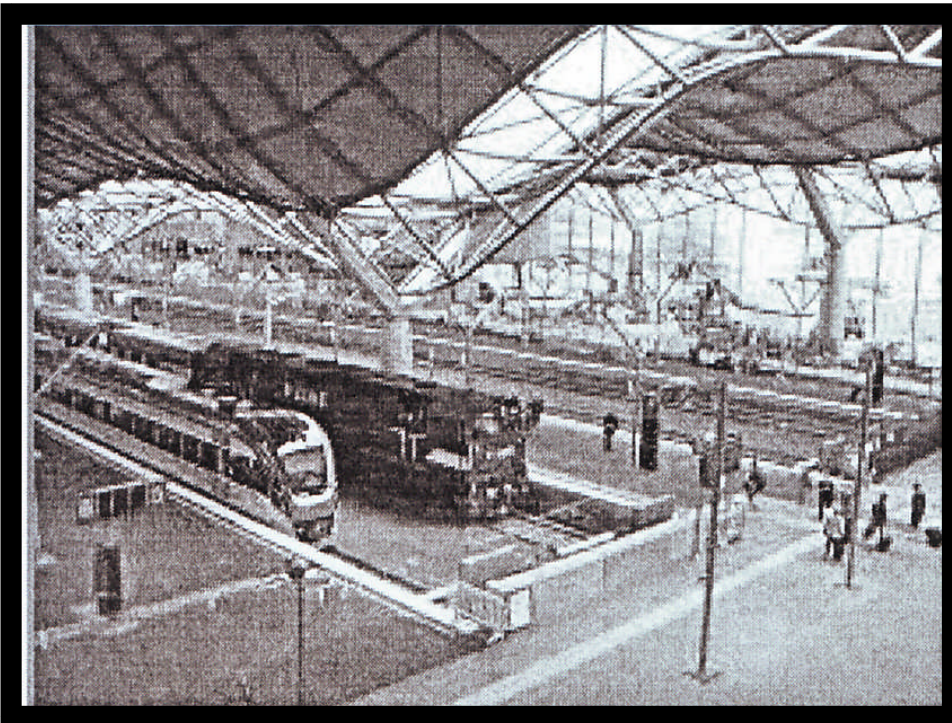
Penrod: They should not be accepted in the union. Let them go to an industrial lawyer. They will learn about the high fees they charge. Their only hope of success would be if a lawyer takes on the case Pro-Bono.

RW: There is a rumour that a conductor dobbed in a driver over a Health and Safety issue to the Internal Rail Regulator.

Rastus and Roscoe: You are correct. This individual dobbed the driver in over a Health and Safety issue. We will not discuss the Pro's and Con's of the issue due to limited space. It will have to be discussed in a future issue. The driver involved received a final warning.

Penelope: This conductor is a bit of a go getter who thinks that by dobbing the driver in he would get a position.

Rastus: We heard a rumour that V/Line management were hostile at what he did. That is going behind a manager's back. In fact V/Line did not know until they were contacted by the Rail Regulator.



being conducted by conductors on trains. Barrier Staff have always been employed on Suburban Barriers.

Jethro: At this point two V/Line employees have come forward to talk about these issues.

Wilma and Wilfred: We have come forward to talk about the conditions Customer Service Staff have to endure.

Penelope: The barriers were erected on the cheap with no staff protection such as barrier cabins or heaters. Also Race Trains operated by Metro Trains use Platform 8. On these days no extra V/line staff are rostered. Metro Train staff only assist on Platform 8.

Wilma: Due to a tight budget, overtime is reduced and if a staff member is sick, the shifts are not covered thus existing staff have to cover the shift, the best they can.

staff having hot drinks at the barriers. They say it is not professional.

Roscoe: Management can GET STUFFED. If it is cold and you want a hot drink. HAVE IT.

Wilfred: In one instance a supervisor called a barrier employee into the office and said to this person, "If I see you having a hot drink again, you will be out of a job."

Roscoe: This is bullying, doesn't this slug have any compassion.

Wilma: No he doesn't, you see this station master is only seconded to the position, but is unfortunately in charge of barrier staff.

Rastus: In other words, he thinks that by picking on this employee, he will get a few brownie points in his favour when the position is advertised.

Penelope: This conductor is not game to go to the meal room on his breaks so he sits in the staff clerk's office playing on the computers.

Rastus and Roscoe: If he goes into the meal the drivers will not talk to him. If we do say to him what we think of him, he will probably go bleating to Human Resources.

Penrod: Then Human Resources will send out a letter to all employees about bullying.

RW: Has it come to this, where you cannot voice an opinion.

Roscoe: Yes. It may be in the workplace, but not in the street off Railway Property. If you see this slug, say to him what you think of him, but in a tactful manner.

Wilma: What upsets us is that one of the barrier staff has made it known that he will dob-in any employee he sees doing the wrong thing.

Wilfred: This person comes from a managerial background and is hated by the barrier staff. He is a go getter and he doesn't care who he treads on to get promotion.

Wilma: One of the employees at Southern Cross stood up to the acting station master.

RW: What did he do?

Wilfred: He ran to Human Resources and said he was bullied. The employee was given a warning which would be placed on his record.

Roscoe: To be weak. It looks like he cannot make his own decisions.

Penrod: No. He cannot solve problems.

RW: Once again we have run out of space. Unfortunately people on contract or seconded positions think that by dobbing fellow employees they will be promoted. In most cases it does not happen. As management use these people for their own purposes.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say people dobbing in fellow employees are scum. As for the seconded station master go back to your old job, you are not wanted at Southern Cross. Finally if you are dobbed in by a fellow employee, make it known to others and don't front Human Resources.

IRELAND TODAY

6/3/17

Tesco agreed Friday to suspend its attempt to impose a worsening of pay and conditions on its long term workers and to return to the Labour Court, leading to the suspension of the strike. Monday's Irish Times carries a report on just how hard Tesco have been hit by the strike action, the Finglas superstore saw a massive 80% decline in takings. These leaked figures stand in stark contrast to the attempt by Tesco PR to suggest the strike was ineffective and unpopular.

The figures reveal that even those stores which had not yet voted to strike, and which subsequently did not have pickets, saw a decline of 30% in sales. According to Conor Pope's report in Tesco Clearwater on the Monday before the strike "sales were €165,901, while a week later they were under €35,000, a drop of €130,916 or nearly 80 per cent" and "The fall between the two Mondays across 29 stores of all sizes totalled €827,896. .. A daily loss of that scale would suggest the cumulative impact of the 11-day strike came close to €50 million"

Losses of that scale explain why Tesco was willing to spend over €100,000 on full page newspaper ads trying to unsuccessfully convince customers that they should not support the strike. They also show why workers taking strike action has a power that cannot be ignored, in the way marches and other demonstrations some-

times are. Being conservative Tesco probably lost 2 million profits from the 11 day strike (although Tesco keeps profits from the Ireland franchise a secret).

