

# REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

**ONLY GRASS ROOTS DIRECT ACTION ON THE JOB CAN  
TACKLE THE EVER WIDENING BAIRD GOVT. ONSLAUGHT!**

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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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## Sydney Cabbies' News

### Rebel Worker: What has been the impact of Uber on the Sydney taxi industry?

Cabbie: I feel that Uber planned to wipe out the conventional taxi industry but have only been partly successful. I have noticed a 30% cut in my income- contributed by among other things- the advent of Uber.

**RW: What have been those other factors?**

Cabbie: Since the Keneally ALP government and in years subsequently there have been 100's of lease hold taxi plates generated and thus ever more taxis put on the road. The industry mafia has encouraged drivers to bid up the lease values at auction. With the pressure from Uber, the Lock out Laws and the dilution of ever more taxi plates over the last 5 -6 years, both those working in the industry and much of the investor sector is floundering financially.

**RW: What are the measures that the TWU (Transport Workers Union) has been taking to tackle this crisis for bailee drivers?**

Cabbie: The TWU is pursuing a legalistic approach and is presenting a submission to the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) based on 5 major advances to work conditions. It involves such demands as a safety net of \$22 - 25/hour for bailee drivers and the provision for a range of greater access to the entitlements of Holiday Pay etc, Superannuation for everyone, a reversal of the onus being on the driver to pay for fuel (to the operator) and state ( as opposed to just Sydney) Award coverage.

**RW: What has been the reaction to the actions of the TWU?**

Cabbie: The TAXI COUNCIL has deployed the full force of its industrial relations arm - the Taxi Industry Association (TIA) to fight the TWU in the Industrial Courts- in fact the TIA on one occasion came close to admitting that a sizable portion of the bucks that it had levied the taxi operator some time ago to fight the UBER ISSUE HAD BEEN

DEPLOYED TO FIGHT THE TWU when at a meeting of all and sundry at the Cyprus Club- the CEO of the TIA pointed at a TWU member at the meeting and indirectly attributed the TWU as soaking up the TIA's counter Uber war chest ... God knows what! Cabbie: ... and on top of all that the TIA has manoeuvred to have the NSW parliament bring in legislation to have bailees expelled from the very chapter of the act of parliament the NSW Indus-



trial Relations Act- that gives bailee drivers access to a whole bunch of industrial law in the first place and that's where it has got butt ugly.

**RW: Oh why so?**

Cabbie: Many drivers are familiar with TODA- the Taxi Owners And Drivers Association the group Michael Jools and other broke away from when it was the TDA, it was a driver's advocacy group in those days. These days it is little more than an echo chamber for the Taxi Council. TODA submitted to the parliamentary inquiry-

that was dealing with the Uber issue- that drivers be expelled from Chapter 6 of the Act. The chronology of how all this came about in terms of the TIA pushing for the identical thing that TODA has also pushed for involves much stealth- but suffice to say the Pres. of TODA signed a document purporting to have been presented to the parliament- it was up on TODA's website- yet there is no mention of the same document on parliamentary disclosure. In fact they used an analogy to argue their case (their document) involving a plumber and a well

known equipment hire firm to make the case for bailees drivers getting SFA- and it was repeated by the Chairman of the parliamentary inquiry as though he thought it up. Anne Turner is the President of TODA and she signed the document.

**RW: We'll wait developments.**

## ASN APPEAL

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

**Please make out Cheques to Black Cat Media & send to P.O. Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW.**



# N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

## A New Agreement is a Chance to Right the Wrongs

(But only if we do it together)

By Crimson Coconut

**Another bargaining period is upon us in the lead up to the 2017 Enterprise Agreement. The last Agreement saw the old Rail Agreements split up into their component parts. You now have separate agreements for Sydney Trains, NSW Trains, Transport NSW, etc. This in our opinion is not a good thing for workers, as the collective strength of the membership is divided.** Management wanted it this way for no other reason except than that it favours them. All the talk about different business divisions requiring different agreements is nonsense. It will now be possible for people doing basically the same task to be on a different award and having different conditions and wage rates.

With that in mind we need to look ahead to the next agreement. What is it we want out of a new agreement?

In the past there have been union surveys and delegate discussions on a new log of claims before bargaining has been introduced. However the final log of claims has never matched the aspirations of the general membership of the unions involved. The final log of claims put forward has always reflected the political aspirations of the Union's bureaucrats.

Who can remember a past ridiculous claim for the sale of Martin's Creek Quarry as a condition on a log claims for an E.B.A.? We all know who was the beneficiary of that process in N.S.W. The A.L.P.?

The Log of Claims is always rubber stamped by handpicked delegates at a special meeting. There is little or no input from the general membership. So in reality any Log of Claims in the past had little or no relevance to those at the shop floor.

The outcome of presenting the log of claims to Management and getting up a few favourable concessions for the workforce has largely always been a failure. Management have hammered home their advantage on what has substantially been their austerity agenda and downsizing for privatisation. The Unions have had to play the defensive game of not giving too much away.

Why have we been on the back foot in recent years rather than taking the initiative in bargaining?

One of the most important failings lies in the lead-up to a bargaining round. It comes down to the real lack of workplace democracy. Although staff "briefings" are held during negotiations they are always stage managed affairs with management often sitting in with union delegates to put down any dissent. The ideas and questions of the general membership is not taken seriously at these meetings. It is a process whereby their bureaucracy's obligations are ful-

or to those that elected them, but would be able to represent their local committee views to the Central Bargaining Committee. This could then form a two way street with a report back to the Local Bargaining Committee on the outcomes from the Central Committee at regular intervals.

Something must change, as the current process of bringing in outsiders from Unions NSW, who have a poor understanding of what is happening in particular workplaces or bringing their own political agenda is not working. It is also very undemocratic.



filled, yet it involves no real consultation with the membership.

From the Union and Membership point of view the whole process must start much sooner than this. Unions and their Members must have regular meetings to thrash out the important issues well before negotiations begin. Heaven forbid, many of our fellow workers do not know or care how or why the bargaining process takes place. This is not their fault. They must be brought into the bargaining process and become owners of it. That's possibly the best way to share knowledge and experience across the broad spectrum of the general membership. Loyalty and solidarity would be the main by-product of a more representative and diverse process.

Why not, for instance, start Bargaining Committees in every workplace run by local union members, (not handpicked stooges)? These then could feed into a central bargaining policy committee. Made up of elected representatives from each workplace it would help pull policy and bargaining together. The local elected representatives would be only answerable to the people in their immediate workplace

Politically it is far more expedient for the Unions to just say "You elected us - we'll do the bargaining for you".

That approach is not good enough and leads to poor outcomes since it does not allow the combined strength of the membership to be utilised in a dispute. Maybe that's the way some people on both sides want it? Members must be the ones who decide what goes into the Log of Claims. The Union and Union Leadership should be the conduit through which the wishes of the membership is articulated and acted upon.

For our Agreement we need to think hard and long about what is important to us collectively as a workforce. We also need to think hard about how we ensure that any Log of Claims that we put forward is seriously considered and implemented. We should never contemplate Management removing the totality of our claims from the table as they have in the past. We also need strategies for mounting a defence of these claims if they look like being discarded. As I've discussed above, only a



general mobilisation and democratic organisation can help with that. Without it we are back on the defensive from the boss's agenda of cuts and privatisation.

We at Sparks would like YOU to put forward some of the issues that YOU think are important enough to be included in E.B.A. 2017. You can send your suggestions to:

EMAIL: [rebworknet@y7mail.com](mailto:rebworknet@y7mail.com)  
or alternatively drop us a note to:  
Sparks  
P.O. Box 92  
Broadway  
2007

*If we get enough suggestions we can compare it with the final Log of Claims put forward by the Combined Unions.*

*To get you thinking here are a few suggestions that we would like to see in the next E.B.A.*

The most pressing issue that we have to deal with today is that of job security. How we shore up our jobs in an era of privatisation, austerity, downsizing, automation, part time and casual work and other forms of insecure work is not an easy task. Short of full revolutionary change and redistribution of wealth, that we advocate, it is well beyond the scope of anything that can be put in an Enterprise Agreement.

**So here we go with a few suggestions:**

\* Agreed limits on the use of part-time and casual work.

\* Automatic conversion of part-time and casual workers into full time workers after 6 months.

\* Paid leave for sufferers of Domestic Violence.

\* Full consultation with the affected workforce (not just the union) before any workplace changes brought about by new technology or economic requirements.

\* A pay rise above the imposed Government cap. (See latest ABC Staff Agreement for what can be achieved).

\* Savings through technological change and workplace change to be passed on in the form of wage increases and generous redundancy payouts.

\* Examine the logistics of setting up regional (i.e. City Circle, Parramatta, Bankstown, Sutherland, etc.) publicly run workplace child care or minding facilities in order to full fill a promise of a 50% female workforce.

\* Although privatisation should be resisted by the Unions, helping halt the spread of privatisation is also beyond the scope of an E.B.A. We can call, however, for parity of wages and conditions for any employees transferred to the private sector at the substantial rate of pay. Where the union has coverage of employees in the



\* Delays to the implementation of new procedures, processes and technological changes if they don't work or if management has not implemented them properly. (i.e. computerised pay and sign-on).

\* Real progression through the ranks based on ability, time served and dedication rather than cronyism and who you play golf with.

\* Employer contributed insurance cover for journey claims to and from work at ridiculous hours.

newly transferred private business it is hoped that conditions and wages would be on par with those in the public sector and vice-versa

Get active on your EBA now. Demand a say in drawing up a Log of Claims. Follow it through to the best of your ability to see it implemented.

There's no doubt that management are already putting the finishing touches to their E.B.A. proposals. They always have a march on us since that is their full time job. Together we can do better. Unlike them, we have a whole world to win.

## STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

**RW: What are your thoughts on the hidden agenda behind the Light Rail Extensions?**

Waverley Busie: Why are the Light Rail extensions in the Eastern Suburbs being

constructed? The reason is to provide a tool for the Baird Govt's developer and builder mates to make short term windfall profits and for the Baird Govt. to increase revenue via stamp duty on property sales. To get from point A to B, the Light Rail is a white elephant. The existing bus services in the Eastern Suburbs are quite sufficient. Latest news is that the first light rail vehi-

cles will run on the new extensions from 2019. Whilst a recent Channel 9 report has confirmed the information in the last Sparks, that the Light Rail will carry

much less passengers than the existing bus services in the Eastern Suburbs. The existing buses will also be much quieter than the Light Rail vehicles. It's not true that the Light Rail will cause less cars in the city. People will still be using the same amount. However, there will be several hundred less bus drivers. The extensions



will have a domino effect in terms of opening up the area to massive high rise developments and the selloff of public housing in such suburbs as Daceyville. Already at East Gardens where the Light Rail vehicle yard is to be located, Meritons are constructing 10 to 15 storey apartment blocks. According to a friend of mine who some months ago bought a smallish place in Kingsford for \$1 million which is close to the extensions, the property has now increased in value by \$100,000. So with the

Govt., which has severely affected its operations. Despite promises from the Baird Govt. of expenditure. With this rampage of the Baird Govt. there seems a lot of "selective hearing" on both Liberal and ALP sides of politics. Too many crooks are being allowed to do what they want.

**RW: What are your impressions of the "disconnectedness" problem in the railways and the buses?**

WB: I've noticed a lot of new staff appear-

coming on to the job and remaining on it, is not meeting the number of drivers leaving due to them going overseas, retiring and other reasons. I can't put my finger on the main cause.

I was recently speaking to someone from Hanson Concrete Mixers. He mentioned that his company has the same problem with a severe shortage of trained concrete mixer drivers.

In the case of workplace injuries, I have noticed many drivers are developing RSI related upper shoulder injuries associated with the straining of tendons. Resulting from applying the hand brake and steering. Despite the widespread nature of the injury, most won't speak up about the issue as it seems they don't want to rock the boat and fear for their jobs.

**RW: How is management viewing the problems of drivers?**

WB: 2 months ago management sent out a second questionnaire to us about on the job problems. The bosses say they have learnt quite a bit from the response. Whilst in a recent DVD starring Peter Rowley and Jamie Sinclair even admitted that drivers in the STA are doing things tough. However they are doing nothing to remedy this situation. In fact, the bosses are worsening things for us with the constant push to impose more cutbacks and ignoring the impact of this onslaught upon us. They are milking more from us and establishing more control with constant restrictions. As part of the 6 monthly GPS "cosy little chats," the bosses are down loading personal on-line data collected to check on various aspects of our situation. A gung ho boss could use this info to turn the screws on you. The bosses are cutting our pay by imposing fines over trifles. Some areas they target are drivers exceeding the 10 kph speed limit and not wearing the vest in the yard and running late. At Waverley, allegedly 5-7-8 drivers have been fined in recent times over this speed limit issue. At a recent union meeting we were warned that if we get fined over this issue, we can't claim from the traffic fine fund. The bosses shouldn't be making money out of us on this pretext. There is no need for this extra layer of "Code of Conduct." We appear to be heading for the draconian regime which occurred during the Greiner Govt. years.

Twenty years ago the Depot was a much more family friendly place and there was a great social life. Today this has largely disappeared, with ever more restrictions imposed by management. The bosses have also savagely cut training. The latest training I can recall attending was 18 months ago concerning how to get about in Rozelle. Whilst the STA is constantly milking money out of us with various



extensions, real estate owners and developers in the Kingsford and Kensington areas are getting a windfall. It also seems that the Baird Govt. has given a lucrative deal to the builders, as they can take as long as they want to complete the project. Is this the Sydney that we would want?

**RW: What are your impressions of the Baird Govt.'s projects?**

WB: A nasty "secretive" underside is becoming apparent with the WESTCONNEX project. It has been reported that soil filler containing asbestos has been sold to the WESTCONNEX builders to be used in the construction. Recently the Transport Company Moir, has been caught dumping asbestos contaminated soil in various locations. It just goes to show how in Baird's NSW bending the rules by big business such as illegal dumping is out of control. With the Govt's reliance on South Korea and China to manufacture equipment for the projects, there are serious issues of corruption associated with the companies involved in the manufacturing in these countries. Overall billions are being squandered on these projects, some of which are completely unnecessary such as the Light Rail extensions, WESTCONNEX and tunnels. However, public services and associated infrastructure which are in urgent need of expenditure are being neglected. Recently I was speaking to someone from North-West country NSW, who mentioned that the hospital in a major medium sized city in this area has been completely neglected in regard to funding from the

ing at stations. They seem to be quite timid and don't know how to handle groups of commuters. There also seems a big decline in the number of old timers. On the buses as part of "Optimisation" there seems a similar problem developing. I've noticed at the Bronte Beach terminus drivers from other depots who are doing the run, are staying locked up in their buses and are unwilling to communicate with other drivers. It seems they are on another planet. At the Bondi Junction Interchange, where under Optimisation there is now drivers from a range of different depots such as the Nth Shore, Tempe, Kingsgrove, Leichhardt, Waverley, Randwick and Port Botany. It seems many feel alienated and don't see the interchange as part of their heartland and just want to remain in their buses and not socialise with other drivers.

**RW: What's the latest with the high turnover of drivers on the job and injuries on the job?**

WB: We are continuing to see the situation where the STA never gets enough drivers for the job. Outside Waverley Depot there is a large banner advertising vacancies for fulltime, part time and casual drivers. The high turnover seems associated with a range of factors such as the job becoming too difficult and stressful, low morale, the wages of up to \$85,000 pa at Waverley which is the best paid depot in the STA and at other depots wages of between \$65,000 to \$75,000 pa, being inadequate. I was recently speaking to someone from TransDev. He seemed much less stressed by his job. The numbers of new drivers



plys and constant corner cutting, the Baird Govt. is using these funds to splurge on unnecessary projects like the Light Rail Extensions and big bonuses for the bosses.

**RW: What are your impressions of Randwick Depot?**

WB: Despite its great history, the Govt. intends to sweep it away. These days it has a very lost and forlorn look. I've noticed that the canteen has been closed, and there is no cafe type area for drivers to socialise, encouraging a disconnection amongst them. Whilst various items of equipment are unavailable. By 2019 the depot will be gone and the area will disappear in high rise overdevelopment.

**RW: How is the situation with bus maintenance?**

WB: I was recently speaking to a bus dispatcher at the depot. He was very upset about the number of buses breaking down on the road. He considered a major contribution to the problem has been the outsourcing by the bosses of different sectors of bus maintenance such as tyres and electronics to different contractors to save money. Whilst, as in the case of drivers there is a disconnectedness amongst mechanical staff contributing to oversights in work done. Other contributing factors are the metal fatigue and other problems caused by the buses being on the road for between 12 to 18 hours per day in the inner west. When we first get to our bus at the start of our shift, we have to check for any obvious problems. However, this is insufficient, a comprehensive inspection needs to be conducted on each bus by the mechanics to detect and remedy problems. Such inspections are not occurring. There needs to be 3 extra mechanics employed at each depot. It seems the bosses are just spending the bare minimum to keep the buses moving.

**RW: How are you finding the Opals?**

WB: The bosses say the Opal system is not our problem. They are lying to us. It is our problem. I have noticed some continuing niggly problems such as "sticky" buttons on the console and the GPS not turning off. Whilst, the Opal software is getting older and likely to be prone to more malfunctioning in the future. As a result of these problems, we are undergoing more fatigue. We need relaxed drivers. Cubic which supplies the Opal system needs to be advised of these problems and have techs conduct regular services of all buses. With the lack of ticket issuing, associated with the Opal system, the bosses are now seizing the opportunity to further cut our running times between 5 and 10 minutes. Commuters are being hard done by with the loss of free Opal trips. Public transport is becoming ever more expensive and more bus stops are being cut out.

**RW: How is the situation with the uniforms?**

WB: We still haven't received the new uniform. Latest news is that it's been promised to be issued early next year. With this delay, it seems the bosses are trying another ploy to save money. On offer are two types of uniform: a nylon hot and crappy one favoured by the bosses and a cotton uniform, which most drivers want. The on-line distribution of the last uniform was fraught with problems. Only 10 to

BD: At our depot all buses have had fire suppressers installed. So far we have not received any more information on the subject from either management or the union hierarchy. Despite the importance of the issue, there has only been small articles in the papers.

**RW: How are you finding the new manager?**

BD: We are getting on very well with him. He seems to make snap decisions which favour drivers such as in regard to leave. In



15% of drivers were confident with it, whilst the rest struggle. It has led many drivers to miss parts and get the wrong size. There needs to be people to people contact in the uniform distribution to avoid these problems. The Uniform supplier should be made to take the responsibility to come out to the depots with the uniforms of different sizes so it can be properly distributed.

## BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

**RW: What has been the response at Burwood to the new shift changes advised as of Wed. 19/10/16?**

Burwood Driver: I have noticed a generally favourable impression amongst those drivers I have spoken about it. In regard to the normal shifts, new lines of work have been added to both the AM and PM shifts. The extra work for the PM shifts is connected to the M41 running until after 1am from Burwood to MacQuarie Park due it seems to work on the Nth Western Rail line. Whilst those displaced from rosters last time the shifts were changed have now got back on. Generally, it's been quiet, seems neither the STA or the union officials want to make waves at the moment.

**RW: What is the situation with buses bursting into flames?**

the case of part timers he has been very helpful in responding to concerns. In regard to one driver's complaint about a short shift, he has somehow intervened and extended the length. Those at the depot who have become part timers have done so because of personal and family considerations. Despite these drivers being affected by considerable pay cuts. One driver I know has been quite hard hit with short shifts, but considers next time shifts are reorganised he will come out better.

## LEIGHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the Police raid on Leichhardt on 18th August?**

Leichhardt Busie: It appears a disgruntled journalist who had an unhappy experience on an STA bus had some role in causing the caper. 48 vehicles were checked and all drivers who were around at the depot at the time were drug tested by the cops. However, only minor problems with the buses were detected involving such issues as seats not screwed properly.

