

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



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**ONLY A CAMPAIGN UNDER GRASS ROOTS CONTROL
CAN DEFEAT THE O'FARRELL GOVT. ONSLAUGHT!**



NATIONAL NEWS; NSW RAILWAY NEWS; RAIL-BUS NEWS; STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; ILLUSION & REALITY IN THE NSW FIRE BRIGADE UNION; GRASS ROOTS CAMPAIGN IN THE NSW PUBLIC SERVICE; BRITAIN TODAY; SPAIN; EGYPTIAN STRIKE WAVE; USA: GRAIN TERMINAL SABOTAGE; SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR NEWS; BOOK REVIEW CORNER: WHAT IS SYNDICALISM?; NEWS & NOTES; PLUS MORE!

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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NATIONAL NEWS

"THE THOMSON SAGA"

The Gillard government's wafer thin majority will disappear if Craig Thomson is forced to resign from the Federal government before the next Federal election. Taliban Tony Abbott, smelling victory, has launched an unprecedented attack on a man who has not been charged with any offence. They are so desperate to get their man "due process". The cornerstone of conservative politics has been discarded for short term political gain. I have no idea whether the allegations aired in the media about Craig Thomson hold water but I'm willing for due process to take its course. Federal parliamentarians cannot lose their seat unless they're declared bankrupt or are jailed for more than one year for an indictable offence. Even if Craig Thomson is guilty of the allegations that have been made it will take years for the case to be finalised.

There are much more important issues than whether Craig Thomson fraudulently used his union credit card. To paralyse parliamentary business in an effort to force a by-election in a case where charges have not been laid (even if charges are laid the possibility of a verdict is years away) is a total waste of parliamentary time. Nothing in the Opposition and the government's behaviour does anything to restore people's faith in both parliament and their parliamentary representatives. The longer this grubby little affair wastes valuable parliamentary time, the more disillusioned people will become with a political system that promises so much and delivers so little. I'm not surprised by the Opposition's tactics. Keen to use the state apparatus to impose his will on other people, Tony Abbott is more than happy to take a leaf out of the Taliban's book, suspend due process and introduce summary justice so he and his motley crew can, with the permission of the parliamentary puppet masters, turn Australia into a paradise for the rich and powerful.

THE LEGACY OF THE KEVIN RUDD AFFAIR

Because Australians have for far too long believed their participation is limited to them casting a ballot every three years. Politics is much, much more than people voting. It is much, much more than people joining political parties or standing for elections. Parliamentary politics has become a sideshow because real power no longer lies in parliament. The fate of Kevin Rudd brought home to many Australians real power lies in the boardrooms of unaccountable national and transnational corporations, not parliament.

The government is now so frightened of upsetting the real power brokers it is forced to constantly look over its shoulder every time it initiates a new policy initiative. The Opposition is led by a man who has promised he will give up his last breath to ensure some of the richest corporations on the planet don't pay one extra cent in tax. He is supported by colleagues who are currently attempting to find seventy billion dollars in savings to honour their promise to the biggest polluters, they will not pay a carbon tax and to give the mining sector the thirty billion dollars that will be collected when the Gillard government's watered down resources tax gains Royal assent. We only have ourselves to blame for the appalling state of Federal politics. For far too long we have allowed unaccountable corporations to manipulate parliament to maximise their profits and power at our expense. Ultimate political authority rests in the hands of a people who are willing to exercise the rights they have to assemble and protest to ensure parliament reflects the will of the people, not accountable corporations. We deserve the government and opposition we have because for far too long we have been happy to let that small section of society that owns the means of production, distribution, exchange and communication subvert our political institutions without putting up a fight to defend and extend what few rights and liberties we still have left in Australia.

*Thanks to
the Anarchist Age*

REBEL WORKER WEB SITE -

www.rebelworker.org

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

TRAIN CREW NEWS

We are still having continuing issues with the new Waratah train. As I mentioned last edition, these issues include the role of guards on platforms in the City Circle, the amount of time for training train crews on the train and the changing of the role of the guard on the trains in regard to watching the train onto the platform and removal of the whistle.

We are also facing major attacks on train crew wages by the bosses. I have heard that RailCorp wants to cut out train crew travel time for foreign depot working and cut back stand by shifts on weekends by standing you down at on home base pay, have swinger shifts work only Monday to Friday. The union doesn't believe they can do it, and are challenging it. RailCorp are saying it was part of the 2010 EBA pay rise. The union is wanting the dispute referred back to the Industrial Relations Commission for a hearing.

By Concerned Guard

A Most Undemocratic Union

By Crimson Coconut

Following on from Members' Voice good showing in last RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) election and gaining somewhere in excess of 40% of the average vote where contested, the RTBU Leadership has decided to ignore the protest vote and continue its old undemocratic ways.

One has to look no further than the appointment of NSW Branch Organisers. Only 2 out of the 6 organisers were fairly elected at the last election. The rest were appointments.

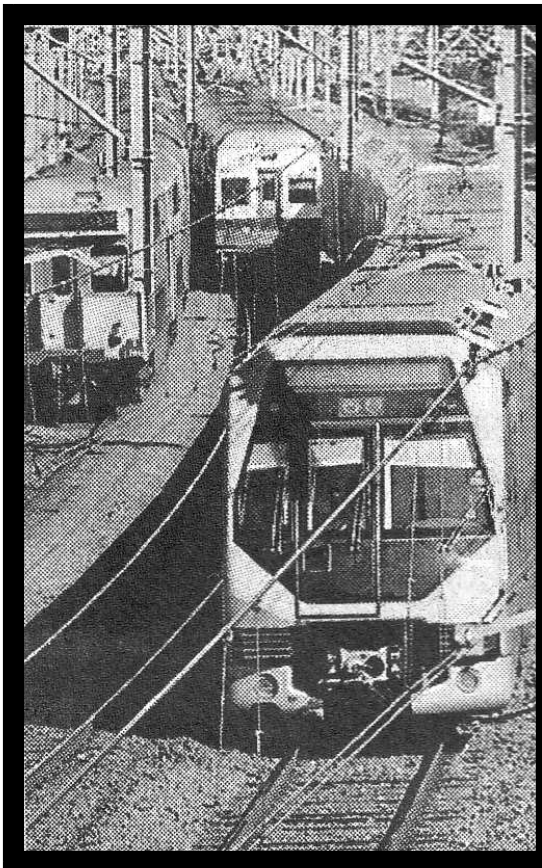
Although the rules of the RTBU allow for this, Members' Voice and many union members believe that this is undemocratic and unconscionable. Union rules should ensure that appointments should reflect the will of the majority of members rather than allegiances to the ALP or the union apparatchiks. The rules must be changed if the union is to be representative of its members.

One of these appointed organiser delegates was soundly rejected at the RTBU National Elections scoring just 410 votes, while several of the others never stood for any position at all.

Not unlike the Health Services Union, which has featured prominently in the

news because of corrupt conduct and misappropriation of funds, the RTBU is an incestuous ALP family affair. At least 2 of the organiser appointments have been provided with a paid position because of their ties with the ALP - some may not even be eligible for union membership.

In the RTBU office, family members of RTBU Royalty fill several of the paid positions. While this may be just good fortune because of RTBU inter-union affinity



it is not a good look and smells of dubious recruiting and appointments.

Unfortunately Members' Voice was unable to dislodge the RTBU leadership at the last union election. Despite our bold showing and the gaining of a respectable percentage vote none of our candidates appears in the new leadership team.

It is the elected leadership's right and will to rule how they see fit. We believe however that the crisis of confidence that the trade union movement finds itself in, the looming environmental catastrophe and the continuing world economic crisis urgently demands change. The RTBU leadership and the rest of union movement only sees the continuation of business as usual. This is not good enough.

This makes the task of building Members' Voice all the more urgent for a future overthrow of (what could commonly be termed) "the unrepresentative swill" as soon as we get the chance.

Stopping Privatisation and Staff Cutbacks

By Crimson Coconut

In the last edition of RW, we raised some of the reasons why we should oppose privatisation. Here we attempt to discuss some of the ways to do this.

Firstly, How NOT to stop privatisation and government/employer attacks on working conditions!

Typically the trade union movement in NSW is being forced by the union rank and file into a position of fending off Barry O'Farrell's attacks on workers in NSW using Fair Work Legislation. Unions NSW are dragging their feet over an effective response to O'Farrell's attempts at holding down wages and slashing jobs.

The September 8th rally in the Domain was a pathetic response from Unions NSW to Barry O'Farrell's attacks. Not that I am against the large number of people that turned out on the day. There is a groundswell of support for some effective action and all of the workers who attended deserve to win this struggle because of their beliefs and because of their efforts. But really, getting workers to walk from a rail station to the Domain to listen to platitudes about the need to remove O'Farrell from power will change nothing.