Tesco were attempting to impose a cut in pay and conditions for their longest serving staff in Ireland, the pay cut was up to 20%. These pre-1996 workers could earn 14 euro an hour, a rate close to a living



wage rather than the minimum wage most workers in retail are stuck with. As such Tesco's actions were a threat to all retail workers, the 14,500 employed by Tesco but also workers across all other retail outlets.

Minimum wages also act as a subsidy from all workers to the corporations that impose them, because many such workers are then forced to claim various state benefits to get by. One study of this for Tesco in the UK estimated that the British state was giving

Tesco an annual subsidy equivalent to 364 million sterling, because it's 209,000 low paid workers needed to claim Working Tax-Credits and Housing Benefit.

We don't have figures for Ireland but it's significant that on Friday the Department of Social Protection had to deny that Tesco workers would have Family Income Supplement cut because they were striking, so certainly the low pay of some of the workers mean they do have to claim it. These state subsidies to corporations come at a cost to healthcare and education for all workers. This is why it's so important that

we all support fights against a race to the bottom' conditions and support fights for wage increases. No one should have to work for a wage that they cannot live off, and these supplements amount to a recognition that the pay is too low to survive on.

There are specific reasons in Ireland for the high level of solidarity shown and the respect for the pickets. The 1910s on saw a situation where workers who once lived under desperate conditions won very significant improvements, decade after decade, through militant action. We escaped the slums of 1910s Dublin through a

long, long fight that was not easy, the 1913 Lockout being one significant defeat. But a successful fight over time meant for all the generations up to the present each set of workers lived considerably better than their parents. The drop in union membership over the last decades has meant the current generation of workers have seen real declines, often in official forms where they enter the workforce at a lower set of wages and conditions.

The collective solidarity from the 1910s, which saw a general culture of respect for picket lines and solidarity with those on strike, was a key part of winning those improvements. There were suggestions during the strike that this culture has weakened, although in part this was because a lot of people seemed to be ignoring the picket at the Baggot Street store, but that's located in the fairly affluent business district. There was also an issue initially with students at the St Pat's teacher training college crossing the picket at the Drumcondra store. However this was greatly reduced following the work of a number of teacher union activists and the college student union.

Tesco themselves have played a nasty game. At its most bizarre they painted out the pedestrian crossing at the entrance of the Ballybrack store. They forced strikers away from the doors of the actual store to the gates of shopping centres and then cried crocodile tears because of course this meant other businesses were affected.

Their strategy was clearly to isolate the 250 affected workers from the remaining 14,000 workers, and demoralise them into surrender.

This wasn't entirely unsuccessful. Mandate lost strike ballots in some of the stores where there were no workers on the pre-1996 contracts. Tesco are using what Mussolini called Salami tactics; in attacking the union, cutting off one thin slice of the workers to attack at a time. Mandate reckons that if Tesco had succeeded with the pre-96 workers the "3,000 workers on post-1996 contracts who are currently on a higher hourly rate of pay who will be next."

Some 10,000 of Tesco's 14,500 workers are represented by Mandate, if that 10,000 stick together it's very clear Tesco would be defeated. But if Tesco can cut them into chunks isolated from each other it could pick them off one by one. When it comes to conflicts with their bosses individual workers don't have a lot of power but when we stick together we win.

It's not clear what will happen in the Labour Court either - after all, it is stacked in favour of the bosses' interests. But what is clear is that effective picketing and solidarity aren't just for tales of labour battles in the 1910's. They are weapons for defending and advancing our quality of life in 2017 and beyond, sadly something which will always be under attack as long as we are split into employees and employers. Striking works. The costs for Tesco, in terms of lost profits, obviously proved far too high and hit Tesco in the one place where it hurts, right in the profits.

Words: Andrew Flood (follow Andrew on Twitter)

Author: Andrew N Flood

International Transport Workers' News

argues that requiring workers to be present as railways stations both mornings makes it practically impossible for them to take a full day off.

TAIWAN RAIL STRIKE

27/1/17 TAIPEI, Taiwan — The railway scrambled to keep trains on time Friday as hundreds of union members stayed home to protest working conditions, while the southbound lanes of freeways were packed from dawn as people rushed home on Lunar New Year's eve.

The Taiwan Railways Administration (TRA) initiated emergency measures in response to the strike, including deploying junior level managers to join low-level workers, Director-General Lu Jie-shen said.

Assuring passengers that "every train will depart at its scheduled time," Lu said he had 100 percent faith in the administration, and added that 90 percent of workers disapproved of the union's behaviour.

The industrial action was taken in retaliation of the TRA's continued refusal to hire more workers in order to ease the burden on its current staff, Taiwan Railway Union Director-General Wang Chieh said.

"The union has received more than 1,000 signatures in support of the campaign," Wang said, "but because many members were pressured by higher-ups, we're expecting (only) around 400 to 500 staff to no-show from Jan. 27 through 30."

Officials estimated that approximately 30 percent of Taipei Railway Station staff did not show up for work Friday.

Transportation Minister Ho Chen Tan expressed understanding for the striking workers, saying that "individual labor unions may arrange their own plans."

However, Ho said, "the transportation business is in the service industry. This is the time of year when commuters need the TRA the most."

The TRA expects to handle an average of 712,000 passengers daily during the Lunar New Year break, with a surge on Monday to 887,000.

Demonstrations Nationwide

While some union members simply took the day off Friday, others took to the streets, with demonstrations in Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung.

Protesters chanted and held spring couplets reading "We all need transportation, but TRA workers need labor rights" and "The TRA neglects labor rights, jeopardizes passengers' safety."

As well as an increase in hiring, the union is demanding reduced working hours and a guaranteed full day off for holidays.

Current TRA scheduling designates holidays as extending from 7 a.m. in the morning to 7 a.m. the next morning. The union

Monday to See Worst Traffic

The worst traffic this Lunar New Year will most likely happen Monday, with authorities predicting 70 percent more vehicles than usual will use the country's freeways.

For southbound traffic, Sunday will likely be the busiest day, the Taiwan Area National Freeway Bureau said, estimating that driving just from the north of Changhua to the southern tip of the county — normally an 8-minute journey — could take up to 40 minutes.

Tuesday is expected to see the most congestion in northbound lanes, with a 15-minute trip taking up to 1 hour and 50 minutes.

UK: RAIL STRIKE OVER DOO

Rail Union RMT members who are guards and drivers on Southern Rail went on strike again on the 22nd February 2017 in the on-going disputes over the safety impact of the extension of Driver Only Operation and the removal of guards from services.

Members went on strike for 24 hours between 0001 hours and 2359 hours on Wednesday 22nd February 2017.

The strike comes after talks between RMT and Southern in the guards dispute with their press announcement saying that ‘we were deliberately wrecked yesterday by the company as they made a mockery of the negotiating process and chose to completely ignore the safety issues at the heart of the matter’

Mick Cash, RMT General Secretary, said:

“The abject failure by Southern Rail in yesterday’s talks to take the safety issues seriously has left us with no option but to confirm further action. These disputes could have been settled if Southern/GTR had listened to our case and given the guarantee of a second-safety critical member of staff on their trains.