**RW: What is the biggest issue at the depot lately?**

LB: Our continuing major issue is the shortage of drivers. Every day at Leichhardt we are at least 11 drivers down for runs. Consequently, drivers on their day

off are continually called in and many of us are becoming worn out and burnt out. Contributing to this situation is that trainees can't cope with the full on nature of the job and ferocious speed up and soon get fed up and leave the job.

**RW: How are you finding the new manager?**

LB: We don't see her much. She is that type of manager.

### Mechanical Section News

The most significant news has been the police raid at the depot on 18/8/16. In regard to the raid, basically the highway patrol

came through and did a snap audit in response to several incidents with STA. We had a front wheel hub bearing collapse and the wheel and hub came off in Balmain. Also, there was a Burwood bus that crashed into a house, drivers fault. So the cops came out and tried to defect buses. But we already had RMS or RTA come and inspect our buses for registration. So the highway patrol response was pointless. All of it was orchestrated by the Liberal State Govt. Cause they want to give us bad publicity and try and privatise our buses.

### PRIVATE BUS NEWS

#### Wildcat Mass Sickie

According to the Sydney Daily Telegraph 25/10/16, a wildcat mass sickie occurred at the Northmead depot of Hillsbus on Monday 24/10/16. It involved 83 of the 240 drivers at the depot and caused the cancellation of 185 services. Resulting in many commuters being stranded at bus stops. The TWU union bosses denied any responsibility for the action.

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In this issue of RW, we will discuss the issues of employees on short term contracts. Drivers, Conductors and Staff from Head Office will discuss the issues. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.*

**RW: Why are daily paid employees employed on contract?**

Sheona: Employees are employed on six to twelve months contracts to cover for employees seconded to other positions during major projects, employees on long term illness, Maternity Leave and if extra employees have to be recruited to cover for employees who need to be trained for a new work skill.

Clarence: An example of this occurred when the MYKI ticketing system was introduced to V/Line and platform staff were recruited. Due to retirements and resignations remaining contract employees were absorbed into V/Line.

Penelope: This was the same for Conductors and for the last twenty years, the majority of Conductors whose work was satisfactory were appointed to permanent positions.

**RW: I think of the stress an employee faces toward the end of the contract. Those who want the position worry whether they will have a job.**

Dexter: The issue that Conductors think stinks is where a person on a contract applies for a permanent position. They have to apply along with other applicants. Years ago, if a vacancy occurred the Regional Manager placed the Contract Employee in the position.

Clarence: Another issue facing Contract Employees is that a Supervisor could take a dislike to a Contract Employee making it difficult for them to obtain a permanent position.

**RW: I understand this happened at a country location.**

Dexter: You are correct. This happened at Milourra.

**RW: Could you give a background about this location.**

Sheona: This workplace is at least 240 kilometres from the next V/Line Station which is Swan Hill.

Rastus: When the passenger train ceased in 1993 V/line Freight employees sold tickets. In 1997 this was outsourced. Due to complaints from the public in 2006 V/Line took control of the agency. Thus it became a V/Line station.

Penrod: Two employees were appointed with annual leave relief covered by relieving staff from Bendigo district. It was later transferred to Ballarat district.

Penelope: The station functioned for a number of years and the local populace were pleased that V/Line was running the station, but sadly one of the employees passed away.

Sheona: This employee was replaced by an employee on a contract. Later the other employee was promoted to a position in the Bathurst area, so another employee was employed on a contract.

Dexter: The station was operating smoothly then V/Line advertised for full time positions.

Penelope: The two employees applied for the permanent positions hoping to be made permanent.

Sheona: The two employees were looking forward to obtaining an interview but it was not to happen.

**RW: What happened?**

Sheona: But out of the blue one of the employees received an email from the Western Line manager saying that she was to train a successor for the position. Once the person was trained she was terminated. She did not get the interview.

Roscoe: Didn't this manager have the guts



to go to Milourra and explain why she was not given an interview.

Penelope: We have heard the person has had a nervous breakdown over the email.

**RW: What of the other employee?**

Dexter: The other employee not knowing what had happened rang up the Line Manager asking when he was to have an interview. The Line Manager informed him his work was not up to V/Line standard and he would finish up when his contract expired. Penrod: The employee was upset with what happened, that at 1.30 pm on the



same day he shut down Miloura station, went home got changed, returned to the station that night and placed his uniform on the night bus to Melbourne.

Rastus and Roscoe: One of our drivers was at Ballarat when the Miloura bus arrived and saw station staff retrieve the uniform with the resignation pinned to the uniform.

Sheona: Miloura station remained closed and the previous employee who was promoted to the Ballarat area was sent back on expenses to man the station. Later on an employee from Ballarat was sent to relieve at Miloura.

**RW: Think of the expenses.**

Rastus: V/Line doesn't care about expenses. If they want to terminate a person they waste large amounts of money to terminate a person.

Roscoe: We wonder if the Line Manager's mates were lined up for the positions?

**RW: Is this the Line Manager who told a Union Delegate at a Disciplinary Hearing that he was to observe and not defend the member he was representing?**

Roscoe: Yes.

**RW: Where does this individual come from?**

Rastus: He was one of these WH122 kids employed by V/line from outside so as to give V/line some expertise. All this person has achieved is to be hated by employees. Even the Local Trades and Labour Council hate the person.

Roscoe: These are the types of individuals being employed by V/Line. They have no rail experience. In fact the drivers now have supervisors with no rail experience.

**RW: Once again we have run out of space. People employed on contract if their work is satisfactory should be offered a permanent position without having to go for another interview.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say the two employees at Miloura were treated shabbily. We drivers hope the employee who had the nervous breakdown sues V/Line. As for the Line Manager, this is a message from V/Line drivers. Get out of the industry. If any employee has to front this manager for disciplinary hearings **DON'T TURN UP.**

## ITALIAN LABOUR NEWS

### FOODORA STRUGGLES

#### 1. Foodora in Italy

**It's been sold for a figure of several tens of millions of euros yet Foodora has the typical appeal of a startup: young and friendly international people working in an open space office in Berlin and young students delivering food by bike as an easy side-job.**

It landed in Turin as a mirror image of the Berlin base. The managers, all under 30, meet every so often in a co-working space in the city centre, are informal and speak using English words. The fleet of couriers are also young, educated, and are paid €5 per hour. — This image started to crack when in August Deliveroo couriers in London went on strike and a month later their counterparts in Paris also protested. The reason was, oversimplifying, that once the company had attracted enough "workers", pay shifted from a fixed scheme to per-delivery compensation only.

Ever since the company opened in Italy, workers had been meeting and talking to one another informally, especially where they are waiting for new deliveries. They had held informal assemblies, sometimes even meeting with management in order to discuss many issues. When a change in contract similar to London and Paris happened at Foodora in Turin, the protest flared up.

The usual problems affecting all delivery workers are that deliveries may be in

harsh weather conditions and usually involve moving a lot (60-80 kilometres per shift in Foodora's case). Nor is it new that there are long waits for the food to be ready or the next delivery.

There are, though, completely new aspects connected to the digital nature of the work relationship. Working time is 24/7 meaning there is no such thing as work/non-work division. Riders can theoretically decide when they are available, though they do not know whether they

complete stand-still. Not to mention that both bike and phone are provided by the courier, with all the related costs of maintenance and repair.

In some interviews workers even mentioned privacy issues as continual geo-localization goes against privacy law, especially if done by an app from the Apple and Google Play stores.

All of this for €500 a month, working 25 hours a week.

#### 2. New conditions and first strikes

**Riders demanded better working con-**



will actually work as the management decides to accept, modify or even delete the shifts, at any time, even during the shift itself.

As an algorithm decides in real time the work rhythms (according to volume of requests and positions of the couriers), there are hours of absolute rush and hours of

**ditions. In May 2016, they wrote a letter signed by 85 out of 100 workers, but the requests were answered with a mix of procrastination and excuses, such as that the head of the company was elsewhere at the time. Finally, in July, a meeting took place but management said**



the contract could not be modified. What turned dissatisfaction into protest was that the contract could actually be changed, and the company did that.

In September Foodora issued a new contract, applying to all new riders, and from November 30, to all riders. This new contract eliminates the fixed income and replaces it with a variable one: €2.70 per delivery. The number of deliveries per shift is not a factor that riders can influence, as if they were factory workers, but it will still determine their income. For an income of €500, they will have to make a delivery every half hour, at any hour, regardless of the day, time or period of the year.

The managing director, Gianluca Cocco, refused to discuss the new terms with the base union, SiCobas, that the workers had chosen to represent them, saying that autonomous workers have no right to unionise. The management agreed only to face-to-face meetings with individual workers and many were removed from the group used to communicate with them or blacklisted.

The informal connections between riders turned into the platform for a strike: on October 8th in Turin there was the first strike in Italy of workers employed through an app. Around 50 riders blocked the service for the whole Saturday, biking through the city distributing leaflets in the restaurants affiliated to Foodora. There were basically three demands:

Abolition of the “temporary collaboration” contract described above, as well as the per-delivery pay, and introduction of a flexible part-time (20 hours minimum) contract. This kind of contract guarantees sick leave, insurance and vacation, a basic salary (€7.50 per hour) with a variable bonus (€1 per delivery), halting of any threat towards and disciplinary sanctions of the protesting workers. Further demands include a proper formal communication channel with the employer (rather than a whatsapp group and an app), fair assistance from the company towards the cost of bike and phone, and proper insurance covering not only accidents but also recovery days and illness.