It does nothing to involve workers in the decision making process or any other process for that matter that will remove O'Farrell. Workers are being led, rather than encouraged and helped into leading the struggle. A truly representative union response would not have been just about removing O'Farrell, but instead empowering workers to fend off any future attacks. That means putting workers rights and needs above short term political goals.

My guess is that they want us to wait until the next election and vote Labor so that Barry and his gang are removed. Guess what - that is just too long and will be too late. The Libs are so entrenched and have

such a majority it will take at least another two terms to remove them from office. In the meantime workers will all be screwed waiting.

The Labor Unions are hamstrung by a preconceived idea that they have to portray themselves as responsible managers and responsible unions, so as not to harm Labor's cleanskin image to the "big end of town", those who make the real decisions in Macquarie Street.

Hence the NSW Union movement's dilemma - an angry rank and file membership on one side that wants direct action to stop the continuing attacks on wages and conditions - a Labor Party on the other side that is down and out and out of office needing workers votes to regain lost ground. They believe that if workers suffer enough under O'Farrell that they just might vote Labor. For this reason there is no urgency to ease the pain and suffering of workers.

Public sector workers remember that it was a Labor Government in NSW that introduced the 2.5% wage freeze. If you listened to the Unions NSW speeches and read their brochures you would think that the wages freeze was something new introduced by B O'Farrell.

We should support rallies and actions of the NSW Unions despite these shortcomings, with the proviso and recognition that neither Labor nor Liberal gives two hoots about working people. A pox on both their houses I say. However we need to support any moves which strengthens the hand of workers.

So what is required? Instead of a gentle stroll in the park, for some feel good exercise, flex some industrial muscle in the form of STRIKE action. This is not just our industrial right it is an international human right. It would have made the Libs and their bankrollers sit up and take notice. Show some union leadership; call the workers out with a list of demands. Primarily tell Barry that he should back off and repeal any legislation that impinges on

the rights of workers to bargain without limits. Bring Sydney and regional centres to a halt - they will cave in if we really apply the industrial screws. Business will scream at both parties to stop them losing money - the only pain they feel is in their pockets.

Union members were not reassured that they would be protected from employer re-



prisals if they attended the rally. That's a real failing and lack of communication from the union movement. Anyway, it would have been much better to have called a stop-work day of action. It would have had far more impact and many, many more would have attended the rally.

The union leadership may have reinforced the view that industrial action is illegal. So what? How can we remove this unjust law with challenging it? Is the union going to remain forever a limp and powerless bureaucratic institution that believes that the best way forward is to bend over backwards?

Local campaigns at workplace level, building up to a comprehensive and united fight would work best. Let workers in their workplaces decide what action should be

taken - any agreed action should be supported from head office. Workers need to organise themselves and organise others, come together and organise.

We need to bring our communities and our families along with us, they need to see that the proposed changes affect them too. We also need to link and join with progressive elements within the trade unions, forming an effective block for action.

An education campaign and debate involving shop floor members should be held in all workplaces or in a local meeting places outside of the workplace if meetings are not allowed by the bosses. Public Sector Unions could then hold a ballot of union members over whether and what form industrial action should take.

While the RTBU, has for once, held some sort of information meetings in the workplace, they have tended to stress many of the reasons for not being able to take strike action.

Democratising the unions by building worker controlled industrial committees within workplaces is essential for a long term campaign to defeat the new round of austerity measures and privatisations. That's because we can't expect a radical change in policy within the Labor controlled unions any time soon.

At the end of the day we only have one real weapon to force the bosses and our political masters to back down and that is our ability to withdraw our labour. Society and the bosses rely on our labour to keep the wheels of industry turning and the profits churning.

As Joe Hill, songwriter, member of the Industrial Workers of the World put it in a song at the turn of the century:

"If the workers took a notion they could stop all speeding trains; Every ship upon the ocean they can tie with mighty chains. Every wheel in the creation, every mine and every mill; Fleets and armies of the nation, will at their command stand still."

We might well ask, what has really changed?

obedience in return for no rights, no privileges, no fair work awards and conditions, no union powers and no guarantee of work stability.

It is with all of this in mind that over 45,000 Government employees let their voices of protest be heard on September 8 at a mass rally at the Domain in Sydney and culminating with a march past Parliament House. Whilst our voices were most definitely heard, they fell on deaf ears with NSW Premier/Dictator Barry O'Farrell refusing to back down. Unions NSW Secretary Mark Lennon has vowed to fight on and continue with rallies and meetings to

State Government Employees To Become 3rd Class Citizens

By The Transport Scrutinizer

The recent decision by the NSW O'Farrell Neo-Nazi Government to impose a below inflation rate 2.5% salary/wages cap on its workforce shows its total disregard for their well being. So too does the NSW Neo-Nazi Government's decision to strip workers' rights, awards and conditions. The Government's domination of the Industrial Relations Commission, also restricts the powers of the Unions to

RAIL – BUS NEWS

negotiate for better awards and conditions for their members. Therefore it is only fitting to state that the Neo-Nazi Government has basically reduced us all to 3rd class citizens, as it wants us to show blind

continue to put pressure on the Government to show some respect to its workforce by repealing its draconian policies.

Whilst it is true that even recent ALP Governments have wrecked the awards and conditions of its workers, none of that compares with the evil that we are now faced with. If O'Farrell and his band of Neo-Nazis have their day, we will all become slaves to the system with the worst possible conditions, including less or no penalty rates, no voluntary overtime, reduced annual leave, sick leave, carers' leave, long service leave and less take home pay. If convicted of some trumped up departmental charges, we will also lose the right of appeal, resulting in illegal and unwarranted sackings. In short, we've



been HAD. And if private enterprise employees think they are exempt, they are sorely mistaken, as their bosses will side with O'Farrell, to screw their conditions as well.

It was the voice of the people that unseated the Keneally ALP Government and it will be the voice of the people that will turn the O'Farrell Neo Nazi Government into a one-hit wonder. If the Unions NSW Campaign continues to gain momentum and gains the community support that we need, then we will succeed. In gaining proper pay and conditions and retain government jobs, many communities, particularly those in outlying areas will benefit from financial stability, resulting from Government workers continuing to contribute to generated revenue, which keeps the economies of all shires and municipalities alive.

State Transit Newsflash

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Rebel Worker: What's the latest with the union?

Waverley Busie: In the last week of July we voted for a 2 1/2 % pa rise back dated to mid June, to allow further negotiations on the Enterprise Agreement. The union officials are encouraging us to have our union dues deducted from our bank accounts to avoid the STA under pressure from the O'Farrell Govt., abolishing pay roll deduction of our union dues. As a result, we would become un-financial. I encourage everyone to do it. Latest news is that the bosses are using the excuse that the new enterprise agreement hasn't been finalised, to stop us from applying for our holidays.

RW: What's the latest developments with the bosses' attacks?

WB: Some of the most draconian is the decision of the bosses to change the STA policy regarding accidents. Under the previous policy, if you had 4 accidents, you were sent to be retrained and then returned to your normal work. Now if you have three 3 accidents, even if the accidents are not your fault, there is a possibility that you can be sacked. A sort of three strikes and you can be out if the bosses don't like you for some reason! What are the full details? We haven't officially been told. Whilst I recently saw on the notice board, a message that drivers should beware that if they don't display their DOT Cards in their buses, they could face \$750 fines. By these initiatives, the bosses are definitely trying to create a climate of fear on the job.

Another management initiative is the introduction of rotating block rosters for those on the scrap heap, cleaners, refuelers and shed drivers. You can swop a roster, but you have to take the initiative. Are these new rosters designed to reduce overtime, as a further corner cutting measure? I was recently speaking to a refueler who was upset with the changes to the rosters.



Like the refueler, many have been on the same roster for many years and now, the bosses have changed it, in the interests of penny pinching and making changes to

suit themselves. Whilst the worker is inconvenienced. Another major attack by the STA is large cuts to utility middle management jobs in depots. The work performed by such positions is important for the buses to function effectively and avoiding disputes over such issues as getting holidays. The STA with its penny pinching is stealing money from our pockets to make themselves look good in the eyes of the NSW Govt. The STA is stealing money from our hard earned cash. It's ours! Not the STA's! Not the Govt's! Not the people of NSW! It belongs to us!

RW: How are the bus services?

WB: The bosses are proceeding to trim back services on many routes. I was surprised to find that the 324 service in the Watson's Bay area, which is one of the most important runs, is roughly one every 30 minutes in the off peak. Another route targeted is the 400 from Burwood to Bondi Junction. Recently I was at a bus stop in a south western suburb, where there were many people waiting for a 400 to make connections. When it failed to turn up as per the timetable, a lady mentioned to me a similar experience she had recently, where due to heavy rain the bus was delayed in turning up and there was no replacement bus run. Many of the passengers were angry about the poor service and decided to catch cabs to meet their flights at the airport. Passengers deserve a better, reliable and consistent service. Especially on big runs like the 400 which covers a long distance and links to the airport, when a bus on the run breaks down and the driver calls in, it needs to be quickly replaced.