“Instead they have shifted the goal posts even further and have now created a ‘strike breakers’ charter” where one of the numerous new conditions where trains can run driver-only is during industrial action.

“We are disappointed that the RMT is going to heap yet further misery and disruption on the travelling public. We aim to run as full a service as we can.”

During the last conductor strike, on 23 January, Southern ran around three-quarters of its normal service.

Uckfield

See Page 13

Anarchist Elected to RMT Executive

At the beginning of this year the RMT elected Andy Littlechild, a longstanding anarchist and member of the Solidarity Federation (SolFed), to the RMT union’s National Executive Council as its London transport representative. — The role, which lasts for three

years, takes responsibility for the entire

Ed’s note: SolFed, and other anarchist groups, see trade union bureaucracy as taking agency out of the hands of workers and transferring it to people who are not at the site of, or affected by, the struggle taking place. The full-timer’s wages and community ties

are linked to a national-level body removed from direct struggle, and their role is therefore based on what’s best for the institution, rather than the workers.

(For more on SolFed and anarcho-syndicalist thinking, try Fighting For Ourselves online/book)

Whether Andy’s decision to engage with the RMT’s executive will be productive or not is yet to be seen. The test will be in how and whether he manages to preserve his class-based anarchist politics in practice against the relentless industrial and political warfare in

London, especially on the Tube where he has walked straight into the bitter, escalating dispute and strike activity around staffing stations, as well as several smaller skirmishes which are developing there as I write - and how Andy preserves his politics likewise in his dealings within the hierarchy of the RMT.

One thing we can say is only the RMT would put a known anarchist in charge of London.Edit: There is one other union which has elected an openly anarchist member to a major position in recent times - Donnacha DeLong was president of the National Union of Journalists from 2011-12 and still sits on its NEC.

<https://freedomnews.org.uk/rmt-union-puts-anarchist-in-charge-of-london/>



That is simply scandalous and a measure of the betrayal of our members as a result of the TUC-brokered deal with Southern in the drivers’ dispute.”

“The full detail of Southern’s plan is far worse than anyone could have anticipated. This is dire news, not just for staff, but for passengers who rightly demand a safe, reliable and accessible service. RMT will not walk away from the fight for a railway that puts public safety before private profit.

“It is now down to Southern/GTR to face up to their responsibilities and engage in genuine and serious talks that address our issues.”

In response to the RMT announcement of a 24-hour conductors’ strike next Wednesday, 22 February, Nick Brown, Chief Operating Officer of Govia Thameslink Railway, Southern’s parent company, said:

battlezone of London Underground including trains, stations, engineers, all ancillary staff and contracted companies, along with Transport for London, Docklands Light Railway, Black Cabs and even Boris Bikes. — Andy, who’s worked for many years as a Tube track worker and union rep, stood unopposed for the position and was duly elected after receiving nominations from every RMT branch in the constituency. His unopposed win was generally linked to Andy’s perceived militancy and non-sectarian approach to organising, which endeared him to RMT’s London activist base and gave him a clear run.

Being elected in this way is not without its downside as it meant there was no election

involving the members; and is equally controversial given a general trend of anarchist disdain for full-time union positions, not least within SolFed itself, which bars full-time union officers from membership.

SPANISH WHARFIES FIGHT CASUALISATION

6/3/17

Spanish ports are battenning down the hatches, bracing for massive union strikes against a right-wing government determined to impose casualisation at any cost.

Thousands of dock workers face the sack, to be replaced by low-paid casuals as temping agencies are allowed for the first time onto the waterfront.

“The Spanish government is tearing up the rule book with a callous disregard for Spanish jobs, Spanish prestige and international conventions,” says International Transport Workers Federation leader Paddy Crumlin.

“Their plans go beyond belief.”

According to the International Dockworkers Council, “their plan is to fire

Spanish dockworkers at a rate of 25% of their full strength each year, which means an absolute extinction of their employment within three years."

Some of Spain's port employers are already licking their chops, telling PortStrategy.com that under the "free market" system of their dreams they can slash pay in half.

Other employers are less pleased, asking angrily why a full-frontal attack on labour laws is announced just weeks after successful negotiations established a new agreement for the years to come.

Barcelona port worker and IDC Coordinator Jordi Aragunde says "The Spanish government... seeks to make the dockworker profession disappear from national ports."

"We feel cheated," says Antolín Goya, leader of the Coordinadora port worker's union.

Across Spain, mass meetings of dock workers have voted loudly and angrily to resist this attack.

Strike action will hit all of Spain's ports on the 20th, 22nd and 24th of February.

"Hopefully there is still time for the government to walk away from this rash proposal and instead engage in negotiations," says ITF maritime operations coordinator Jacqueline Smith.

"On behalf of ITF unions worldwide we counsel it to do so."

The SAGEP is funded by contributions from companies providing cargo handling services, who are required to be involved if they wish to use Spanish ports.

Unions work within the SAGEPs to ensure their members have secure jobs and pay commensurate with both their skills and the sacrifices they make working in a dangerous industry.

The proposed changes will replace this



system with one in which temping agencies and global corporations compete to lower wages and claw back conditions.

Spanish ports are doing exceptionally well under the current system, with the port of Valencia handling a record 4.72 million twenty-foot-equivalent units last year.

The CMT union had earlier cancelled five days of strikes while it held negotiations with the terminal operators and stevedores' organization Anesco.

The minority Popular Party government's planned reform was in response to a European Court ruling in December 2014 that the country's dock labor system, which is run by local union controlled port pools, breaches EU rules on the freedom of establishment.

Spain was fined 15.6 million Euros (\$16.7 million) last July for failing to comply with the court's ruling and faces a daily penalty of 134,000 Euros until it carries out the reforms.

The draft reform would dismantle the union's monopoly over the hiring of dockworkers across the Spanish water-

The port of Barcelona increased its container traffic in the same year by 14.5% to 2.2 million TEUs.

Why now?

Spain is a member of the European Union, which has the power to force policies on member states that override their sovereignty and go against the wishes of their people.

In December 2014, the European Court of Justice declared the Spanish port employment system is against EU law.

The EU imposed a 15.6 million euro fine in July 2016. Years of governmental gridlock in Madrid had put a showdown with maritime unions low on the agenda.

Since then there have been additional daily fines of 134,000 euros.

<http://www.nasaships.com/SitePages/NasNews.aspx>

Quote:

Spanish ports workers have suspended the previously announced strike dates for March 6th and 8th. Strikes action to commence starting March 10th, 2017 as follows:

- Week 10 - March 10th – every other hour starting at 8:00AM
- Week 11 - March 13th, 15th, 17th every other hour starting at 8:00AM
- Week 12 – March 20th, 22nd, 24th every other hour starting at 8:00AM
- Bilbao Port will strike on the above days for 24 hour periods starting at 8:00 AM.