### 3. Evolution of the struggle

**The protest was so successful that it carried on all day, was joined by many locals and was immediately reported by newspapers, mainly because of the newness of the technologies involved.** There was significant disruption of the brand image: modifications of the company logo (from a hand carrying a tray to one carrying an iron ball with chain) and a “shitstorm” on social media where the company had to delete insults and mes-

sages of solidarity. The over-exposure of Foodora’s brand on these platforms made them a great place to show digital solidarity. All this was linked to local assemblies and street action: going to each restaurant to give out leaflets and speeches. The message spread wider, a proper boycott was launched, and restaurants started to join it. In the end a meeting with the managing director to discuss their requests was fixed for October 10. At the end of this meeting the management, both Italian and German, promised to issue a statement in response to every point. It’s worth mentioning that during the meeting a group of people from the co-working space used by Foodora came together to show solidarity and that the co-working space dissociated itself from any connection to Foodora.

While management was deciding how to answer, an indirect answer came through a rather strange layoff. Two promoters who went to a riders’ assembly to understand and show solidarity were excluded from the app. Their contract was not over, but they were effectively laid off as they were not being given any shifts. The clear written answer to the protesters arrived at 00.02 of the 14th (despite a deadline of the 13th): not €2.70 euro per delivery but €3.70. The same morning the riders went to the Turin office but found it empty. No one from management showed or picked up the phone. Two labour inspectors were sent directly from the Ministry of Labour, though, to check the legality of the situation, while the Minister himself expressed solidarity with the riders. Unfortunately more and more riders were locked out of the app as they spent their day giving out leaflets about their protest. A group went to the main HQ in Milan twice, once finding it unexpectedly closed and the next time forcing the management to lock themselves in the office for three hours. Both occasions were used to meet some colleagues in the city, organizing info-events for the coming week and spreading the strike.

Under the pressure from the workers the company decided to answer at least one of the demands. It issued a statement that three bike shops were authorized to give 50% discount. According to the riders, no-one has ever received such a discount. The company’s real reaction, though, was to employ a massive number of new riders, promising them at least two deliveries per hour, a promise that has been broken by either fewer deliveries per hour or fewer hours per week, and blame laid at the door of the striking riders.

Two weeks after the first strike not only workers but even restaurants that expressed solidarity have been denied access to the app. From the beginning the striking riders have used different methods to decentralize their struggle: frequent

change of the representative speaking with management, use of fake names and distorted voices. Once Foodora identified who it thought were the leaders, they were completely banned from any communication, although not officially fired. There are, though, interviews where workers who were ready to accept the new contract were subjected to the same sanctions, just because they took part in assemblies. How the management knew about their participation is a matter of speculation.

Meanwhile labour inspectors are investigating and the workers have been received by both the municipality and the Labour Ministry. Since both occasions proved unfruitful (Foodora failed to attend the meeting with the municipality), the strikers kept on organizing several public meetings. The role of social centers and squats cannot be underestimated: media reporting and coverage as well as practical solidarity and support came immediately from local grassroots movements. Public assemblies in Milan were held at social center COX, and in Turin assemblies were promoted by activists at the local university and at the social center Cavallerizza, while a solidarity dinner was held in anarchist squat Asilo.

### 4. Flexibility and the Italian labour market

**Further reflection should be given to the bigger picture. The truth is that Foodora was able to offer such low salaries (compared, for instance, with France where a rider gets €7.20 an hour + €2 per delivery) because the Jobs Act and previous reforms have deregulated the Italian job market and removed general protection for workers.** When the deregulated market meets the hyper-fragmented employment form of Foodora it results in a terrible mix. Furthermore, Foodora has been accused of taking advantage of the high youth unemployment rate in Italy (around 40% in 2015, according to ISTAT): what the company terms a “side job” is, for the riders, one of the only ways to have an income.

Luckily the struggles of the riders and many others keep our eyes open and our hopes high.

You can find info and statements (in Italian) about the striking riders on their FB page: Deliverance Project. Feel free to express your solidarity to them, or on the Foodora FB page.

*Original article from the Struggles in Italy blog*

## GENERAL STRIKE

**On 21 October, over 1.3 million workers took part in a general strike called by a number of base trade unions (USB, S.I. Cobas, Unicobas, Adl Cobas, Cub Lazio) and joined by many organisations and local groups throughout Italy.**

The strike was a political one, and it was called to protest against the Bossi-Fini migration law, EU policies and Matteo Renzi's government's most contested measures: the Labour reform known as Jobs Act, the Constitutional Reform, the 'Good School' reform of primary and secondary school, and the 2016 Budget Law.

The main aim was to block the centers of the biggest Italian cities and to disrupt the normal operations of the logistics sector, still in uproar after the shocking death of worker and trade unionist Abdelssalam Eldanf, killed the night between September 14 and 15 during a strike in Piacenza. In whichever square or street logistics workers have assembled, this has been the main subject.

None of the three main Italian trade unions (CGIL-CISL-UIL) joined the strike in any way, confirming the growing distance between them and the more combative base trade unions in how they struggle for workers' rights as well as a different attitude towards the upcoming referendum (CGIL has shyly taken the 'No' side while CISL has sided with 'Yes' and UIL is still undecided).

As usually happens when the Italian base trade unions call a strike, around 60% of logistics and transport workers came out, with peaks in the urban transport services of Rome, Bologna and Naples. The airports of Rome, Pisa, Bologna, Milan and Naples were affected.

The participation of the logistics workers stopped operations in Padua, Rome, Piacenza, Milan, Turin and Verona.

In Rome the strike was joined by those who are protesting against the newborn Movimento 5 Stelle local government,

which is clamping down on housing and social occupations. The demonstration ended up in an 'acampada' (tented occupation) in San Giovanni Square, renamed for this occasion 'Abdelssalam Square, after the worker and trade unionist who was killed very recently.

In Pontedera, near Pisa, the workers of the Piaggio plant blocked the railroad, while students in Palermo also marched through the city. City marches were also held in Florence and Rome.

The strike and the marches were not covered by national radio, national television or the main newspapers, with the exception of Il Manifesto and a few others. USB, Unicobas and Usi complained to both Agcom, the regulator and competition authority for the communication industries,



and Rai national television about the 'cloak of silence' hiding information about the strike from the public.

The general strike was extended on Saturday 22nd: in Rome, for the national "No Renzi Day" demonstration, a total of 40,000 workers marched through the city. The demonstration was the first organised by the 'Social No National Committee', a group of parties and movements that link the proposed constitutional reform to the neoliberal policies of Matteo Renzi's government.

Among the movements and political parties that joined the demonstration and the

National Committee were the No-TAV Movement, the Communist Refoundation Party, the Social Center Cortocircuito, as well politicians and artists, such as Moni Ovadia, Naples' mayor Luigi de Magistris, writer Valerio Evangelisti and former partisan Lidia Menapace.

The 'Social No' is particularly endorsed by Giorgio Cremaschi, former President of the CGIL-affiliated Metalworkers Trade Union, FIOM, who left CGIL because of the management of its current Secretary Susanna Camusso. He traces the origin of the reform of the 1948 post-fascism Constitution to the neoliberal policies which have played such a central role in Italy since 1980. Cremaschi believes that the 1948 Constitution of the Republic has its roots in the antifascist Resistance, while Renzi's reform is based

on Italy's social and cultural regression over the last 30 years. The reform would be the summary, conclusion and settlement of this authoritarian project. It is impossible, according to Cremaschi, to separate the constitutional reform from this government and its political leader Renzi. It is also misleading not to understand

the economic and social targets of the reform, the ones asked for by the bank JP Morgan. He claims that voting 'No' to the reform would respect the 1948 Constitution, and this 'No' must be a social one as well as a political one.

The Social No National Committee will hold its next national demonstration on 27 November, and is encouraging a popular and general mobilization against Renzi's constitutional reform.

*Original article from the Struggles in Italy blog.*

## U.S.A. TODAY

### The New Caesar

**Don't mourn! Do not attach yourself to the destiny of other people!**

Hillary Clinton could have saved the country from impending disaster, simply by withdrawing from the campaign late last winter. All of the normal indicators then demonstrated that Mr. Sanders had become a very viable candidate (the sheer amount of monies collected from ordinary people to support the Sanders'

campaign; the incredible numbers and diversity of people attending his rallies; the simple fact that Bernie had no problems of character (unlike both Trump and Clinton). For much of the campaign it was clear that Hillary's efforts were not focused on winning. She was tired. She was absent-minded. Self-absorbed, she wanted to win but she did not want to struggle to win. She refused absolutely to learn new ways of doing things.





# International Transport Workers News

## USA: TRANSIT WORKERS STRIKE

1/11/16

**Around 4,700 public transportation workers in Philadelphia went on strike at midnight, shutting down many of the city's transit options.**

**The members of the Transport Workers Union Local 234 and the South Eastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, or SEPTA, were unable to agree on a new contract.**

The strike is causing widespread disruption, and raising concerns that if the situation is not resolved it may interfere with Election Day next week.

"All Philadelphians—not just regular SEPTA riders—should prepare for significant disruptions to their commutes, especially the evening rush hour," member station WHYY reports. "The strike shut down all of SEPTA's city transit services: Buses, trolleys, trackless trolleys and subways that operate in the city, which usually handle 884,000 trips a day, will not run."

Regional rail is the only service still operating, SEPTA says — and even before the strike, rail services were operating "at near capacity."

WHYY reporter Tom MacDonald spoke with NPR from a suburban train station in downtown Philadelphia, where he said the trains that were running were struggling with large quantities of riders — many of them unfamiliar with the trains.

"We've got delays as much as 99 minutes on some of these rail lines," MacDonald said. "Everything is behind ... the riders are frustrated. I mean, they want their regular way of going to work."

MacDonald notes that the union had been warning Philadelphia residents for weeks that a strike was in the works. But many residents are used to deadlines being extended in situations like these — a few days' delay as the union and SEPTA try to work out a deal.

"The union went on strike at exactly the strike deadline and that's caught some people off guard," MacDonald says.

It's also left students in the lurch. NBC Philadelphia, citing school officials, said around 60,000 students public, private and charter school students rely on public transit to get to school.

Schools in Philadelphia are remaining open on Tuesday, The Associated Press reports.

"[School officials] are saying that those who don't make it in will be given an excused absence, but parents are urged to find a way to bring their children to school or get them there, one way or the other," MacDonald reports.

The strike was initiated after negotiations broke down over issues including health care costs, pensions and worker rest, WHYY has reported.