I have also noticed a lot of unswept buses at Waverley Depot. Despite the number of buses in the fleet increasing, the number of cleaners remains the same. Definitely, the cleaners are being put under pressure to sweep the buses quicker. In raising this issue I am not against the worker. However it shows a pattern of STA squeezing more productivity from us via a speed up.

RW: What's the latest developments with fare evasion?

WB: It's the STA's responsibility to ensure that people getting on a bus pay for correct tickets. I've noticed many people are getting free rides and get grumpy if they don't get free bus trips. This is fair because the revenue collected from tickets pays for the service. The STA needs to ensure that shop keepers are properly trained so they sell the correct prepaid tickets to passengers. Why doesn't the STA raise revenue through taking a more serious attitude on reducing fare evasion, rather than trying to squeeze savings from us at every opportunity?

RW: How are things at the depot?

WB: Latest news is that "boom gates" have been installed, as part of a security over kill. It's looking like a fortress! The canteen remains closed undermining any social atmosphere. The depot has lost its mojo. How is it that other depots such as Pt. Botany have functioning canteens administered by their institutes? Let's make a canteen across the road in Centennial Park. It would be a beautiful environment! In general the workplace feels dead. Over the years, it's been changed from a great place to work to an empty shell. There is no entertainment allowed. Whilst there are

all manner of prohibitions on activities and bringing family or friends on the premises. All we have now is boring Safety meetings to attend. I have also noticed that the workforce turnover is huge. The bosses are clearly putting out the message "We are in control! We are in control!"

On a positive note I have noticed that aspects of the Transport NSW uniforms which we are being issued has greatly improved in quality. However, the business style shirts are baggy and dull.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the latest with the STA's cost cutting drive?

Leichhardt Busie: The STA bosses are pursuing this efficiency drive to a ludicrous extent. They are trying out any measure to corner cut. In early August, a shed drivers supervisor came to the depot and arbitrarily reduced the number of shed drivers on the night shift from 4 to 1. The number of refuelers remained the same. This caused chaos. As the sole shed driver on the night shift couldn't cope with the massively increased workload and the depot yard became a parking lot, crammed with buses. The depot manager had to urgently intervene to tackle the problem, and reinstated the 3 shed drivers. Subsequently, due to pressure from higher STA management, the depot manager made a "U" Turn and put the reinstated 3 shedies back on driving duties. The cramming of

buses in the yard has been mostly sorted out. As buses are now refuelled throughout the day, rather than until after 6pm following the evening peak.

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Since the last edition of RW our unelected depot delegate resigned. A election was held for a temporary person. The result was declared, but no details were given out for each candidate. Strange result! It looks like the preferred person was declared the winner. A new election will be held soon run by the electoral commission. STA has started to cut costs in the depots. First it was shed drivers, then the maintenance dept. What is next ,drivers? I don't think so. As we are needed to drive buses? Or top heavy management?

The new government seems to have middle management in its sights in the STA. Rumours abound that certain personal are resigned to being displaced. The lucky ones are hoping to secure a different position or if possible go back to driving. They are renewing their DOT card.

Burwood depot has a new clerk, ex-Waverley depot. It has been reported that the person is the partner of a certain union official from Redfern. This person was reported to have campaigned against Raul and company in the last union election. I understand that STA was not allowed to use bias in that election. Has the Waverley delegate had some hand in this move? Or is this person too close to the union and has been transferred to Burwood to negate this connection?

Rastus & Roscoe: A few of our drivers went to his farewell. It makes us sick that he resigned and that our esteemed Dr. Dolittle is now working in training and compliance.

RW: In the previous issue, mention was made that the catering manager who was on stress leave, and would not return until the manager was removed.

Sheona: Guess what happened? Two weeks after the manager departed, the catering manager returned to work.

Clarence: Yes, he returned as if nothing happened. In the last issue of Sparks, a question was asked if this person was pulling a rort. Yes, we think he was. You see there is a rumour floating around, that he went on an overseas trip. I wonder if he is after a termination benefit.

RW: What of the other individual?

Rastus: A week after the manager resigned a number of our drivers were doing a training course opposite the station sign on area at Spencer Street. The drivers saw

Victorian Rail News

In the last issue of RW, mention was made about the removal of a manager at Spencer Street. In this issue Drivers, Conductors, Station Staff and Staff from Head Office have combined to talk of the aftermath to the manager's removal. Once again names have been changed.

RW: Has the manager's position been filled?

Sheona: Yes it has. Contrary to the last issue the job was advertised and it has been filled internally.

Clarence: Yes it has been filled but informed sources have told us that the position is on a lower salary than what the last manager was paid.

RW: I have been informed that the rank and file workers at Spencer Street arranged a farewell for the manager.

Jethro: Yes they did and the petition that was taken up in support if the former manager was presented to him. Also a fair number of female workers turned up to show support. Surprisingly only one salaried officer turned up. The rest stayed away.

Clarence: Yes. What a gutless bunch.

Jethro: The manager ended up resigning because the other managers had stabbed him in the back and even if he had kept his job, they would have found another excuse to sack him. As I said in the previous issue, the sexual harassment charges were trumped up. The manager has since obtained another job with another train operating company.

this individual walking around grinning like a Cheshire Cat. One of the Station Staff yelled at this person, "Your day of reckoning is Coming".

Roscoe: This person got on a train gloating about what happened and when they went in the front driver's cab of the railmotor, the driver told the person to get out of the cab.

Rastus: This person like to dob in drivers for having people in the front cab, yet they wanted to travel in the cab.

Jethro: This person is two faced.

Roscoe: You can say that again.

Clarence: After the manager resigned a message was carved into the notice board in the meal room saying what the RANK & FILE thought about this CRETIN.

RW: The message should have been placed on the board, not carved.

Jethro: The message should not have been carved into the board but RANK & FILE members were upset over what happened.

RW: What happened?

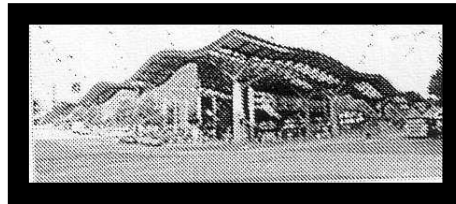
Jethro: The board was removed from the meal room and management started giving a number of conductors and station staff the THIRD DEGREE.

Clarence: Yes, you see a number of conductors were contacted and told to attend an interview. These people did not know why they were being interviewed. When they fronted the interview, they were interviewed by the Manager of V/Line security

plus a goon from Human Resources. They gave these people the THIRD DEGREE. They were distressed and one of the Conductors told the Union who put a stop to these interviews.

Sheona: You see Human Resources wanted to interview all of the employees who were on duty at the time the message was carved on the board and they promised to fire the culprits.

Rastus & Roscoe: Drivers use this meal room between trains particularly Country Depots. A number of Drivers were to be



interviewed, but the Drivers said they would not attend.

Clarence: What a waste of time.

Jethro: In the last issue it was stated that management was using this cretin to get rid of the manager and once the manager was removed, then this cretin would be fired.

Rastus: Well it has happened. We Drivers have heard this individual has been stood down pending an enquiry on their attitude to work.

Sheona: Yes! It has happened!

Clarence: As this issue of Sparks it to go to press this person is suspended. This person has been given a number of days to reply to the charges. They are using passenger complaints as the issue.

Rastus & Roscoe: As we have said in the previous issue "What goes around. Comes around." This individual maybe an academic, but when it comes to common sense they have none.

Jethro: This individual was warned by other people not to report the manager, but did not listen. Now this individual is to be fired.

RW: Yes these managers down at Spence Street used this person to get rid of the manager and now they are going to get rid of this person. "The Wheel Turns."

Rastus & Roscoe: In having the final say, most our drivers hate this individual. Not only V/Line Drivers, but Drivers at Metro Trains and Pacific National. As for V/Line Security attempting to interview employees over who carved the message on the notice board. FORGET IT. Concentrate on real security issues such as assaults on Drivers and Conductors. Finally once again we tell all V/Line employees don't turn up, if you are to front Human Resources.

N.S.W. FIRE BRIGADE UNION: ILLUSION & REALITY

To many people in Sydney, the New South Wales Fire Brigade Employees Union (FBEU) may look like a well-organized, militant and progressive trade union. The reality for the states paid firefighters is something completely different. With wages cut, mass sackings, brigades permanently closed and a new secretive internal investigation unit running a union busting agenda - the experience for firefighters under Jim Casey's term of office has been an unmitigated disaster. In just two years the FBEU has gone from winning the best pay rise in the public sector to cutting deals far worse than any now on offer to NSW public servants.