The protests continue to stem from European regulations to reform the country's port labor system, ending restrictive practices surrounding dock labor.

What's at stake?

Under the current system, Spanish ports require employers to give preference when hiring to dockers who are part of a local register of qualified workers, known as a SAGEP.

STOP PRESS

Spanish dockworkers call off remaining strikes

Bruce Barnard, Special Correspondent / Mar 16, 2017

The Spanish dockworkers' union on Thursday cancelled the remaining four days of a nine-day strike campaign after the government failed to win parliamentary support for reforms of the country's dock labor system.

The strikes, which would have involved dockworkers stopping work every other hour, were due to take place on March 17, 20, 22, and 24.

front and free port employers to hire non-union labor and remove the obligation to be paying members of the local dock pools.

The dockworkers' union said it is prepared to start "serious and rigorous" negotiations with all parties, including employers and the government, to reach a consensus on responding to the Luxembourg court's ruling.

The government has said it must comply with the court's ruling and proposed a three-year transition for the reformed labor system to come into effect in a bid to win parliamentary support and meet some of the concerns of the union, which claims the reform will result in up to 7,000 job losses.

The government has not said how it will respond to the failure to obtain parliamentary approval for its planned reform.

Continued From Page 11 UK Rail Strike Over DOO

A deal aimed at ending the dispute between Southern Railway and the Aslef union over driver-only trains has been agreed.

Parent company Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) said both sides had secured a "recommended deal" after "constructive talks".

Mick Whelan, General Secretary of Aslef, said union members would now be balloted on the proposals.

The result of the vote will be announced on 3 April.

Mr Whelan said the new terms "offer solutions to our concerns, as well as restoring the confidence of all parties, and the travelling public".

GTR director Andy Bindon said he was pleased with the deal and hoped it would end "an extraordinarily difficult period for passengers, staff and the regional economy".

Aslef has been in dispute with GTR over driver-only operated (DOO) trains, and

the firm's decision to turn guards into on-board supervisors and give responsibility for opening and closing carriage doors to drivers.

The union's members have taken six days of strike action in recent months which have crippled Southern services.

It also banned overtime which caused huge disruption to Southern's 300,000 passengers.

In February, Aslef members rejected a deal with Southern by a majority of 54.1% in a similar ballot. It came after 11 days of talks between the rail operator and the union.

Just days before, talks between the Rail Maritime and Transport Workers union (RMT) and Southern rail broke down without any deal agreement.

Mick Cash, leader of the RMT, which has also been taking strike action against Southern, said: "RMT has not seen the detail of the proposed outline agreement between GTR and Aslef and we are of course requesting a full copy as it goes to the heart of our disputes with the company."

"In the meantime RMT is pressing yet again for urgent talks with the company in our guards and drivers' disputes."

Analysis, by BBC South transport correspondent, Paul Clifton

This is not a done deal - yet. Last month, drivers unexpectedly rejected a deal brokered by their own union.

The margin wasn't large - 55% against - and the two sides have been talking ever since to find a way of bringing a majority of the members back on board.

We've not been told the details of the revised agreement.

But it's likely to include further improvements to CCTV monitoring systems drivers use when closing the train doors.

Passengers will be crossing their fingers that this time the deal will be strong enough to stick.

But the separate dispute involving train guards is not part of this deal, and the year-long action by the RMT union continues.

GERMAN LABOUR NEWS

The union FAU (Free Workers Union) has welcomed legal action from the German Association of Journalists (DJV) and pilots' union Cockpit in the campaign to try and knock down a controversial Bargaining Unit Act designed to shut down small unions, known as the Tarifeinheitgesetz (TEG), which is growing.

The Act, which was passed in 2015, says that in an industry with more than one union agreements made with the largest union will take priority. Before its introduction, it was possible for different unions to win different agreements for workers within the same industry, encouraging groups to "one-up" each other in workplaces and rewarding effective tactics.

Smaller unions, including FAU, have been up in arms about TEG, saying it effectively functions as a union-busting initiative because it gives a monopolistic franchise to bigger TUC-style unions which feel threatened

by smaller, more militant groups. In one widely-cited example, the militant rail union GDL, which has a strong presence in engineers and conductors, would find itself unable to win any concessions above those won by the far less militant but much larger EVG, which has a higher absolute number of members in the industry.

In a statement on Wednesday FAU strikes working group representative Pablo Rastenes said:

The TEG can be seen as a direct response to successful militancy by small unions, among others in the rail sector in 2014. The initiative for the TEG was brought by



the Federation of Employers (BDA) and the big DGB unions [DGB is equivalent to Britain's TUC/Australia's ACTU].

The fact the unions made common cause with the BDA can only be seen as an expression of their fear of having to suffer further losses of members and of losing their monopolistic status.

FAU has followed the development since its first discussions with concern and mo-

bilised against this joint venture of DGB and BDA - and later against the legislative process of the Ministry of Labour under Andrea Nahles.

The campaign reached its climax with a nationwide demonstration of the action alliance with the slogan "Hands off the strike - for full trade union freedom of action" on April 18th 2015 in Frankfurt. It was the peak of the GDL strike and the KiTa strikes of Ver.di, and just before the TEG was adopted in the summer by the Bundestag.

The FAU appeals to all workers and trade unions, not only for the well-being of their own members but for all wage earners, regardless of the outcome of the proceedings, to show solidarity and take action against any future restriction on the freedom of association and trade union freedom.

Regardless of how the Constitutional Court will decide in the coming months, the recommendation of labour lawyer Dr. Rolf Geffken made at that militant demonstration in Frankfurt holds true: "The best defence against the restriction of the right to strike will be the strike itself!"

[Edited machine translation of original FAU article]

In their legal arguments, DJV and Cockpit say the Act is incompatible with Basic Law (Germany's constitution), as it conflicts with the guarantee for bargaining autonomy (Article 9 Par 3).

BRITAIN TODAY

HARRODS VICTORY

From @UVWunion, 20 JAN 2017: "We have beaten Harrods, the richest and most prestigious department store in the world! 100% of the service charge will now go to staff! Thank you to everyone for your support and a big congratulations to the resilience and courage of our members, the Harrods restaurant workers, who have achieved this victory by joining United Voices of the World, getting organised and standing up to their employer's outrageous practices."

A bit of background

After Harrods' chefs and waiters joined UVW we immediately submitted a claim for 100% of the service charge to go to staff.

Harrods had previously been taking up to 75% for themselves, without admitting the

They also agree to our other demands of appointing an independent tronc master to administer the service charge and allowing staff to sit on the tronc committee.

This victory sends out a clear message to the rest of the restaurant and hospitality industry that workers are no longer going to accept anything less than 100% of the tips and trade unions are ready to help them get organised and fight.

The success of the campaign at Harrods offers a powerful model to follow for other workers across the industry. We will now continue to push Harrods to improve the conditions and pay of their workers and demand proper union recognition.