SEPTA says the union walked away from "pay raises, enhanced pension benefits, maintained health care coverage levels and continued job security."

The union says SEPTA's representatives "refused to address non-economic issues affecting operator and public safety."

If the strike lasts a week or more, SEPTA plans to file an emergency temporary restraining order to suspend the strike for Election Day next Tuesday, to ensure that all voters will be able to access the polls, WHYY reports.

In 2009, a SEPTA strike lasted for six days.

- NPR

## RUSSIAN TRUCKIES SET UP NEW UNION TO FIGHT PUTIN GOVT.

**Video interview with a supporter of the truck drivers' industrial action in Russia.**

11mins, German with English subs., 2016 <http://en.labournet.tv/video/7049/strike-and-self-organisation-truckers-russia>

June 2016, interview with a supporter of the truck drivers' industrial action in Russia - After the introduction of the new "Platon" road toll, truck drivers who drive their own trucks feel that their livelihoods are under threat. Since November 11, 2015 they have continued with their protests. On 30 April, 2016, at a meeting of 300 delegates, the "Union of Transport Workers of Russia" (OPR) was formed.

"This experience, simply sitting together in a huge room, and to realise that we were many, was really inspiring. People told me afterwards, 'this is the happiest day of my life'."

However, attacks on truck drivers are just one part of a generalised attack from

above: "Over the past three years a lot of antisocial "reforms" have been brought in, neo liberalisation, Russian style, which is very closely linked to corruption. That is what truck drivers in Russia criticise. However this doesn't only affect truck drivers. It affects the healthcare system, schools, which must now operate according to new economic criteria. It affects hospitals, doctors are now trying to form a 'wild' union, which is fraught with many problems...also teachers." (from the video)

The truck drivers appreciate any messages of solidarity. Please write to them here: [solidarity\\_trucker \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:solidarity_trucker@yahoo.com)

## UK: Deliveroo Drivers on Wildcat Strike

17/8/16

**We are now on the sixth day of strike action by couriers from the delivery firm Deliveroo. Triggered by new payment terms imposed by management, drivers are calling for a national boycott of the company until the new pay scheme is opt-in rather than opt-out, the threat of dismissal is lifted from its workforce and the company implements the London living wage.** So far this remarkable, non-traditional industrial action has seen non-unionised drivers organise themselves in physical meetings and on WhatsApp, a crowd funded strike fund of over £10,000 raised online and consumers and restaurants call for an end to driver exploitation.

However, to fully understand the Deliveroo strike dispute, it is important to realise that the two foundations of our present gig economy, freedom and flexibility, in practice mean exhaustion and exploitation. This is not only a dispute over pay, but a conflict over the nature of language and our vision of the economy itself; do we want an economy where "freedom" means exploitation or where it means security and liberty?

The Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB) is raising this question as a trade union facilitating and supporting a campaign that is fundamentally worker-led. Without being members of any union Deliveroo drivers have organised effective action to bring the world's attention to their inspirational struggle. We have realised this is the moment when the social network strikes back against



the gig economy. This is why we are backing the drivers' autonomous action to the hilt, liaising with management and providing crowdfunded cover for the many strikers who have signed up to the IWGB over the past few days.

Deliveroo's deal offers drivers neither security nor liberty; it will make life harder for them and their families.

For Deliveroo chief executive and co-founder William Shu, "freedom"

Many reporters have failed to note that Deliveroo lets workers opt out of a scheme that leaves them with no guaranteed income only if they work in a delivery zone where this scheme is not already in place, even if this means moving from south-west London's Kingston to Hackney, on the other side of the city. This forces drivers to leave neighbourhoods where their local knowledge helps them make fast deliveries for unfamiliar parts of town. Deliveroo has also made clear

ing out hundreds of pounds for bike repairs, scooter insurance and tax accounting. Shu states Deliveroo is a partner of two road safety charities, but he does not mention that when drivers are injured on the job they do not receive a penny in sick pay. Nor does he mention that Deliveroo does not contribute to pension payments. This is the "freedom" drivers are given.

This dispute highlights the danger that arises when the buzzwords of zero-hours Britain become detached from workers'

everyday reality. What would offer couriers genuine freedom is a guaranteed London living wage of £9.40 per hour with an extra £1 per delivery and a commitment by Deliveroo to cover the costs of insurance and repairs. Many other courier firms have done this after negotiations with the IWGB, so why not Deliveroo? This is what the striking drivers are asking for. It is a modest demand, to give them the freedom to provide for themselves and their families, and the flexibility to take a day off work when they feel ill. This is the modern economy we want to see.

• This article was amended on 17 August 2016 to remove an incorrect reference to whistle-

blowers.

*Thanks to the Guardian*



clearly means exploitation. Responding to the strike on BBC Radio 4 on Monday, he claimed to offer couriers a wage guarantee of £7.50 "during peak hours" for "a limited time" and a "choice" to opt out of his new piece rate pay scheme. While this was trumpeted as a concession to our demands, it has been widely misrepresented. Shu's deal offers drivers neither security nor liberty; it will make life harder for them and their families.

in emails to workers, as seen by Channel 4 News, that while workers are not "obliged" to sign the new agreement, it is a "compulsory requirement" for all riders in the area who wish to continue working for the company. Some "choice". Some "flexibility".

Note that when Shu speaks of couriers making an average of £9.20 to £9.30 per hour (a figure disputed by many drivers), this does not consider that drivers are pay-

## BRITAIN TODAY

### Solidarity with all workers: Byron Burgers face workers' anger

This August, Byron Burgers was at the centre of a dispute around their dodgy ethical practices, leading to a spontaneous campaign of demonstrations across the UK. Unlike similar campaigns, this one didn't have any key demands - it was simply about teaching the bosses a lesson.

Earlier in the year, Byron had called dozens of their London staff to a 'health and safety' briefing. Instead of the mundane meeting the staff were expecting, immigration officers burst into the room, before detaining everyone present and deporting 35 people. The company attempted to excuse itself by saying it was a legal requirement - a claim that was quickly debunked by legal experts. Sources from within Byron suggested the actions only made sense if they were part of a 'back-room deal'. This could have been to enable bosses to dodge fines for breaching employment and immigration law. Either way, this at-

tack on ordinary workers decimated lives and let those responsible off scot-free. The rest of the country wasn't going to stand idly by.

Current and former workers at Byron, including some who had quit in disgust at the deportations, called for action. The first demonstration took place at a central London branch at the centre of the scandal, with hundreds of protesters forcing the restaurant to close. Actions quickly spread, with pickets, protests, and occupations across the country - there was even a 'biblical plague' of locusts released in several London outlets. Online, the company's social media presence also took a battering. The Bristol restaurant's Facebook page is still offline after being hijacked by a supporter of the protests. It was all an awesome display of working-class unity and self-organisation in the

face of an attack by the bosses. Far from being divided by the discourse of migrants 'stealing jobs', people came together to deliver a blow to Byron's profits.

As well as the significant short-term impact on the owners' profits caused by the campaign, the damage dealt to their image will grossly effect the company in the long

term. Their workers, migrant or otherwise, we hope they look back on what happened to Byron and think very, very carefully about it.

*Thanks to Resistance Bulletin*



term. This isn't just due to the actions already mentioned, but to others that came to light as a result, including the millions in profits the company rakes in from its over-priced burgers being rooted via offshore havens, to avoid paying UK tax.

The next time a company has to make a decision on whether to screw up the lives of

## Postal workers' wildcat strike

*by Bridgwater postman*

**Hundreds of Royal Mail workers carried out a wildcat strike on 24th August to defend their Communication**

found Uber has acted unlawfully by not providing drivers with basic workers' rights. This could lead to Uber drivers getting basic workers' rights but it might not and shouldn't been seen as a victory.

All that has happened is a tribunal has found Uber drivers at the moment are effectively employees and not self-employed. This means Uber will have to pay the two drivers who bought the case money for the period they were working and not getting the rights they would have done if they were employees. But Uber will appeal this and may not end up having to change anything at all.

If Uber exhausts its appeals and can't overturn the ruling then it has two choices. It either takes on its drivers as employees giving them the wages and conditions they should be getting. Or Uber can change the way it operates so its workers are legally self-employed. Given Uber's global business model is based on it not employing drivers, it looks likely it will change the way it operates to meet the law.

**Workers' Union Branch Secretary Chris Rye, based in Swindon, who had been suspended following a row with a manager.**

The first walkout took place at the huge Dorcan Sorting and Delivery Office at 6am. Chippenham Delivery Office workers walked out in solidarity later that morning. Back in Swindon, workers picketed until the start of the late shift at the sorting office, when the whole of that shift refused to go into the building to work.

Later that afternoon Royal Mail agreed to lift Chris's suspension, and the workers agreed to return to work.

Chris is currently on 'house arrest', in the sense that he has to stay for the whole of his shift at the CWU Union room at Dorcan, and not wander about talking to members. The Branch's position is that if Chris is formally charged with any offence, or if the soon-to-be-published enquiry into industrial relations at Dorcan does not completely vindicate the CWU, then further strike action is likely.

The initial success of the Swindon strike is entirely due to the lightning-fast response of the 'illegal' walkout. Many Royal Mail militants up and down the country will be encouraged, as many fear that the era of regular wildcat strikes throughout Royal Mail, endemic up to a few years ago, were a thing of the past.

*Thanks to Resistance Bulletin*

## LEGAL DECISION AGAINST UBER IN THE UK CRITIQUE

28/10/16

**The recent employment tribunal ruling against Uber is not the end of the 'gig-economy' and might not change anything.**

One in seven workers in the UK today is self-employed. Self-employed workers earn less than other workers. Pay for self-employed workers fell nearly a fifth during the financial crisis. Many of these workers are actually working for themselves, but a significant amount are working for employers who use self-employment to avoid giving workers the pay and conditions full time employees are guaranteed under the law.