Kicked out of his Trotskyist political party after nearly twenty years. Jim Casey was elected to office with his entire team on a platform built around improving the relationship between management and the union. While the union certainly has become

more conciliatory to management, management has at the same time turned up the heat on the union and is now aggressively cutting costs, restructuring and outsourcing. The former director of HR for Qantas (a notoriously aggressive change agent) has been employed and piece by piece an entirely new management system designed to drive down costs and pit member against member is being carefully constructed with little or no resistance.

How did this happen?

After applying to join the fire brigades like everyone else some ten years ago, Jim wasn't able to make the grade. Instead he applied for and was recruited to the Australian Capital Territory fire brigades based in Canberra. After a number of years commuting, Jim approached the union secretary in Sydney and was eventually al-

lowed in through the backdoor when the secretary at the time called in favours and had his mate employed without having to meet the same standards as everyone else. Jim laid low for a while then in 2006 nominated himself on the team of an incumbent seeking re-election. When he realized how on the nose the incumbents were he switched camps mid campaign and was subsequently elected as a vice president sitting on the union's executive.

Over the following three years new workplace delegates were democratically elected in over 75% of all fire brigades. The union's quarterly journal was reintroduced, minutes of all meetings were published and delegates were regularly updated on union campaigns. Three additional organisers were employed, Unions NSW was brought in to train delegates and delegations of local firefighters were sent in to lobby most of the 94 local Members of Parliament. The number of firefighters attending meetings increased dramatically and management was forced into reacting to the union's agenda as the Minister demanded answers from the fire brigades Commissioner on a regular basis.

The union had seized the agenda and was constantly pitching up campaigns for better fire engines and equipment, more training, less toxic foam and a host of other important issues - management was chasing its tail reacting to the union's agenda. Firefighters were actively involved in, engaged with and running the union. Instead of just 20 elected officials and employees thinking up ways to screw the boss, 6000 firefighters were pitching up creative tactical ways to make management's job unworkable and maximized industrial muscle on the job.

The plan to get Jim Casey elected secretary was as much run from inside the union as it was through meeting firefighters. The man, who had pressured management to get Jim in through the back door, had been employed as an industrial officer as part of a political deal when he resigned as secretary of the union. With Jim now an elected official, the industrial officer called a strike of union staff in early 2007 claiming an 8% pay rise over and above firefighters rates. All staff walked off the job allowing Jim to present himself as a mediator and the previous union secretary to present himself as a solid unionist. In the months before the 2009 election the same industrial officer again called a strike in an effort to sabotage the democratically elected leadership. Unable to get the support of more than one other union employee, the two then walked off on sick leave and called fire brigade bosses to ensure management would take advantage of the union whilst it had no industrial staff.

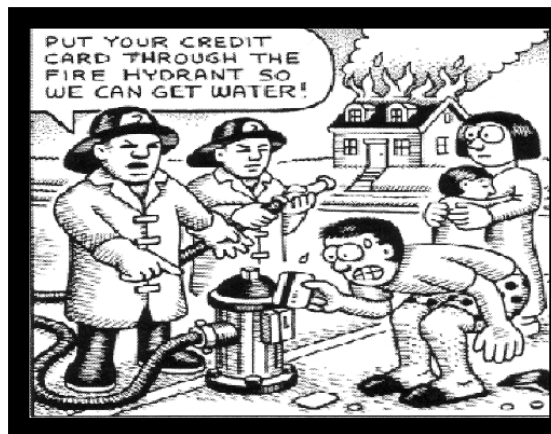
Jim was subsequently elected secretary of the FBEU with a union in good shape, 100% union density among full time firefighters and close to 75% density among part time country based firefighters. The Union had \$2 million in the bank and a state of the art building in Surrey Hills complete with a meeting hall. It had a Marxist leadership and most importantly an active and militant delegate structure. The union had adopted an organizing model and was moving from a Stalinist command and control model to one of workers control.

So what went wrong?

Before being elected secretary Jim had written an article for the union's journal condemning a decision of the labour courts to award firefighters a 12.6% increase in wages over 3 years. This decision then set a precedent for all other public servants. The Minister and former Trotskyist Michael Costa had earlier threatened to shut down the NSW Industrial Relations Commission if the courts awarded any public servant more than the 2.5% increase government had offered. Having

stared down a threat to close the oldest labour court in the world, the judges didn't take it very well when Jim Casey accused them of hypocrisy and indifference to the needs of FBEU members.

Within weeks of being elected Casey was summonsed by the most senior judges of the labour courts and informed of their displeasure at his contempt for their decision. He was told he had 14 days to recant or he could be thrown in the slammer for up to five years. Clearly afraid that he might have to share the love in a cage full of big angry men Casey had a barrister draft a letter claiming he no longer held those views and that he wouldn't dare to write such things about a decision of the courts again. At his first test Jim had gone to water and from that point on the courts knew they only had to growl and Jim would run with his tail between his legs. Sadly Jim was unable to translate his theories about Marxism into reality.



All this occurred in Jim's first couple of months in office. Management was well aware that he had backed down when he should have stood his ground and immediately moved to drag every dispute possible into the courts and have the union slapped hard on each occasion. The tables had turned and for the first time in nearly 20 years management was on the front foot and the union was playing catch up. Jim then started to react to circumstances as they were thrown at him. He tripled the number of industrial officers the union employed and got rid of half the organisers. This created more problems in managing nine quasi lawyers at the very time that delegates were missing out on the work organisers had been doing. Delegates started resigning, as industrial officers were cutting deals with management and undermining fire station delegates.

As management tightened the noose the union moved to placate members by organizing lavish piss ups, kitsch new t-shirts and with great fanfare announced it was designing a medal for anyone who had been a member of the union for more than 20 years. Beads and trinkets were rolled out

to distract members, as fire brigades were shut, promotional systems unwound and front line trucks privatized. Desperate to look strong Casey then nominated himself for the national secretaries position. Sledging and vilifying the incumbent he was overwhelmingly rejected when just one delegate to the national conference backed the NSW delegates to support him. The vilification was then stepped up again and Casey accused the nation secretary of corruption in the national media.

Unwilling to stand up to management Casey had led the FBEU into a fight with the national union. Firefighters were told they should resign and that the money saved would be used to run a parallel union from the Surry Hill offices. Within just 18 months Casey had split the national union and locked the FBEU into a very expensive and protracted dispute in the courts. This couldn't come at a worse time for firefighters in NSW as the national union is now benefitting from the election to office of Adam Bandt (the national union's former in-house counsel). Bandt now holds the balance of power in the national Parliament.

With the union leadership now bouncing from crisis to crisis and management dictating the agenda Casey needed to lock down conditions of employment covered by the firefighters collective agreement before a new conservative government was elected in March 2011. To do this he approached the incumbent government cap in hand asking for a 3 X 2.5% wage deal. The very policy the FBEU had managed to break in the previous wage round. Only this time Casey agreed to accept secondhand uniforms, tougher court martial procedures and training whilst on the job. Knowing that firefighters wouldn't accept such a crap deal if they had time to think about it, he called a series of meetings all within minutes of each other only releasing the 2.5% proposal at the start of the meetings. The 2.5% was voted in by the narrowest of margins, again splitting the union 49% to 51%.

Just weeks after a new government was elected with 70 of the 94 seats in Parliament a new wages policy was announced granting increases of 2.5% for no trade off's but allowing government to crack open collective agreements and reduce or remove conditions. Jim Casey had negotiated a wage deal worse than an offer to any union and by rolling over early had shown it was a weak target and could be used by government to deny other unions more than 2.5%. The FBEU had effectively undermined every other public sector union, screwed its own members and was now clearly a weak link government would be targeting.

Management of the fire brigades couldn't believe their luck, they had been handed a golden goose and were only just starting to pluck it. Secret investigations of anonymous allegations were instigated and firefighters were denied basic procedural fairness as they were investigated but not informed of the allegations laid against them. Individuals were singled out and sacked despite compelling evidence that should have seen a competent court reinstate them. Management was now on a roll and it pushed its hand by throwing all sorts of things at the union.

The HR director has now laid down a very clear strategy to drive change throughout the state's fire brigades. Business managers were appointed to each of the 20 zones throughout the state, set an agenda to compete against each other in an effort to drive down costs line item by line item. A new software system was purchased which is built to allow the development of a case management system for everyone of the

6000 firefighters employed. A 'Stasi' filing system linking operational, health and safety and disciplinary records. Most ominously this system boasts of its capacity to archive complaints and allegations (including anonymous ones) made against union members.

With the new Stasi filing system in place management has moved to introduce a new 'Alcohol and Other Drugs' policy. This policy uses both random and targeted testing. It comes with an anonymous 'dob your mate in' line and once an anonymous complaint has been filed union members can be targeted for the presence of any alcohol or drug used over the preceding 4 weeks for up to two years. With no evidence of an alcohol or drug problem in the industry, this policy is clearly designed to pit member against member and ensure that union activists keep their mouths shut and their heads down for fear of an anonymous complaint which will stay on the Stasi file for years into the future.