NHS on the Brink

On March 4th, around 250,000 NHS workers, patient activists, union members and members of the public from across the country joined a 'Save the NHS' march in Central London.



exact percentage, or around £5000 per worker per year. After helping the chefs and waiters build towards a potential strike and mobilising 100s of people including staff, for a massive demonstration which ended up shutting down Knightsbridge and much of Harrods, and threats of regular and even bigger demonstrations to come, Harrods finally gave in and agreed to give over 100% of the service charge to staff.

As we slowly made our way across Bloomsbury and down to Parliament, I chatted to fellow nurses, discussing the desperate state of the NHS. It was clear from the placards and union banners that this demonstration had pulled in people from across the country. The NHS did not seem like an abstract ideal to the people attending, it was something they relied on, worked in or knew that they would need at some point in the future. When compared to other demonstrations, such as the recent anti-Trump one, the average age of participants was noticeably much higher.

But in spite of the size and welcoming atmosphere of the crowd, there was a bitter-sweet feeling: if only this demonstration had happened twelve months ago; going back a year, in the midst of the junior doctors' strike, a demonstration of this size would have helped galvanise those on strike, and perhaps slowed the eventual capitulation of the BMA leadership. Now, despite the media attention of the winter crisis in hospitals, very little press coverage of the march would follow.

If you've been lucky enough not to need access to healthcare recently, you may not be aware of how bad things have got. Below is one nurses perspective of how the NHS is buckling under an extraordinary amount of pressure.

People's experiences at GP surgeries can range from an inability to even get an appointment, through the other end of the spectrum, to excellent care. A few things are clear though: there are not enough GPs, whether in surgeries currently, being trained to replace retiring GPs, or to strengthen services where needed. This is due to a lack of money, but increasingly in the future it will also be about an inability to recruit. Horrible working conditions will lead to junior doctors leaving the public sector in search of less stressful jobs, or the country altogether, to work in medicine elsewhere. Uncertainty around Brexit (sorry had to mention it once) means recruitment in other countries is becoming more difficult.

Consultation sessions of ten minutes are increasingly insufficient to help patients manage their complex health conditions well. 'GP held' budgets in the form of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) promised, in name only, to allow GPs to commission the services their patients needed locally. However, their actual purpose has been to put the government at arm's length as austerity budgets mean CCGs start rationing operations and care to their patients. Top tip: if the government gives you 'control' of a budget, they're trying to fuck you.

Poor access to adequate GP services can lead to delays in access to diagnostic tests, and late detection of certain diseases. Whilst the NHS offers (for the amount we pay in taxes) a pretty comprehensive range of drugs, treatments and surgeries for conditions such as cancer, UK cancer survival rates lag behind other large economies in Europe. This can be primarily blamed on late detection, because when they are diagnosed, they are at a much later stage, and therefore harder to treat.

As the population ages, the demands on the NHS are predictably rising. However, hospital services have largely stayed static, at best, when it comes to numbers of beds, nurses and doctors. In some acute

clinical areas, like A&E and medical admissions wards, this cocktail of increasing demand and insufficient staff leads to avoidable patient deaths on a daily basis. As we speak, local NHS groups are being forced by the Department of Health to develop plans that will further cut hospital services. As you'd expect, they have a delightfully upbeat title, "Sustainability and Transformation Plans" or STPs. As staff skip breaks and work late to keep patients safe, whole swathes of 'salaried' workers are now working hour upon hour of unpaid overtime. Ten years ago, nurses and doctors did this routinely, now it is physios, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and so on. Everyone's goodwill is being manipulated to extract even more 'value' out of them.

In the community, things are worse, (if that's even conceivable). Social care budgets have been cut by 50% in some areas. This has led to councils cutting payments to social care companies providing care to vulnerable people in their own home or residential homes. Falling payments have led to falling wages for care workers with, for example, companies trying not to pay workers for their travel time between home visits. But the cuts have gotten to such a point that care companies are now pulling out of contracts with councils; there isn't sufficient profit for it to be worth their time. Money 'saved' by these cuts is then lost as people need to be admitted to hospital because their living environment is so unsafe their health is affected.

All pretty bleak, and that's not even getting into the creeping privatisation of NHS services. But bleakness is the strategy, as

far as I can see. For the NHS to be a viable concept, it has to remain comprehensive. If it is funded sufficiently to meet the needs and expectations of the general public, it is in relative safety.

But when the more affluent in society view it as insufficient for their needs - due to cancelled operations, lack of GP appointments, or unsafely staffed hospitals - then they will vote with their feet and take out private medical insurance. A smart move by the government now would be to start



offering tax incentives to people/companies that do just that.

Once the government creates a wedge between rich and poor healthcare users, it will no longer be alone in trying to keep NHS costs down; it will be joined vocally by the affluent and powerful parts of the population that no longer requires the NHS at all. At this point the NHS becomes the de facto healthcare system for the poor,

will be severely limited in the services it can afford to provide and left to rot on the vine. At this point, anyone who can afford health insurance will then make the effort to buy coverage, causing the split to grow larger.

Where does that leave healthcare workers and the public in general that want an affordable, high quality, comprehensive healthcare system?

Firstly, the severity of the situation must be recognised: this is not a winter crisis, but the grinding down of the NHS until it is no longer a safe provider of care.

But secondly, and perhaps most importantly, although austerity is being designed at the national level, cuts will be at their most visible when local hospitals are closing maternity services, A&E departments, and so on. For these cuts to be effectively opposed it will require the collective action of health workers, patients and the general public. We'll need to be organised and creative, utilising every strategy that's proven effective in the past, pickets, bed occupations, solidarity strikes, and more.

Successful examples of these, like the campaign to save Lewisham Hospital, are all too rare these days but we'll need much more of them if we're to save the NHS. The alternative, of losing entirely the idea of a healthcare system that meets the needs of everyone and is free at the point use, really doesn't bear thinking about.

Thanks to Libcom

DIGITAL DEAD END

In modern contemporary society authentic experience is now becoming commodified information; processed data. Our rulers want to be rulers banal political and economic agendas and programs present a prognosis again. Simultaneously maintaining everything and saying nothing. Their politics of nothing are then reduced to an advertising slogan and basic thievery, subsidising the dreary lives of the rich as usual. This is the reality, people cast their votes in today's mediocracy. Whilst product from the political supermarket is to be prescribed and consumed where all the products are pretty much the same. Any differences remain spurious and elusive. Power is reducing language into non-words in personal touch screens where cybernetic quasi-authenticity is transforming the world into pre-packaged

simulations. It's obvious where the masters of this electronic world, who opened the gates to this con-job are still laughing all the way to their personal tax-havens.

Now that a crumbling capitalism is paradoxically reaching its zenith, thinking is becoming unnecessary, poetry is slowly dying and language remains a servant of power. People continue to line up each year to purchase the latest electronic hand held gizmo. The only real effective and rational use of each device, as history has already predicted, is the coordination and amplification of open rebellion against authority. If nothing else, all other uses simply reinforce the dominant regime of an alienating commodified existence.