This is why today's ruling against Uber is being welcomed by many on the left. The trade union GMB bought a case on behalf of two Uber drivers against the company at an employment tribunal. The tribunal

One of the reasons the left is so excited about the outcome of this tribunal is because people think it will bring about the end of the 'gig-economy'. The idea being companies across the country who use bogus self-employment will now all be forced to end the practice. Hundreds of thousands of workers could now get the minimum wage and have access to paid holidays and sick pay. But that doesn't look very likely.

The law provides a framework within which capitalist firms have to operate, this framework cares more about profit than workers' rights. Companies across the UK are going to be working out ways of changing the way they operate so they fit within that framework. Every firm which can see a way of making sure its workers are legally self-employed will take it if it costs less than making the workers regular employees.

No doubt some workers somewhere will benefit from this ruling, but this is unlikely to be the cause for widespread change. When the Deliveroo strike was taking



place people told me this tribunal case could be more significant than the strike action. They were wrong. Legal action can compel companies to change the way they operate but it cannot guarantee improvements in working conditions. The best way of doing that is workers organising collectively and taking direct action to force companies like Uber to respect our basic rights.

If the class struggle is fought through the legal system, workers are fighting without our most effective weapon, our ability to stop work. Fighting and winning legal cases is good for left-wing legal firms but it does nothing to build up working class power. Plus the legal system can be changed by politicians. With a government in power which is keen to attack working conditions don't be surprised if the law gets changed because of this ruling to legalise the way companies like Uber operate.

*Thanks to Jim's Blog*

**Comment:**

**I haven't seen the full details of the legal ruling, also I'm not 100% sure of everything with regard to this area of employment law (employment law in general is also mostly pretty vague). However it looks to me like the tribunal determined they were "workers", rather than employees. This does give them some basic employment rights, like holiday pay and the minimum wage, however they have no rights against unfair dismissal.**

They do have the protection from "detriment" for raising a claim about non-payment of the national minimum wage, but while "employees" are protected from unfair dismissal for challenging an employer who is denying them a

statutory right (like holiday pay), workers are not. So I would have thought at least on the minimum wage front there would be protection.

But of course Uber are challenging the tribunal outcome. And in any case tribunals don't set legal precedent, only at the level of Employment Appeal Tribunal or above is legal precedent set, so at the moment the only Uber drivers who technically have "workers' rights" are those two who brought the case.

So if others did, Uber could sack them, and they would have to try to take the company to court and prove that they were workers all over again, before even demonstrating any detriment. This would be pretty long winded and expensive...

*Steven Thanks to Libcom*

## BOOK REVIEW CORNER

### **Rebellion in Patagonia by Osvaldo Bayer, Translated by Paul Sharkey and Joshua Neuhouser, Published by AK Press**

**In Rebellion in Patagonia Osvaldo Bayer rescued this tragedy from historical oblivion.**

**'The 1921 massacre of the rural workers of Patagonia is no longer a taboo subject, mentioned as if it were but a legend.' (p467) Patagonia, in the far south of Argentina, dominated by the livestock runs of large landowners, is a long way from Buenos Aires. It may be a long way from where you are, but this is a story that resonates.**

Rebellion in Patagonia tells how the anarchist-organised rural workers strike in 1920-21 and win historic concessions, after the army and reformist politicians opt for compromise. The landowners are intent on destroying the workers' organisation and resist implementing the agreement, which leads to the second strike (of 1921). The owners want a solution, one that leaves them in full control. 'If the military doesn't intervene, "there will be nothing but ruins and desolation."' (p148 quoting La Nación) Why is there a problem?

"Outside agitators, the aftertaste of unrestricted immigration, profess doctrines in which those who were once slaves will take the place of their oppressors.'" (p121, quoting La Unión) Class interests are

sprinkled with patriotic rhetoric. Political pressure is applied to the reformists. The army is encouraged - this time - to return things to 'business as usual'. In other words, to massacre the strikers. Not simply to break the strike, but to drown it in blood.

**The Anarchists of the Workers' Society put their faith in solidarity that doesn't come.**

They know which side the army are on. Not so the rural workers. 'As far as they are concerned, the real enemies are the police officers who beat them and shake them down for the few pesos they have. But fighting the army, no, they don't want to get involved in that. This is the moment when Antonio Soto realizes his biggest mistake: organizing a strike that is absolutely anarchist in form - authentic, sudden, unexpected, impulsive - without the support of a rank and file that understands the basic notions of human freedom and its enemies.' (p267)

The killing isn't random. Once the strikers surrender (defeating your enemies is easier if they think you're neutral!) the sorting starts. The army calls it 'assigning responsibilities' (p221). Anyone singled out as a strike leader is killed, usually after being beaten. Strikers can have their lives saved by being claimed by their bosses. Given

power of life and death, some use it to save lives and some use it to settle scores: 'The commanding military officer himself admits that the judgements as to who was guilty and who was innocent were made by the "ranchers and foremen." [...] Many accounts state that the ranchers didn't just point out the "ring-leaders" but also any peons that had been slightly insubordinate or to whom they owed wages.' (p241) Beyond that, the unknown and unclaimed only had hope, and not a lot of that. 'The ranchers decided whose lives were to be saved and if nobody claimed them they were executed or taken to prison. The same thing happened to the men nobody knew, the migrant workers.' (p247, quoting Antonio Tiznao)

Bayer records the protest of the prostitutes of the La Catalana brothel (in San Julián) who strike themselves: 'Patient research has allowed us to discover the names of these five women, these five whores who were the only ones brave enough to publicly say that the perpetrators of the bloodiest massacre of workers in our history were nothing more than murderers.' (p338)[1] And the protests spread. At first it's the anarchists but then, 'When La Vanguardia - the newspaper of the Socialist Party - learned that the dead included Albino Argüelles, secretary-general of the San Julián Workers' Society and a card-carrying party member, they began attacking [President] Yrigoyen and Commander Varela day after day.'

(p339)

Yrigoyen will say - and will keep saying - nothing. The government will refuse to investigate. A compromise is arranged. 'When the repression began, there were three categories of strikers: the bad workers, who "died in combat"; the suspicious workers, who were imprisoned in Río Gallegos after being punished and humiliated; and the good workers, who were rescued by their employers.' (p366) The prisoners will be released: the task has been accomplished anyway. 'And what about Varela's argument that these people were bandits, arsonists, thieves? Now, with one stroke of a pen, the judge admits that they shouldn't have been arrested. What one hand writes is erased by the other.' (p373)

Commander Varela asks Yrigoyen to support him, to explain he was following orders. It doesn't happen.

Since there will be no justice, inevitably the anarchists think about revenge. Anarchist political violence has thrown up many remarkable characters. Just look at Simón Radowitzky or Severino di Giovanni, both of whom Bayer has written about.

#### Kurt Wilckens

Kurt Gustav Wilckens is possibly the most remarkable and least fierce anarchist avenger. 'He has never even been to Patagonia, but neither has he received so much as five centavos in payment for the assassination. His name is Kurt Gustav Wilckens. A German anarchist of the Tolstoyan persuasion, he is an enemy of violence, but he believes that, in extreme cases, the only response to the violence of the mighty should be more violence.' (p18)

Wilckens assassinates Commander Varela, 'the butcher of Patagonia'. Wilckens is then murdered in prison in a right-wing plot, which triggers massive protests and cements his place as a working class hero. 'If we hadn't personally collected the testimonies, flyers, communiques, etc., we wouldn't have believed that, even in the most remote corners of the country, there were people who felt the need to express their support for the anarchist avenger and their anger at his murder.' (p433) Bayer follows the story to the bitter end.

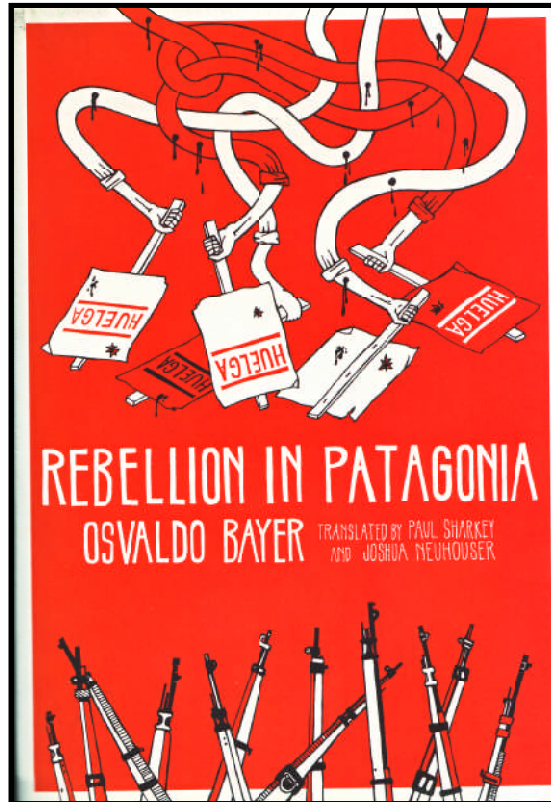
Perez Millán Temperley, the killer of Wilckens, is given a light sentence and serves it in a mental hospital - until he's killed in an anarchist plot.

Rebellion in Patagonia is not cheerful reading and might leave you asking 'What can you do but weep?' It reminded me of

*And they wore their Sunday suits,  
But we knew the work they had been at,  
By the quicklime on their boots.*

But there was no quicklime: some bodies were burnt, many were just left on the pampas. It was left to the local people to bury them properly.

Despite the brutality, this is a very humane book because Bayer is determined to bear witness and writes with a clear grasp of what's at stake. It's also a model for writing history from below. Starting fifty



years after the events, Bayer interviews eyewitnesses (strikers, neutrals and soldiers) as well as the children of victims and perpetrators, visits the execution sites and sees the bullet-marked rocks for himself. He also makes good use of the written record, like the flier that catches the moment when it's being typeset: 'While we went to press, we were informed that the bakers had just voted to go on strike.' (p414)

When Bayer talks about illiterate workers, there's no sneer, simply admiration that those who had so little would risk it all for an ideal. They strike to commemorate the execution of the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer: 'This is typically anarchist. Just think about the riskiness of a strike in a place where jobs are extremely scarce, where all the bosses know each other, and where nobody will hire a disobedient worker. And that these sombre men - peons, bellboys, and stevedores - would take such a risk on behalf of someone who had died eleven years before in a far-off land.