In order to distract firefighters from the Alcohol and Other Drugs policy and its capacity to seriously divide union members, management has commenced a campaign of mass sackings. Dozens of sick and injured firefighters on long-term non-operational jobs were sent letters notifying them that they had been sacked and that while their service was appreciated but they were no longer required. Rather than calling mass meetings and stop work action to get the media focused on the heartless actions of the state government, the union listed the matter in the labour courts. It really doesn't get much more serious than mass sackings, even if the sackings are being used to distract the union from the more insidious and structural attacks on the unity of a workforce which once stood its ground.

By Concerned Firey

Grassroots Organising and the Public Sector Unions in NSW

As expected the O'Farrell Government has wasted little time since its election in March moving against workers' rights in the public sector. New laws passed with upper house support from the Shooters and the Christian Democrats strip the state industrial court of its powers to arbitrate in pay disputes. New policies also tighten previous Labor requirements for public sector pay rises above 2.5% p.a. to be funded via offsets such as cuts in jobs and conditions.

An enthusiastic crowd of at least 30,000 workers rallied in the Domain on 8 September and showed what public sector workers think of O'Farrell's new IR regime. This rally built on the 12,000 workers who protested in the rain outside state parliament on Wednesday, 15 June.

To date the campaign from the leadership of the union movement has focused on the loss of powers of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission which they refer to as the "independent umpire", but the idea that the court system is independent is a myth. Trade unionists have always understood that they are the bosses' courts and any legal victory for workers is merely formal recognition of what has been forced on the employer by our industrial strength. It is an old adage that what you can't win on the ground, you won't win in the courts.

Instead of a primarily political campaign that seeks simply to restore the power of the court system to mediate disputes and return to the way things were under Labor, unions should focus on an industrial campaign to fight directly for better pay and



conditions by mobilising the collective power of the membership. It is only through our collective industrial power that workers have ever won anything from employers.

By taking state-wide strike action on 8 September teachers wisely ignored the predictable threat of fines and showed a glimpse of the power that resides in the hands of workers acting in unison.

NSW public sector unions should plan now for a common expiry date for future agreements across the public sector so that in future unions can unite and the strength

of all public sector workers is used to bargain collectively for a common pay rise. This method of 'pattern bargaining' has been employed successfully by strong industrial unions (CFMEU, AMWU) in the private sector for some time and has recently been taken up by the federal public sector union, the CPSU. Currently each union is left to fight largely on its own when negotiating a new agreement which strengthens the hand of the Government and is a key reason why no union going one out has so far managed to break the 2.5% wage cap without making trade-offs.

Organisation

The recent emergence of some independent grassroots industrial organising has raised the possibility of a workers' led revival of the union movement by posing a challenge to the usual bureaucratic, top-down controlled union campaigning that favours the petitioning and lobbying of MPs.

Several cross-union rank and file meetings have recently attracted 40-50 people to discuss plans for actions that involve and engage with rank and file union members. One group involved in these meetings is Power to the People (PtP). Originally formed to fight the privatisation of electricity in NSW, PtP has started meeting again to organise around the public sector campaign. In conjunction with the NSW Union Activists network both groups worked together to organise a successful Public Sector Symposium at the

MUA office on 16 July and a follow up planning meeting on 27 August that brought together rank and file workers from across the union movement.

One of the speakers at the 16 July symposium was Tony Clear. Standing as an independent candidate in the RTBU elections in early 2011 Clear was elected with the support of Members Voice as NSW RTBU President. At the meeting, after explaining to the assembled audience that he is required by the other members of the RTBU leadership to state that he does not officially speak on behalf of the RTBU, Clear talked of the need to stand up to the employer by utilising the industrial power of the membership. Clear pointed out that union leaders are often reluctant to take industrial action lest they incur the wrath of the courts and risk large fines. By contrast Clear boldly stated that unions must maintain the capacity to strike and that he would be prepared to go to jail to defend workers rights if it came to that. Few union leaders are prepared to make such a stand today and through his fighting words Clear amply demonstrated himself to be a friend of workers on the job.

Neo-Liberalism

Since the 1970s the dominant ideology of neo-liberalism, a form of extreme “free market” capitalism, has sought to demonise and attack the public sector and push for privatisation, lay-offs and cuts to social spending. The major parties, despite superficial differences, have shared the same agenda in this regard. Once proud of demonising the public sector, politicians have modified their rhetoric in recent years, fearful of the backlash from a public that actually wants a functioning social infrastructure and does not like to see work-

ers sacked en masse. Opinion polls around the world show that a large majority consistently opposes privatisation, lay-offs and cuts to social spending.

Howard’s defeat in 2007 was due in significant measure to the widespread perception of him ‘going too far in attacking workers’ rights with his WorkChoices legislation. Earlier that year NSW Liberal leader Peter Debnam came unstuck after threatening to sack 29,000 public sector workers in the lead up to the state election. For their part Labor planned to cut 10,000 public sector jobs but the unions bargained them down to 5,000 job cuts and considered it a victory. Following Labor’s re-election in 2007 those jobs were quickly eliminated. Similarly, in the recent state budget the O’Farrell Government has foreshadowed the loss of 5,000 – 10,000 jobs.

Overseas massive social upheaval provoked by increasingly intense austerity measures continues to convulse the world’s markets as the capitalist system lurches from one crisis to another.

Until now Australia has been spared most of these painful convulsions but in a globally integrated economic system this is unlikely to last. Australian share markets have exhibited the same volatility that we see overseas while growth has slowed and unemployment is starting to rise.

The NSW Government is the biggest employer in the country and this battle is being watched closely by capitalists at home and abroad. If successful these changes will establish a pattern for ongoing attacks on workers by employers across the workforce and are a likely precursor to the kind of austerity measures that have sparked upheaval in Europe and elsewhere.

Democracy

The day after the 12,000 strong rally on June 15, in response to simultaneous riots and a general strike in Greece, a headline in the Sydney Morning Herald read “Markets gripped by fear” which commented that “investors get spooked when they see headlines, photos and footage of tens of thousands of protestors standing up to the painful austerity measures that have been imposed on Greece” as \$25b was wiped from the Australian stock market in a “horror day” of trading.

Taxpayer funded bailouts of banks and financial institutions measured in the trillions means this enormous cost has been shifted to governments; in effect we are expected to pick up the tab for the profligate spending of global corporations. But as the growing upheaval shows, with millions of workers on strike, rioting and fighting back, We will not pay and We are the crisis are more than just slogans. The whole global economic/political system is being challenged and with good reason – it is clear to many that the insatiable greed of the corporate elite has imposed an unbearable economic burden on the people.

Democratic alternatives that involve mass popular control of the economy are once again gaining interest among workers weary of the ravages of social war and systemic collapse. It remains to be seen whether the increased level of organising at the base level in unions will continue to grow sufficiently to help build a new movement for mass democracy and workers’ control in Australia but the early signs are very encouraging.

by Max Stirner

BRITAIN TODAY

Teachers Win Reinstatement of East London Militant

Last month teachers at Cardinal Pole school won the reinstatement of union representative Peter Domokos, after threatening strike action. Peter was involved in an ongoing investigation into serious charges against the Hackney school’s management, when that same management ordered his suspension. According to Hackney NUT (National Union of Teachers), previous reps at the school had complained of being ‘bullied and harassed by management’: clearly the bosses at Cardinal Pole were up to their old tricks.

Workers at the school responded with an overwhelming strike ballot, with nearly 90% of members voting for ‘sustained and discontinuous action’ to protest against this victimization. This followed a vote of no-confidence in the school’s head from over 50 members of staff. The vote was swept under the carpet and barred from discussion at a governors meeting. But while management ignored the vote, they couldn’t ignore the threat of strike action. Three days before the planned strike they caved in, agreeing to reinstate Peter with an ‘oral warning’ and that no further disciplinary action would be taken. The school also agreed to a series of meetings with the NUT in an attempt to appease the teachers’ other grievances.

Southampton Strikes Back

Last month workers in Southampton carried out a week of targeted strike action against brutal cuts imposed by the local council. The strikes follow months of anti-cuts action by locals, but the immediate cause of the dispute was the council’s demand for workers to take a pay cut and accept hundreds of job losses. When these demands were rejected by the workers’ unions, the council announced that the entire workforce was sacked - saying that any worker who refused to sign the new contracts the council had drawn up would lose their job. At the same time, a leaked document showed that 1200 workers, a

quarter of the workforce, would be laid off over the next few years anyway. The response from said workforce was, unsurprisingly, furious.

Workers from across the public sector in Southampton took part in the strikes, which were planned to cause maximum disruption to the running of local government. Those stopping work included bin men, health inspectors, parking wardens, street sweepers, childcare workers, library workers and social care workers among others. A protest march through the town attracted hundreds of workers, ending by protesting outside the local guildhall during a meeting of the council. Despite significant disruption to the life of the town, including festering piles of rubbish in the streets, most workers reported that support from locals remained strong.