Capitalism is transforming what might have been face to face transparency into a thing of the past, creating a future where everything and everyone is electronically quantified and managed in economic forms, even colonising our most intimate dreams and selling it back to us. This essentially creates a dead-end world, ideol-

ogy becomes materialised and defused. A spectre is haunting all of us where nobody knows who they are interacting with. Am I a man on a stone or on a tree? We will all now be in danger of becoming completely digital with power defining life itself, atomising people, prohibiting only open communication.

This power is no longer concentrated in one focal point in this world, but is now the organisation of the totality of the world of commodities. Anyone who defeats it at a local level sends a planetary shockwave throughout the network. The world wouldn't be working at all if it didn't have to constantly outrun its own ruin. This catastrophe is everywhere. We are already situated within the collapse of this civilisation. It's this reality we need to transcend and totally revolutionize.

Sometimes it seems, nothing is less probable than a revolution, yet nothing is more vital than a revolution to create an age equal to our desires.

J.D.

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

David Macaray 2015. Night Shift 270 Factory Stories, Los Angeles, Amazon - CreateSpace Independent Publishing, ISBN: 978-1512214963 (pbk.), 360 pages, \$ 17.99

Review by Thomas Klikover

David Macaray's most enjoyable and very readable "Night Shift" is an exquisite study of industrial work in an US-American work manufacturing site between the mid-70s and the mid-90s. Being a marvel of industrial sociology, it avoids Managerialism's dehumanisation of factory workers (e.g. human resources) and of management studies that turn into an academic research object.

To those trapped in the management orbit, it is a stark reminder that those who actually work on the factory floor are not "human resources", numbers of head counts, or disposable commodities but people of flesh and blood – individuals. Macaray uses the term "San Remo" (a fictional name) for the paper factory where he was working. In reality, San Remo is Kimberly-Clark, a \$20 billion multi-national Fortune 500 corporation with 40,000 workers best known for Huggies and Kleenex.

More than 150 years ago, Karl Marx predicted that wherever capitalism goes, a working class will emerge and wherever a working class emerges there is an organised working class. This applies to San Remo (Macaray's preferred title) as well. Very soon after Macaray started working at San Remo, he became a shop steward and eventually president of the local trade union that organises workers at San Remo, the AWPPW: Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (www.awppw.org). As a consequence, "Night Shift" is as much a workplace story as it is a trade union story albeit at the centre of Macaray's study there are the men and women working on the shop floor. At times the gripping book is funny while at other times very serious when, for example, describing the fundamental changes in workplace culture between the mid-70s and mid-90. Despite Managerialism's claims about positive organisational culture, these changes were not for the better apart for the fact that better trained managers became less authoritarian and less dictatorial.

Working in manufacturing means noise in the form of up to "100-125 decibels [and]

paper dust smelling like a combination of boiled flannel and liniment" on which Macaray comments that it reminded him of "Robert Duval in

Apocalypse Now: I love the smell of napalm in the morning". Like being at war, there was a distinct separation between workers and management. Macaray writes, "they were management, we were union. They were officers, we were enlisted...salaried and hourly".

And management ruled over workers except when forced by the strength of the union to negotiate or seek compromises. But despite the rather common HRM rhetoric of not having three or four strike rules, at San Remo disciplining workers consisted of: "informal reprimand, 3-day DLO (disciplinary layoff), 7-day DLO, and termination". Often union stewards were part of the process mediating and avoiding harsh punishments for workers. Next to punishment rules "the company's idiotic zero tolerance policy" was also a major concern for workers and the union.

Like many workers and trade unions,



Macaray experienced many negatives from HRM, for example, when observing that the "guys running HR [were] odious and vindictive". Based on Macaray's two decades of experience in working with HRM, he came to the conclusion that "asking HR to save your operation is like asking a bartender to save your marriage". Like many so places, San Remo also saw changes in personnel management: "in 1971, Human Resources was still called "Industrial Relations". Then, a few years later, IR was renamed "Employment Rela-

tions". Then, a few years after that, it became the present-day HR" marking the distinct anti-union trend away from industrial relations.

Moving towards macho-management also came with two-tier bargaining. This received an initial push when the UAW's (America's autoworkers union) two-tier system (often called "concession bargaining") arrived at San Remo. Macaray writes: "people currently on the payroll get to keep their wages and benefits, but new-hires will be consigned to a lower tier. But the worst part – besides exploiting new-hires and causing resentment on the floor – was that management didn't keep their word" (cf. Thompson 2003). This is also shown in Macaray's detailed descriptions of "contract negotiations" of collective bargaining.

Macaray also writes about absenteeism, workers being late for work, high turnover, workplace violence, sex and sex scandals ("nude pictures circulating the company") and "sexual promiscuity" in a mixed male/female workplace as well as drug problems, alcoholism ("what amazed the executives board was how productive these people could be, even when drunk" as well as the different treatment managers received compared to workers when a manager "was given a full year off at full pay to overcome it"), promotions ("moving up the chain of command"), demotion, industrial accidents ("safety had always been a major concern at San Remo"), workplace deaths, and termination. On the latter, Macaray comments, "if the company wants to fire somebody, fine, let 'em do it, but they can't do it on whim, and they can't do it without due process". Macaray also illuminates internal HR and management affairs as well as internal union affairs when noting on the union side that "bad stewards came in three forms:

- (1) lazy and ignorant stewards;
- (2) angry stewards because they have not been hired into management; and
- (3) borderline psychopaths".

On his own union, Macaray also emphasises that "by far the biggest complaint was that we defended too many bad workers. In truth, "we represented them, we rarely defended them [bad workers]". Management had its fair share of good and bad managers on which Macaray tells the eagle and chicken story: if you throw an eagle up in the air enough times, it'll eventually fly; you throw a chicken up in the air enough times, it'll eventually shit on you".

On the management/HR side, Macaray faced a "racist HR rep [who was] cunning like a rat but did not have many problem-solving skills and creativity – he was a bigot and proud of it". These are bosses

workers and the union did not like. However, Macaray notes that “most of us appreciated a strong, predictable boss...what we wanted to see in a boss was consistency” (cf. Marglin 1974).

The company operated on “day-light-twelve (7:30am to 7:30pm) and the graveyard-twelve (7:30pm to 7:30am)” as if a toilet paper factory needs a night shift? – the title of Macaray’s book. As a manufacturing place it also had many “high-speed, machine-paced jobs”. Meanwhile, the factory also experienced “executives travelling the country on cost-cutting missions”. In the meantime, “the word team entered into our bloodstream in the mid-1980s” – cost-cutting sweetened by teamwork. Not surprisingly, Macaray records “generally speaking, the biggest complaint the union had about management personnel was their hypocrisy” (cf. Macklin 2007).

Macaray closes with an epilogue directing our attention to the changes in organisational culture – most of the fun has been leeched out [while] “the mill descended into industrial fascism”. In the meantime, “the manufacturing sector has been marginalised and debased [but] none of us saw it coming...we honestly believed they [American industries] would last forever”. For those remaining manufacturing industries in the USA and elsewhere, Macaray’s night shift is a magnificent study into work, industrial relations, trade unions, the changes in organisational culture, HRM, management, and perhaps even into the new(ish) ideologies of Managerialism (Klikauer 2013).