That these proletarians - most of them illiterate - took such a risk to commemorate the founder of the Modern School!' (p480-1)

There is bitter irony, though, for self-serving lies: 'It's strange that Paladino was able to make a confession after dying, taking the time to accuse himself of being "one of the most blood-thirsty."' (p330)

There's a very strong sense in Rebellion in Patagonia that the past has never gone away, that the massacres are simply a dress rehearsal for Argentina's twentieth-century agony of dictatorship. Bayer was forced into exile during the 1970s dictatorship and his books (including the first version of this one) were burnt. So he not a 'neutral' observer. But he is a very perceptive one.

There's an awful lot to think about in this book. The rural workers were left to fight alone. The 'pure syndicalists' of the FORA IX will protest about the massacres, but not too much. Bayer unpicks the nationalism used by the bosses, where the flag really is a blindfold: 'Without any need for a red flag, Patagonia was already internationalized - not just by foreign landowners, but also because all of her raw material wealth was sent overseas. In other words, the intervention of the Argentine Army did not occur to defend the nation's interests, but to preserve the status and privileges of foreign companies and to protect an unjust feudal regime that still chokes southern Argentina, slowly turning it into a desert.' (p33)

Bayer isn't shy about condemning the killings carried out by Varela, but he doesn't ignore the forces that used him: 'It seems as if the responsibility of all those who owed something to Varela, of those who benefited from his actions, ended with his death' (p403). It's as if he's sowing seeds of doubt, asking the army if they're happy to be 'the tools of those who already had everything and still wanted more.' (p235)

**Tragic though it is, Rebellion in Patagonia is written with style as well as heart:**

'we can imagine those two tiny Fords travelling through the desert, carrying eight madmen drunk on the ideas of social justice and human redemption. What possessed three Spaniards, one Pole, one Argentine, and three Chileans to set off through this wasteland to bring the gospel of Bakunin to those illiterate, God-forsaken peons? They were crazier than any characters dreamed of by Roberto Arlt, beyond the imagination of even Maxim Gorky. A former stagehand, a stevedore, a mechanic, a former telegraph operator, three shepherds, a former

*Wilde's Ballad of Reading Gaol:*

*Their uniforms were spick and span,*



electrician, and a hotel valet go off to fight for social justice and human redemption in the depopulated expanses of Patagonia. A shame that the conversations between these eight messengers of dynamite and fury weren't recorded. If Jesus had happened upon them in the desert, he would have shook his head sadly and told them, "Brothers, you are exaggerating the teachings of the Gospel." (p156-7)

Bayer's book is a memorial to them: 'flowers for the rebels who failed' as anarchists like to say, a tribute based not on a sense of nostalgia but a love of freedom. It's also a reminder that the past is important: how can we change things if we don't understand how we got where we now are? Finally, in a footnote, Bayer reminds us that some never gave up:

#### Antonio Soto

'Here we should add a few words on the fate of Antonio Soto, the man who refused to surrender at La Anita.[...]Soto remained faithful to his libertarian ideals until the day he died, although he no lon-

ger acted on them publicly. Towards the end of his life, he purchased a small hotel in Punta Arenas that became a gathering place for journalists, artists, freethinkers, and Spanish Republicans. His body was accompanied to the graveyard by a sizable entourage, led by the flag bearers of the Spanish Republican Centre, the Red Cross - of which he was a member - and the Galician Centre. They were followed by student groups, who honoured Soto as the inspiration behind the first student strike in Punta Arenas, which secured an increase in the meagre pay of the town's teachers.' (p491-2) KSL

#### Note

1. 'Here are their names as they appeared on the yellowing pages of the police report:

*Consuelo García, twenty-nine years old, Argentine, single, prostitute at the La Catalana brothel; Angela Fortunato,*

*thirty-one years old, Argentine, married, seamstress and prostitute; Amalia Rodríguez, twenty-six years old, Argentine, single, prostitute; María Juliache, Spaniard, twenty-eight years old, resident of Argentina for the past seven years, prostitute; Maud Foster, Englishwoman, thirty-one years old, single, resident of Argentina for the past ten years, a woman from a good family, prostitute.'*

*Rebellion in Patagonia by Osvaldo Bayer; AK Press/Kate Sharpley Library, 2016. [Originally posted at <http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/905rp9>]*

*R e l a t e d Link: <https://www.akpress.org/rebellion-in-patagonia.html>*

## Debate on Industrial Organising

Hello fellow workers!

As a unionist from Adelaide, the closing of Holden's, as well as the selling or potential closure of the Arrium Whyalla Steelworks presents a potential massive working class struggle. It's my opinion that if these businesses close down the workers should take control of the factories for themselves. What I want to know is how to plant that seed and instigate that struggle? Any suggestions on where to start and what to do? I don't know much about Holden's and even less about Arrium Steel, the sheer size of these operations would make organising a workers occupation a major struggle.

Radelade-the-tragic

Well that's a huge task to be honest.

In Brisbane when Campbell Newman sacked masses of Railway workers, a few years ago, BSN (Brisbane Solidarity Network) went out to the train yards in Ipswich to set up stall with info flyers to encourage general strike action, and talk to people during shift change over.

General response was, 'Thanks mate, but should have started doing this 6 months ago. Bit late now'. So guess it's the old path of finding a few like minds, getting in there, start sharing the idea, with the means that you have.

Happyanarchy

To: Happyanarchy:

The reality in regard to the Ipswich stuff - is that your mob was not interested in doing the long range "serious" organising in this sector prior to the sackings. You had an important tool, the ASN transport paper - your mob - refused to get behind it!!! With it you could have made contacts with workers who wanted to do something, did stories/interviews or even made contact with a militant workers network which may have existed behind the scenes. Helped them with their agitation, networking, countering management propaganda, etc. Developed a Qld rail section (you in fact did have at least one of your group in Qld Rail at this time) and even later on other sections in the paper. So not just 6 months earlier, you could have helped get the grassroots organising ball rolling years earlier! You could still do something like this now. But is your mob serious about industrial organising?

### The Bankruptcy of Leftist Activoidism and the "Smoke & Mirrors" Technique of the Union Bureaucracy

What you wrote above does look like the type of pointless stuff left sects and their activoids get up to. Getting in-

involved when something big happens but is too late and churning out a bit of abstract propaganda - and per-

haps having a bit of excitement and an excuse for a social occasion. In the case of the notorious "Hutchison Ports" dispute of 2015 - in fact, certain of these sects and activoids were used by the union bosses of the MUA (Maritime Union of Australia) in a despicable "smoke and mirrors" performance. Where a fake victory was claimed but a real defeat of workers was achieved by the MUA bosses and the employer/Govt.(1)

In regard to the Laverton, Victoria, Baiada Poultry processing plant strike of 2011, the National Union of Workers (NUW) hierarchy used the services of leftist activoids and sects together with NUW officials for a fake community picket. Instead of mobilising meatworkers across the state and nationally to help the Laverton workers strike for improved conditions. Again the activoids were "lured" into a "smoke and mirrors" performance by the union bosses. After a few weeks, the union officials closed down the struggle claiming a "fake victory".

It included a pay rise which barely met inflation and the guarantee of making workers after 6 months on the job permanent, but this clause had been in the previous agreement. It had never been implemented. Subsequently the NUW officials collaborated with the bosses in the phased cutting of hundreds of jobs over succes-

sive years. Until only 100 workers were left, prior to announcement by the company of the closure of the plant on 17/10/16.

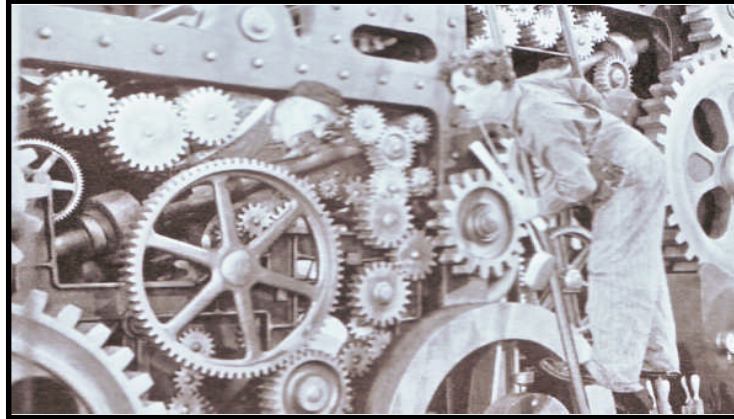
## What “Serious” Syndicalist Industrial Organising Would Look Like?

We actually did something exactly along these above lines (re serious long range work) in the NSW/Sydney railways - in the years of the lead up to the Olympics in 2000. It involved “strategy and analysis” based on industrial experience and historical research, taking account of the need for the precision deployment of limited resources and personnel. Not aimless activism, “running around like headless chickens” or cooking up stunts to deceive gullible overseas people via the internet.