While most of Southampton's workers have had to sign the new contracts, under protest, there are still groups of workers who have not who now face the prospect of lockouts, and the struggle isn't over yet. Unite and Unison, two unions associated with the week of action, say they are pursuing legal action on the grounds of unfair dismissal of council staff. As we go to press, a one day strike by social workers has been extended to a full seven days, continuing into the beginning of August, to coincide with strikes by workers in other sectors including adoption, fostering and childcare over the next few days.

Thanks to "Resistance Bulletin"

Electricians Olympics Site Protest

18/09/2011

Casualisation

Today at the Shard site near London Bridge, around 200 site electricians protested against an attack by employers on their pay and conditions. The "Big Eight" of construction employers want to withdraw from the JIB (Joint Industry Board) agreement on pay, grading and seniority. They want to bring in new grades of semi skilled electricians earning £10.50 and £14 an hour instead of the current hourly JIB rate of £16.25. It would also get rid of seniority, making it easier for employers to pick and choose who works on site. As the recession has affected the building industry especially badly, the employers think this is a good time to take on the electricians, who are one of the strongest groups of workers in the building industry. If they win then they will attack pay and conditions across the board in construction.

Site workers spoke to us about bad conditions in the industry, accidents and long hours, and the agencies who often take about £4,000 a year from their pay. We talked to people who had been blacklisted and sacked. The industry is notoriously hard to organise in, and there are a lot of internal divisions and high turnover. The atmosphere was tense but positive, and after standing on the pavement for a while people blocked the access road to the site and turned back vehicles. The protesters didn't try and stop people going in to work, as they are not on strike yet, but crowded around the gate talking to people and handing out information. Most people took leaflets and looked interested.

The first organising meeting, a rank and file meeting, had 500 people attend and elected an organising committee. In the last few weeks there have been protests at Blackfriars and the Westfield site in Stratford, and other sites around England.



The next protest in London will be Wednesday September 14th at 7am at the Olympic site, Pudding Hill Lane DLR station. This is a huge site with the most electricians in the whole of London. People on the rally asked for as many supporters as possible to come to boost morale.

IWW workers win big concessions after wildcat strike

19/09/2011

Poorly paid cleaners working at the prestigious Guildhall, home of the City of London Corporation, have won a major victory against their bosses, the sub-contractor Ocean Contract Cleaning Ltd, in an ongoing dispute over pay and working conditions. — The cleaners who are all members of the radical union Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) took direct action on 15th July refusing to go into work, instead held a demonstration outside the building in the early morning, as a result not only did the company agree to pay all withheld back pay but have opened up collective bargain negotiations

with the IWW. Previously the workers raised a collective grievance with Ocean Contract Cleaning to review the salaries for the past six months. The company duly ignored the request and refused to participate in any collective bargaining process. As a result in June 34 cleaners employed by Ocean took two days of industrial action as many workers had failed to receive wages over the last three months. The company promised to pay the overdue wages by the 20th of June and so the dispute was suspended. However when the cleaners received their last pay packets, the company failed to keep their promises which resulted in the cleaners calling a new strike day for 15th July with a picket outside London Guildhall.

On the day itself 21 out of the 35 cleaning workforce were on strike arriving at 5.30am to picket outside their workplace. They were joined by cleaners from other sites, Colombian solidarity campaign, students and workers from University College London and SOAS, members of other unions including Unison and RMT as well as London IWW members. It was a lively event with workers shouting slogans, in Spanish and English, including "No pay, no work" and even the local priest turning up with offers of coffee and use of the church toilet to the strikers and their supporters.

After 8am two workers and two IWW union representatives were invited by the Guildhall management to negotiate inside with Ocean representatives eventually coming to a

settlement after several hours with Ocean giving assurances about the unpaid wages. According to the IWW the best thing about this protest was the determination and unity of the workers – despite intimidation from managers they remained solid throughout.

The cleaners of Guildhall are on incredibly low pay rates, £5.95 per hour, whilst working in one of the most expensive cities in Europe and receiving no sick pay or pension. According to the London Living Wage Unit this is officially poverty pay as the London Living Wage has been set at £8.30. Alberto Durango, spokesperson for the cleaners said: "This is just the beginning of this struggle. The workers, currently paid the minimum wage, are determined to go on to fight for the living wage. Thanks to all who supported us, both at the protest and with solidarity messages".

Thanks to Libcom

Post-Ramadan strike wave hits Egypt

by Khawaga Sep 30 2011

The first two weeks of September have witnessed a massive wave of strikes, with many more planned for the rest of the month. These are taking place despite the law - issued in April - criminalizing strikes which harm the national economy, and despite regulations issued by the ruling military junta making negotiations during the course of strikes unacceptable.

Hundreds of thousands of workers and employees have launched strikes, sit-ins and marches to protest their working conditions. Among these are public school teachers - who are planning a general strike on the new academic year's first day of classes, 17 September; workers at private and public-sector textile mills; security and custodial workers at the American University in Cairo; farmers; and nurses and doctors in eight different governorates.

These strike actions come against a political backdrop that once seemed encouraging to Egypt's 27-million labor force. Shortly after President Hosni Mubarak's resignation in 11 February, over 500,000 workers, professionals, farmers, employees and pensioners moved to establish their own independent trade unions and federations to provide a bargaining mechanism for workers long deprived of negotiating with both the state and the business community.

These independent unions are reportedly playing a significant role in organizing protest actions and strikes nationwide. Yet the recent resurgence of widespread strikes, analysts say, reflect a deep disillusionment with the democratic transition process, with workers feeling more and more that improving their economic and political conditions were but hollow promises from the revolution. "The primary demand behind all the strikes - in the public, private and informal sectors - is improved incomes in line with increasing living expenses," said Karam Saber, director of the Land Center for Human Rights. Other common demands include the payment of overdue bonuses, incentive payments, fixed or full-time contracts for full-time work, among other demands. "The interim authorities have made very little progress in terms of raising wages, incomes and salaries; or in terms of putting a cap on the salaries of managerial offi-

cials in the form of a maximum wage," Saber said. According to Saber Barakat, a member of the caretaker council at the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, there are other reasons motivating the working class to protest and strike. One of the main factors causing dismay is the fact that Mubarak's officials and generals are still calling the shots and pulling Egypt's strings. The old guard is still in power. "The revolution gave workers the impression that their conditions would improve;



but reality has proven otherwise," said Barakat.

"The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has sent signals to investors reassuring them that their interests will be protected and upheld." In April, the SCAF and the interim cabinet issued a law outlawing strikes, and they have failed to issue a new trade union law to replace the old and restrictive 1976 law which places severe bureaucratic hurdles on independent labor organization. Furthermore, these authorities have insisted they will not engage in negotiations with strikers until they stop striking or protesting. Egyptian laborers' grievances are countless, and the fruits of the 18-day revolution that raised the slogans of freedom and social justice are yet to be reaped. The interim cabinet has been procrastinating over implementing an LE700 minimum wage.

On Wednesday, Finance Minister Hazem al-Beblawy said that the government will implement it in January 2012, six months later than originally announced. Some 700 textile workers at the Indorama Shebin

al-Kom Textile Company - which was privatized in 2007 - went on strike this week, and around 400 of them blocked highways, roads and even occupied the Munifiya Governorate headquarters on Monday to demand the re-nationalization of their company, as well as improved working conditions and wages. In the Nile Delta governorate of Gharbiya, over 1000 workers went on strike at the Wool Production Company in the town of Samannoud on Saturday, and on the same day, over 3000 workers at the Nasr Company for Fabric Dyeing in Mahalla City went on strike.

Both groups of workers were demanding the payment of overdue bonuses, along with increased incentive payments. Elsewhere in Mahalla City, over 20,000 workers at the Misr Company for Spinning and

Weaving threatened to launch an open-ended strike this past week. Workers at this massive textile mill (the largest in the Middle East) demand increased bonuses and food allowances. They also demand increased investment in public sector textile enterprises in order to save the industry from collapse. "All of Egypt's workers from Aswan to Alexandria are exploited and under-paid. The interim government and SCAF should set a just and adequate minimum wage, for workers in all sectors of the economy, which is in keeping with rising living expenses," said Mohamed al-Attar, a veteran labor activist at Misr Company for Spinning and Weaving. "Workers are tired of empty promises. Workers gave the authorities seven months to address these common grievances and have seen little to nothing in terms of actual reforms. We are reaching boiling point. On Thursday, Minister of Manpower and Immigration Ahmed Hassan al-Borai said that labor unions' elections will be postponed till after the parliamentary elections slated for Novem-

ber, yet another blow to the aspirations of independent labor organizations which have been trying to legally consolidate their emerging structures.