Edited

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DISCUSSION OF RETAIL & FAST FOOD ORGANISING

Dear RW

Your characterisation of the BSN (*Brisbane Solidarity Network*) (as a leftist Sect playing at activist super heroes and pseudo social workers, Ed.) in the last issue of RW was sadly true. And now it is worse. (See “*Debate on Industrial Organising*” in RW Vol.34 No.3 (227) Nov.-Dec. 2016 in www.rebelworker.org and elsewhere on the internet: A-infos RW Vol. 34 No.3 “*Debate on Industrial Organising*”). A large chunk of the local Socialist Alternative (a Trot group) broke away and rejected Leninism, but not Marxism to the great joy from BSN. The new group “Unite” is all agog with local Greens winner for West End, now on the Council (Brisbane City). Sad stuff indeed.

Meanwhile it was the ABC(TV station) which blew the whistle on the 4711 shop that was underpaying its workers in the main street of West End. BSN had nothing to do with it, after all their self promotion about helping such workers.

Brisbane Reader

COMMENT:

The BSN together with other solidarity networks and many leftist sects are effectively satellites of the corporate/bureaucratic unions. Rather than the corporate unions acting as lobbyists and running fake “community pickets” for workers, these groups which don’t receive funds from union dues or under the counter payments from the bosses, effectively do this work often in small

workplaces and peripheral sectors. Although intriguingly some from the lower rungs of the union bureaucracy are involved in these groups.

Certainly by this activity a few workers are assisted with their grievances. However, there is no assistance to the other hundreds of thousands of workers with similar problems in peripheral sectors. The mo-



role of workers on any significant scale is not raised or major direct action encouraged. Whilst the leftist sects and activists are on occasion drawn into the “Smoke and Mirrors” performances orchestrated by the union bosses associated with enterprise agreements. Where notoriously fake “victories” are proclaimed by the union bosses and the corporate and leftist sect media to the roof tops. With the services of the leftist activists for lame duck community pickets, which provide a backdrop for media stunts. To assist ALP electoral fortunes and to “give the impression

that the union bosses are doing something” and be able to rapidly

close down the pickets and fake campaign when the “fake victory is proclaimed”. When in fact real defeats of workers are achieved for the bosses and the tempo of the employer offensive increased. (1) This whole approach is completely ineffectual in combating the new cross industry cuts to penalty rates. However, most likely the leftist activists will be drawn into becoming foot soldiers for the fake campaign on the issue being waged by the ACTU, the ALP and the union hierarchy.

Retail & Fast Food Workers Union

The new Retail & Fast Food Workers Union initiative is also likely to be just as hopeless in significantly encouraging any grass roots direct action and combating the new major employer/Govt. attack associated with the cut to penalty rates. By working within the framework of enterprise bargaining and the Fair Work Australia legislation, it will be prevented from pursuing any effective industrial action. As even in the case of so called “protected industrial action” during an enterprise agreement bargaining period, the IR Court can intervene and direct a return to work. Whilst workers can be sacked for taking “protected” industrial action. In the case of the union gaining a significant base in say one store of a chain, the employers can just close it down. Wiping out a militant union hot spot. Whilst work forces can be heavily white anted with casuals and foreign See Page 18

Continued From Page 17 workers/417 visa holders. It is very likely to become just a micro bureaucratic version of the corporate unions in many aspects.

A "Strategic" & "Big Picture" Approach Required

The only way forward in organising is to approach the issue in the big picture context. Raising the morale of workers generally through long range strategic organising in those sectors affecting the arteries of the capitalist economy particularly the critical transport industries. Involving assisting militants in the day to day class struggle and helping short

circuit management strategies to counter grass roots organisation and direct action. Facilitating the winning of major industrial victories by workers in these sectors and turning the tide against the employer offensive. Whilst the industrial solidarity of transport workers would be obviously crucial to any retail/fast food organising drive on a large scale and outflank store closure and other counter attacks by employers. At busy times with the support of transport workers lightning organising drives could be conducted in these sectors.. It is in this context that a new syndicalist union would emerge in retail and fast food and link up with similar initiatives/drives/breakaways from the Corporate unions in other sectors.

This push would be critical to an expanding cross industry syndicalist oriented union movement. It would wipe out the base of existing Corporate/ALP aligned unions. Whilst being able to effectively tackle large scale employer and Government counter offensives assisted by the Corporate union bureaucracies and break out of enterprise bargaining. In this context transitional steps would occur for a mass syndicalist union centre as a major pole of attraction in the labour movement to counter the ACTU and its affiliates. - Ed.

Notes

(1) See "Hutchison Ports Dispute" in RW Vol.34 No.3 (224) Nov.-Dec. 2015 on web site www.rebelworker.org

Merino Martinez, Julian (1897 - 1977)

A short biography of the Spanish anarchist, who was a prominent 'mid-level' activist in the CNT (Anarcho-Syndicalist union confederation favouring ultra democratic processes and direct action), the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) and the defence committees in Barcelona during the period of the Second Republic (1931-1936) and Civil War (1936-1939)

Julián Merino was born in Palacios de la Sierra in Burgos in northern Spain. An activist in the CNT, from 1919 to 1920 he helped set up unions in the sugar factories around Zaragoza, which went on strike in November 1920. Merino was arrested that same month, in possession of a notebook containing evidence of his organisational activity as well as notes for speaking in public. In addition to urging workers to adopt direct action in the struggle against capital and proclaiming 'Long live anarchist communism!' the notes also contained the text of a toast 'to anarchy' and 'to Bolshevism', concluding 'let the heads of kings shatter like the shards of this glass' (Gastón 2010: 64-66).

In the following years Merino moved to Barcelona where he joined the Maritime Section of the CNT Transport Union. After the Second Republic was declared in 1931 he sided with the radical wing of the CNT in opposition to the more moderate and gradualist sectors – the so-called treintistas. In 1932 he signed a manifesto from the Modelo prison in Barcelona to that effect, and the following year he was arrested and charged with inciting rebellion against the Republic for an article written in Solidaridad Obrera under the pen-name José Bonet. He was arrested again in 1935 on charges of

incitement and illegal association. From 1932-1933 many articles appeared in the anarchist press under the pseudonym of José Bonet, as well as the pamphlet 'Ideas at the service of libertarian communism', although it is unknown whether these were in fact written by Merino.

Merino was by now the FAI delegate to the Barcelona defence committees (Márquez Rodríguez and Gallardo Romero 1999: 80), groups of armed workers initially set up by the CNT to

prevent a right-wing takeover of the Republic, but which radicals had conceived as the potential shock-troops of the anarchist-inspired social revolution. During the Second Republic the defence committees of Barcelona were nominally subordinate to the Regional Defence Committee of Catalonia, composed primarily of members of the affinity group Nosotros, among whose number were the so-called 'Three Musketeers of Spanish anarchism', Juan García Oliver, Buenaventura Durruti and Francisco Ascaso.