After some years we did make contact with such a militant network. Helped them with their stuff and assisted them to win a key union mass meeting which they

forced the union bosses to call - to oppose restructuring of the Sydney railway station network for privatisation. To outmanoeuvre this grass roots success, the union bosses called a lightning state wide rail strike in Sept. 1999, in the week prior to a national ALP conference held in Sydney. All this had far reaching consequences in

workers to agree to the cutting of their wages and conditions. This may indicate the activity of an above “behind the scenes” militant network. So there may be time to assist them, if a way can be found to determine if it exists and make contact. They would need help re putting out a workplace paper etc.



terms of slowing the general privatisation push and the tempo of the employer offensive. (2)

In regard to Whyalla - there has been a media report of workers there opposing a push by the union bosses/the bosses for the

**Stop Press: Latest news is that the AWU (Australian Workers Union) officials and bosses have been successful in pressuring the Steel workers to agree to the cutbacks.**

Mark

Notes:

1. See “Hutchison Ports Dispute” in RW Vol.34 No.3 (224) Nov.-Dec. 2015 on web site [www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org)

2. See “Anarcho-Syndicalism: Catalyst for Workers Self-Organisation” and “Anarcho-Syndicalist Strategy for Australia, Today”, in the archive section of

[www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org)

Thanks to Libcom

## Alfons Thomasz Pilarski 1902 -1977

*A biography of Alfons Thomasz Pilarski, a German anarcho-syndicalist who took part in the German and Polish anarchist and anti-nazi movements.*

**Alfons Thomasz Pilarski (alias Kompartdt) was born in Upper Silesia, a part of Germany with a 30% minority of Poles, on 6th July 1902, the son of a working class family in Leschnitz near Stehlitz.**

From 1917-1921 Alfons worked as a draughtsman in building administration of the municipal authorities in Ratibor. In 1921 he completed his Abitur final exams (roughly equivalent to an educational diploma) as an external course at the Mathias High School in Breslau. He had joined the Communist Party (Spartakusbund) in Upper Silesia during the revolutionary ferment of 1918. He left the KPD after the Heidelberg Congress of October 1919, when the left communists and syndicalists broke away.

He joined the anarcho-syndicalist Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschland (FAUD) and he became a very active propagandist with it. He worked from 1921 to 1927 as a draughtsman and trainee for the anarcho-syndicalist publishing house of Fritz Kater. Pilarski and the Upper

Silesian FAUD put a great emphasis on propaganda. In 1925 they had produced the Workers Voice, an agitational paper, which had to close for lack of funds. In 1928 he was one of the editors of the anarchist paper Befreiung (Liberation) in Breslau and Ratibor. This was a weekly for Silesia and Upper Silesia. It called itself “the only revolutionary paper in the dark east”. It had an aggressive tone and spoke in the language of the street, particularly interesting itself in exposing scandals in the establishment. Two of the seven first issues were seized by the authorities, who also banned it for a month. It had a circulation figure of 7,000, very high for a radical provincial paper.

Alongside Franz Nowak (Gypsy) and Theodor Bennek, Pilarski stood out as one of the most capable militants of the Upper Silesian FAUD. He was regarded by the police as its “intellectual leader”. He was a stirring orator, a talented journalist and a capable commercial artist. Between 1919-1932 he was arrested several times and served 19 months imprisonment altogether.

Besides Befreiung, Pilarski was involved in organizing the Schwarzen Scharen (The Black Crowds). In October 1929 members of the FAUD in Ratibor created

anti-fascist combat organizations under this name, with the purpose of protecting workers meetings from the Nazis who they intended to fight by all means. In November 1929 a Schwarzen Scharen was set up in Beuthen followed by Rosenberg, Katscher, Gleiwitz and Bobrek Karf. Sometimes as many as 1,500 were mobilized and usually between 300-400. The Schwarzen Scharen wore black shirts and black berets, with the anti-militarist symbol of the broken rifle on their berets. The photograph above is of members of the FAUD Ratibor at the funeral of a comrade. Some members of the Schwarzen Scharen are visible on the right in berets and Pilarski is one of the men wearing a hat in the centre of the picture.

Basing his views on the previous experience of the German working class with the reactionary Freikorps, Pilarski believed that if fascism triumphed, the workers movement would be set back by 30 years. Accordingly the Upper Silesian FAUD prepared itself for combat. The Schwarzen Scharen in Ratibor had a machine gun and several pistols. In May 1932 the police discovered a secret training camp of the Schwarzen Scharen in Beuthen. 4 militants were arrested and sentenced to 10 years each in March 1933. Three others, Paul Czakon, Alfons Molina and Bernhard Pacha managed to escape to Spain (where later they fought in

See Page 20



## NEWS & NOTES

One of the most important developments in the NSW Railways next year is EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) 2017. The ASN is doing the hard yards on the job to assist militants to develop a grass roots log of claims and on-the-job organisation to pursue a campaign of direct action to achieve important conditions improvements. Whilst out manoeuvring the ALP aligned union hierarchy and the bosses/Baird Govt. which would use the EBA to further cut jobs and conditions and achieve major steps toward privatisation. (See article Page 3.)

In the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, the Light Rail extensions, which are in reality "Heavy Rail" extensions are increasingly becoming obvious to be a pretext by the Baird Govt. to assist its developer business mates profiteering and the associated privatisation of public housing and land. Whilst providing a means to raise further Govt. revenue via stamp duty on real estate sales. (See article Page 4.)

Currently Uber together with other factors is causing a major crisis for Sydney cabbies, contributing to significant declines in their incomes. In this edition we throw new light on the role of the Baird Govt. in worsening this situation, through brazenly assisting the machinations of the taxi bosses with new outrageous proposed legislation. (See article Page 2.)

In this edition we throw new light on Uber in the UK and a critique of a new legal determination concerning Uber drivers' employment terms. (See article Page 14.)

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### Grassland Infoshop

207B Nicholson St.  
Footscray  
3011 Vic.

### Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### TO FIND OUT MORE

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

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

If undeliverable, return to  
PO Box 92, Broadway NSW 2007

*Continued From Page 18* the fighting against the Francoist insurgents and then in anarchist militia columns).

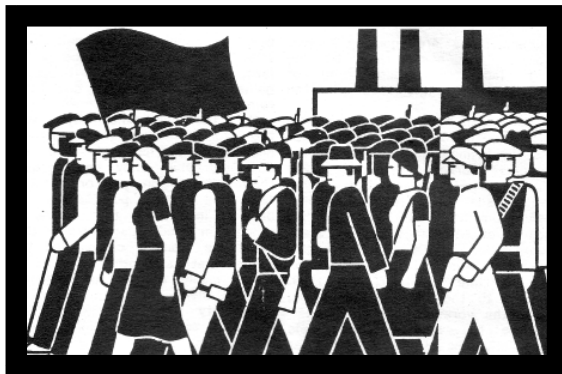
Because of his involvement Pilarski fled across the border to Poland in September 1932, after an arrest warrant was put out for him. His forced emigration was not as difficult for Pilarski as for others fleeing Nazism. He spoke fluent Polish and had a legal right to live in Poland. He studied in Warsaw between 1933/1934 as a scholarship holder of the Polish Institute For the Study of National Problems (Instytut Badan Nardowych). From 1934 to 1936 he was a district secretary of the Polish syndicalist union the ZZZ in the Dabrowa basin and then up to June 1937 he worked in the head office of the metalworkers unions. From June 1937 until February 1939 he was on the editorial board of the Workers Front and in June 1939 he was co-opted on to the leadership of the ZZZ. He organised a secret anarcho-syndicalist opposition within the ZZZ. The Swedish anarchist Helmut Berner, who maintained links with the German anarchist underground, also visited Pilarski in Warsaw. The secret anarcho-syndicalist opposition had collected funds for Spanish children and Berner offered to smuggle these to Barcelona.

The German anarchist Augustin Souchy had asked Pilarski to come to Spain as one of a team of international co-workers. The ZZZ was reluctant to let such a capable organiser as Pilarski go, although his younger brother Richard did go, as did two other Upper Silesian anarcho-syndicalists, Heinrich Freidetzky and Max von Piechulla. In 1937 he married his wife Halina who came from a Polish working class family and had studied philosophy at Warsaw University. Their child Joanna was born in 1944.

In this period he broke with the internationalist outlook of the anarchist move-

ment, believing, as he wrote in a letter to Souchy in 1937 that the "patriotic-revolutionary" mentality should not be opposed and that it was as much a waste of resources as the fight against religion. At the congress of the International Workers Association in 1938, he argued as the Polish delegate against the internationalist positions of the Dutch delegate Bart de Ligt. He argued for the "armed defense" of Czechoslovakia to the applause of the Spanish delegates, who had themselves fallen under the spurious thrall of anti-fascism.

After the German occupation, Pilarski fled to the part of Poland occupied by the Rus-



sians. He got a job in Wilna. In 1942 he secretly returned to Warsaw and was active in the secret syndicalist organisation Wolnosc (Liberty). He took part in the Warsaw uprising as a member of the socialist military group the Polska Armia Ludowa (PAL). After 8 days of fighting, he was seriously wounded. After the crushing of the uprising he was evacuated with his family to Krakow, only escaping Auschwitz by luck.

After the war, as far as it was possible, Pilarski maintained contact with the surviving comrades, corresponding with Rudolf Rocker in the USA and Helmut Ruediger in Stockholm. In 1947 he joined the Polish Labour Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza) and the PZPR (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza). He was fiercely criticized by German comrades

abroad for these actions. Helmut Ruediger believed he had gone too far in adjusting himself to Polish nationalism and in particular its expulsion of 8 million ethnic Germans from their homes.

In January 1945 he worked as a secretary

**Grassroots Syndicalist Organising Drive amongst Storemen & Packers & NUW members in Sydney & NSW**  
**Contact: rebworknet@y7mail.com**  
**or PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW**

for propaganda for the Krakow district committee of the unions, and from June 1945 to June 1947 he worked as an employee in various enterprises in Silesia. From January 1948 to June 1950 he worked as a civil servant in the Ministry for the Western Areas, later in the Ministry for Public Administration. After that he worked up to his retirement in 1969 in the National Centre for the Book Trade as a publicity manager.

He was expelled from the PPR in 1950 and in April 1954 he was arrested by the Polish secret police for political reasons and again on 30th November 1954.

It appears he began corresponding with old Upper Silesian comrades living in Poland and East Germany at the beginning of the 70s, as well as with another FAUD veteran, Max Von Piechulla who was living in Canada. He also had contacts with Souchy in Munich and was able to make visits to Western Europe, although very often the bureaucracy thwarted any requests for such visits.

He refused any medals or decorations from the Polish state and after his retirement lived in a shabby two room apartment. In his correspondence with von Piechulla, he affirmed that he remained committed to libertarian socialism, and that it alone was the only worthwhile form of society for humanity.

He died on 3rd February 1977 in Warsaw.

*Thanks to Libcom*