"The interim authorities are treating workers and the general populace just as

Mubarak did. If they do not change their course then another popular revolt may break out," Attar said. By Jano Charbel. *Originally from Al-Masry al-Youm.*

U.S.A. - SABOTAGE AT EGT GRAIN TERMINAL

In a dispute over the new EGT Grain Terminal in Longview, Washington and management's refusal to recognize the International Longshore and Warehouse Union as the workers' representative, union militants attacked the facility to sabotage the facility's first shipment of grain, protesting in defiance of a court injunction.

EGT Confrontation

8 September 2011

After yesterday's confrontation at the EGT Grain Terminal, where 19 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union were arrested, another demonstration is developing this morning, with an estimated 1,000 local union members descending on the facility, starting at about 4:40 am. Around 400 were involved in yesterday's demonstration on the railroad tracks, starting about 3:30 pm.

Protesting union members blocked the tracks and squared off against about 40 law enforcement officers equipped in tactical helmets, with some carrying bean-bag shotguns and pepper-ball guns. Three were arrested in the original confrontation, then a standoff of about an hour took place. At about 4:35 pm, the 107-car train backed up about 200 yards, to the

cheers of the crowd. At that time, ILWU National President Robert McEllrath told the crowd that it was time to back off, to "live to fight another day."

McEllrath emphasizes that this fight is not against Burlington Northern/Santa Fe and their union workers, it's against a multina-



tional corporation that trying to take union jobs.....Most of the crowd left after McEllrath's speech, with just a few lingering on the tracks. Around 7 pm, they started moving the train again, and 16 were arrested at that time. All are being charged with second-degree trespassing.

This morning, the protestors actually entered the plant site, storming the security guards at the facility. None of those people were attacked or injured, but they report

that the protestors took a Columbia Security vehicle, then drove it into a ditch. Windows were also broken out on the guard shack. Speaking with local law enforcement from a hiding place in the plant, the security guards reported that the protestors went in and cut hoses on the train that had entered the facility. After doing that damage, those involved in the confrontation quickly left, while law enforcement resources were staging nearby. Shortly after 6 am, law enforcement set up a perimeter around the plant, planning to arrest all remaining protestors on the property.

At this point, it's not known how many will be facing charges. Officers entering the property around 6:30 am reported finding that a gate had been torn down, and that hoppers had been opened on at least 100 grain cars, spilling their contents. Union officials are expected to be in Federal court in Tacoma this afternoon, as a hearing is held regarding the Temporary Restraining Order issued against the ILWU last week.

At that time, Judge Ronald Leighton was extremely adamant that the union not engage in picket line violence, vandalism, or other blocking of ingress and egress to the facility. Yesterday's demonstration and this morning's events would appear to be major violations of those orders. Today's hearing is scheduled for 1:30 pm in Federal court in Tacoma.

From radio station KLOG's website.

SPAIN: FORD VISTEON FIGHT

A successful international campaign took place on August 19th, in solidarity with the workers at the Ford Visteon plant in Cadiz (Spain). The workers are facing the threat of imminent closure of the factory, thus leaving more than 450 people unemployed. Meanwhile, once again, we are reminded how multinationals can do and undo at will and with full impunity, even if it means leaving many families without a

livelihood, as well as greatly affecting both the region and the sector because of the direct and indirect jobs that will be lost.

The plant is being closed in order to the move of production to other regions of the world where labour is cheaper. This is how global capitalism works, favoring multinationals such as Visteon which, having received state support (out of taxpayers' pockets) and having taking advantage of their workers' efforts and

dedication, throw them away as soon as the opportunity to make higher profits elsewhere appears. Once again, the power of multinationals over whole countries is evident as they have the capacity to camp at will, unbothered and almost without any opposition.

This is why we believe that the only way to face them is via international coordination. Through the IWA (the International Workers' Association), the CNT union section in Visteon and counting on the

support received from other countries –we were able, in our small way, to organise an international day to show solidarity with the threatened comrades. We are aware that, in order to stop the severe attacks to work conditions, relocations and aggressive policies coming from multinationals against workers, there is no other possible effective response but international direct action and the IWA has done so with this efficient and tenacious campaign. We are convinced that with history backing us, our solidarity pact between member Sections and our action methods, we will be a fierce opponent to this scourge of capitalist entrepreneurship while it tries to manifest its greatest exponent, multinationals.

All sorts of actions were developed during the campaign, from sending faxes throughout the world and letters to the company sites to spreading the information to every corner in the planet. Solidarity was shown by a number of IWA sections, such as PA (Slovakia), KRAS (Russia), CNTF

(France), USI (Italy), NSF (Norway) and some other organisations like ATA (Mex-



ico), Acción Directa (Peru), MASA (Croatia), ASIR (Romania), ESE (Greece), as well as in a number of coun-

tries which will be mentioned in the long report under preparation. Even as we write this, we are receiving information about actions and support in other places.

Where the IWA has more presence, there were more forceful actions of information pickets and rallies in front of the company centers, undertaken by groups like FAU (Germany), ZSP (Poland), FORA (Argentina), SP (Portugal), SolFed (UK) and, of course, CNT (Spain). Some IWA Sections are carrying out a broader information and action campaign in their regions after the events.

We do not believe these protests went unnoticed by the Ford Visteon board and its subsidiaries and we want to warn that, as the conflict intensifies, we will respond by increasing international action.

International Secretary of the CNT-IWA
* Anarchosindicalist

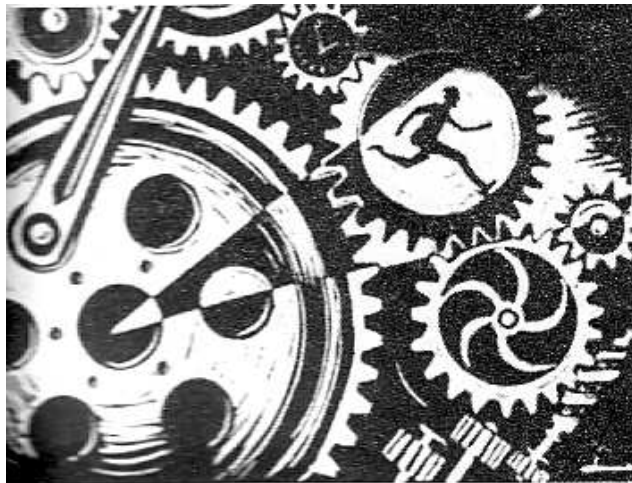
SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR NEWS

SOUTH AFRICA STRIKE SEASON

Hundreds of thousands of South African workers have been taking action over pay as South Africa enters what could be a record breaking 'strike season'. In early July, 170,000 metalworkers walked out and staged large demonstrations in the country's main cities demanding 13% wage increases and a ban on the practice of hiring workers through agency-style labour brokers. The bosses had initially only offered a 7% wage increase, which union members argued was not enough to cover food, electricity, water and petrol prices, but after two weeks of strike action they caved in and signed an agreement granting workers staggered wage increases from 8% to 10% over three years, amongst other concessions.

Whilst the metalworkers were out, they were joined on July 11th by over 70,000 petroleum, chemical and packing workers demanding wage increases of between 11% and 13% with a minimum wage of R6000 (£546) a month. The strikes, combined with panic buying, caused over 1/5th of petrol stations to run dry and many others to run low, with petrol stations in the country's economic

hub particularly affected. Taxi and bus companies were also affected, and with the increased travel promised by the start of school terms the economic pressure on the employers was beginning to mount. After three weeks attempting to weather



the strike they too caved in, and wage increases of between 8.5% and 10% were won - a sizeable increase on what had been offered by the bosses before the strike.

The third major sector of the South African working class to strike has been the

mineworkers, who have downed tools in diamond, coal and gold mines. The average miner earns R3,800 (£346) a month, with diamond, coal and gold companies offering wage increases of 5%, 7-8.5% and 7-9% respectively, despite mine workers arguing they needed increases of at least 11% to keep up with price hikes in food, water, electricity and petrol. In response, diamond mine workers walked out on July 22nd demanding a 15% wage rise, followed by coal and gold miners demanding 14% when they went on strike on the 24th and 28th respectively. The strikes involve tens of thousands of workers from each of the three sectors, and have already shut down all of the countries diamond, coal and gold mines. At the time of writing the strikes are ongoing, although the diamond companies have already upped their wage offer to 7% in response to the workers actions. South African platinum miners have also been in negotiations with their bosses, demanding 20% wage increases.