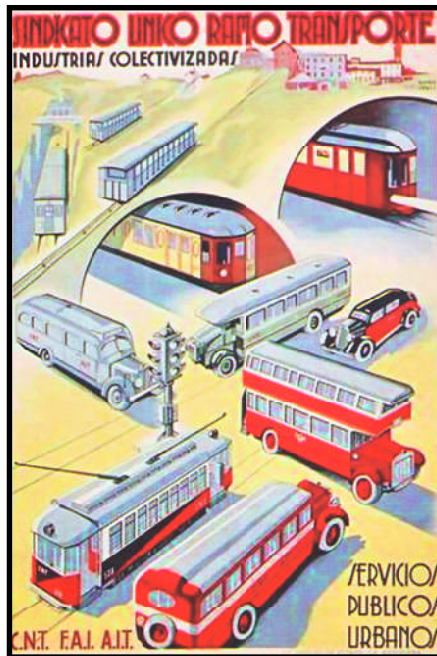
On 17 July 1936, two days before the fighting that marked the beginning of the Civil War, Merino and Juan Yagüe led a raiding party onto the boats anchored in the port of Barcelona and carried off their

stores of weaponry, distributing them among activists of the Libertarian Youth. The event caused consternation among the members of the Regional De-

fence Committee of Catalonia, which had to intervene in order to avoid a state of emergency being declared. Both Merino and Yagüe departed for the front in the first weeks of the Civil War. The latter, who died at Huesca in September 1936, was a member of the Roja y Negra militia column, and it seems probable that Merino was too, given the high proportion of members of the Barcelona Transport Union in its ranks. In October, Merino, as a delegate of a militia column, attended the famous Plenum at Bujaraloz that agreed to the constitution of the Regional Defence Council of Aragon (Ascaso 2006: 24).

By early 1937 he was back in Barcelona, possibly as a result of opposition to the militarisation process that converted the militia columns into regular army brigades. As the secretary of the Local Federation of Affinity Groups (the Barcelona FAI), Merino attended the meetings of the regional 'comités superiores' and made clear his

disagreement with the direction of the movement in this period. At one meeting, much to the annoyance of the majority of attendees, he defended the refusal of the 'Gelsa section' – a component of the Durruti Column – to militarise. The Gelsa



See Page 20

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news lately has been the Fair Work Australia Commission decision to cut penalty rates on Sundays and Public Holidays in the Retail and Hospitality sectors. The timing of the decision and statements by the Commissioner and NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian points to possible flow-ons to other sectors and many enterprise agreements which are coming up for renewal and negotiations later this year. (See articles Pages 2 and 5.)

In the NSW Railways, the ASN has been doing the hard yards assisting militants to out manoeuvre the union officials in their plans to "railroad" the upcoming Rail 2017 EBA resulting in major job and conditions losses and steps toward privatisation. The ASN is assisting militants to build a grass roots controlled direct action campaign to secure improvements in wages and conditions. (See Page 3.)

To participate in a syndicalist organising drive amongst Storemen and Packers in NSW, please contact RW via our postal address or web site.

In the Retail and Fast Food sectors there has been a new union initiative to take on the bosses and the SDA (Shop and Distributive and Allied Employees Association) bureaucracy. How effective will this initiative be? (See article Page 17.)

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Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name
Address.....
General Secretary
PO Box 109 Kotara 2289 NSW.

Continued From Page 18

section would later return to Barcelona with arms in hand, forming the bulk of the initial membership of the Friends of Durruti grouping. With Merino as secretary, the Barcelona FAI became a point of convergence for those sections of the libertarian movement that opposed its continued collaboration with the Republican state, including many members of the Libertarian Youth, the Barcelona defence committees, the Friends of Durruti, exiled German and Italian anarchist groups, etc. This was demonstrated most clearly by a Plenum of the Barcelona FAI held in April 1937 (described in detail in Guillamón 2013: 196-221). The radical positions adopted at this Plenum led to a position paper, co-authored by Merino on behalf of his affinity group, Cultura y Acción, which advocated the withdrawal of anarchists from governmental positions and a return to the 'revolutionary and anti-state terrain', comprehensive socialisation and the 'constitution of a local revolutionary committee for the coordination of the armed struggle against fascism and the counterrevolution, in all its forms'.

This position paper appears to have provided an organisational mandate for the 'May days' uprising. Merino was a member of the committee that co-ordinated this anarchist mobilisation, which responded to the attempted police takeover of the union-controlled telephone exchange in Barcelona on 3 May 1937. This is attested to by Matías Suñer Vidal, a member of the FAI who participated in the fighting (militants-anarchists 2016), and is likewise suggested by the recollections of Severino Campos, then secretary of the Regional FAI in Catalonia (Gimenólogos 2009: 567). In his memoirs, García Oliver, who returned to Barcelona during the street-fighting to appeal for

calm, recalled seeing Merino at the regional CNT headquarters in Barcelona giving orders over the telephone (García Oliver : 421).

Following the May days, Merino continued to swim against the tide from his position as both secretary of the Barcelona FAI and the Barcelona Transport Union. In the former role, he called a Regional Plenum of the FAI in July 1937 that came within a hair's breadth of agreeing to



call on all its members to withdraw from any collaboration with the republican state. In the latter role, he was held responsible by García Oliver for attempting to unleash 'a second May days' in August, when members of the Barcelona Transport Union resisted an attempt by the police to register their headquarters. At a subsequent meeting, García Oliver implied that he should be shot. Undeterred, Merino continued to organise at the margins of organisational discipline,

maintaining the Local Federation of Affinity Groups even after the founding of the much trumpeted Agrupación Anarquista de Barcelona (Barcelona Anarchist Grouping – an attempt by the 'comités superiores' to organise the FAI on the basis of individual membership by locality as opposed to by affinity group affiliation), and attempting to revive the traditional prisoner support committees in opposition to the CNT's Legal Commission, widely considered inadequate in its response to the increasing repression of anarchists in Spain.

Given this trajectory, it is hard to explain how Merino ended up forming a part of the Executive Committee of the

Libertarian Movement in Spain, from April 1938. This body was formed to impose organisational discipline on the movement's more recalcitrant members and can be viewed as the culmination of everything that Merino had fought against for over a year previously. Days before Barcelona fell to the fascists in January 1939, Merino was charged with organising remaining anarchists or anarchist sympathisers into defence battalions in the name of the FAI. In the event however, a suicidal, last-ditch defence of the city was not attempted, and Merino crossed the border into France with thousands of his fellow defeated comrades. He died in Venezuela in April 1977.

By Danny Evans

Thanks to Libcom

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See also: Danny Evans, 'The Conscience of the Spanish Revolution: Anarchist Opposition to State Collaboration in 1937' (Unpublished PhD thesis, available on request)