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Steven Hirsch and Lucien Van Der Walt (eds), *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940 "The Praxis of National Liberation and Social Revolution"*, Foreword by Benedict Anderson

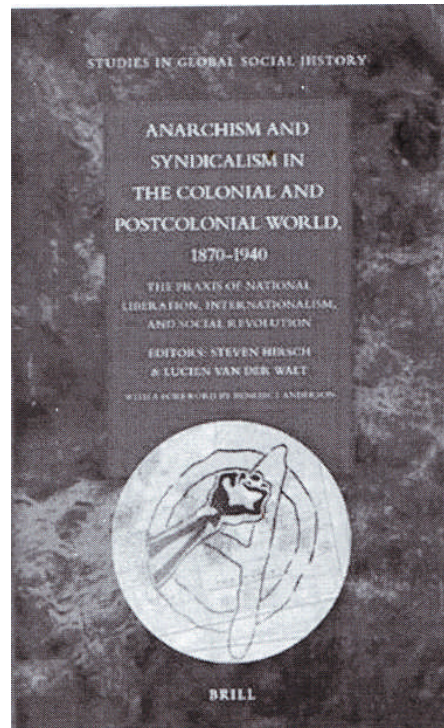
This book attempts a first historical and theoretical approach to detecting anarchist and syndicalist ideas in a range of countries and regions around the world which were under colonial occupation and power between the last decades of the 19th and the almost half of the 20th century. It is a project adopted by the Leiden Publishing House in 2010, initially as an academic work, and in which the authors of the various articles which compose this volume are attempting, in my opinion, a successful in all cases presented, linkage of the development of the anarchist, anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary syndicalist ideas and practices with the question of national liberation, the overthrow of colonial and authoritarian institutions and powers and the establishment of local communities that rely as much as possible to libertarian ideas and practices.

The book is an excellent collection of narratives from the anarchist and syndicalist resistance to globalisation first attempt by the block of authoritarian and imperialist development (1870-1930) and goes beyond the usual Western European tradition, which until now have been hidden or concealed the transnational links between movements of various countries and regions of the planet and the fact that during the first decades of the 20th century, outside the known cases of Western Europe existed big, solid and quite constructive anarchist and syndicalist movements which influenced largely the social, political and economic developments in regions such as Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

In spite of what is believed within extensive circles of the radical left, and even a significant part of the anarchist movement, that anarchism has developed only in Western Europe and North America, this book is a solid proof that anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism appear within the First International and until the first decades of the 20th century been formed and developed as a transnational movements not as characteristics of a single country or a region, isolated from the global political and other developments of their respective times.

Of course, the authors do not deny that anarchism began in Western Europe. But

that was because of capitalism and industrialisation started from there and so was the reaction to them, through the sequential development of liberals and other progressive ideas developed in Marxism and Anarchism, ideological formations that spread around the world associated with local social and other conditions. This is made possible through the migration due to the repression, persecution and even the bad social, political and other conditions. For example, Spanish anarchists emigrated and acted as a catalyst in



the development of anarchist and union movements in a number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Italian anarchists acted decisively in Egypt and Argentina, Chinese and Korean anarchists and radicals had an impact on Japan while various European revolutionary workers settled in South Africa where they also had a catalytic presence.

But focusing on all those neglected, little-known or, for the most part, unknown to English-speaking readership, historical dimensions of the anarchist and trade union movement, the authors of the different chapters of this book attempt to give as relief the transnational, global dimension of these movements and their central role in

local anti-colonisation and anti-imperialist struggles. To accomplish this, the authors are moving to a detailed analysis of ideas, the whole structure and practice of anarchism and syndicalism, also giving us a completely new approach by which we are now in a position to learn how to organize our own movements at present and in the near future.

Note also that in several regions of the world the ideas of class struggle anarchism affected and influenced the ideas of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as the syndicalist ideas of a marxist origin (DeLeon's) and "indigenous" traditions of struggle and anti-colonisation struggle and the libertarian or anti-authoritarian influenced trade union movements that developed in the oppressed nations much more than those in Western Europe.

Through the chapters of the book three major tendencies regarding the issue of national liberation within the larger anarchist movement are appearing.

The first tendency was against national independence by simply considering it useless and meaningless, dominated only by narrow nationalist characteristics and expressed mainly by a significant minority of the Cuban anarchist movement at a time when Cuba was fighting for independence from Spain. Today this trend continues to influence some anarchists from Western Europe and the U.S. and some anti-statist marxist groups.

The second tendency was believing the opposite, adopting nationalistic elements, but by a progressive approach. This tendency saw that nationalism and national liberation are going side by side but in a progressive direction. Mostly Korean and Chinese anarchists were influenced by this tendency, although we can say that such views lead to right-wing and anti-communist views (eg. China).

The third tendency, according to the authors, was the most important and faced the question of national liberation as a real and necessary part of the human liberation. Its devotees thought that one can not fight only for national liberation while ignoring the broader social struggle.

In fact, these three approaches are the three main approaches to any kind of popular struggle of the anarchists, even today. For example, for the unions there are three opinions among anarchists: a) ignore them, b) participate to them as organisers but beyond every political trend, and c) be actively involved through the creation of unions and the adoption of increasingly revolutionary policies of unions. In my

opinion, the third position is the most revolutionary one because it avoids the development of sectarian and opportunist views.

All the chapters that compose this book, show that the anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist movements have developed and implemented ideas and always taking into account the broader colonial context prevailed at the time and in which they acted on specific countries. That is, they did not engage in a sterile and narrow workerist logic and action, but saw and tried to develop the daily syndicalist and revolutionary struggle as an integral part of the broader anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle through and by which they hoped to lay the groundwork for creating a libertarian, egalitarian society.

The book begins with an extensive foreword by academic and professor at Cornell University (U.S.A.) Benedict Anderson (whose most important work is the widely read and translated into several languages "Imagined Communities").

The book is composed of Two Parts, describing the birth and development of the anarchist and trade union movement in the colonial world, and the same movements in post-colonial world, always, as we said, according to the general anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle.

The First Part consists of six comprehensive Chapters, of which the First Chapter deals with the development of anarchist ideas in Egypt during the period 1860-1940 and is written by Anthony Gorman. The Second Chapter describes the relationship between the communist, anarchist and trade ideas in South Africa in the period 1886-1928 and is written by Lucien Van Der Walt. The Third Chapter deals with the anarchist movement in Korea to both national and transnational dimension, and is written by Dongyoun Hwang. The Fourth Chapter sets out aspects of the anarchist movement in China and is written by the most knowledgeable of the subject Arif Dirlik. The Fifth Chapter conversing with the famous anarchist communist Makhnovist movement in Ukraine from 1917 to 1921 and is written by Russian historian Alexandr Shubin, while the Sixth Chapter traces the libertarian approach to the movement of industrial unionism in Ireland and is written by Emmet O'Connor.

The Second Part of the book consists of five Chapters, of which the First Chapter, written by Steven Hirsch, give details of the history of the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Peru during the period 1905-1930. The Second Chapter, written by Kirk Shaffer, converses with the anarchist movement in the Caribbean, Mexico

and southern U.S. States. The Third Chapter, written by Geoffroy de Laforcade, describes the anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist movement within the dockers of Argentina during the period 1900-1930. The Fourth Chapter, co-written by Edilene Toledo and Luigi Biondi, gives a compelling evidence for the multinational anarcho-syndicalist movement in Sao Paulo, Brazil from 1895 to 1935 and, finally, the Fifth Chapter, which is the concluding book, co-written by Steven Hirsch and Lucien Van Der Walt, gives us the vicissitudes of movements in the countries and regions of the world described in the preceding chapters and attempts a summary and an initial conclusions.

As we see, the only Western country the syndicalist movement of which presented here is Ireland. This country was the first British colony in which no specific anarchist movement developed ever, but it had a major trade union movement with developed ideas of radical and revolutionary syndicalism.

The book, which is quite expensive, expected in 2012 (if I'm not mistaken) to be released outside of narrow academic circles.

Dimitri Troaditis
(MACG – personal capacity)

A FEATURE REVIEW by Graham Purchase

Part 1 Anarchism, Anthropology and Asia The Art of Not Being Governed:

An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia

By James Scott

Yale University Press/Orient Black Swan 2009

Continued from Last Edition

Scott's ethnographical survey of the co-evolution of civilization and barbarian self-organization leads him to similar conclusions to those of Kropotkin. The decomposition of aboriginality through secondary re-tribalization or ethnogenesis resulted in a barbarian periphery created in relation and reaction to the rise and expansion of states. Scott and Kropotkin argue that this is a nearly universal (though in no sense inevitable, progressive or irreversible) evolutionary stage or global level anthropological phenomenon in the development of human social dynamics and structure.

In the Philippines the Ifugao were created out of people who escaped Islamic and then Spanish Christian invasions by

fleeing North to the hills (p. 136). In Java the Tengger Highlanders became a new ethnic barbarian tribe in reaction and flight from Islamic and then Dutch colonizers (p. 134). Upon the Malay Peninsular "Islam created the tribals". The forest populations never converted to Islam but supplied the coastal ports of the Maylay state with much of the forest produce upon which it depended:

"The post 1874 notions of Malayness converted these populations virtually overnight into the 'aborigines' they are considered today." (p.111) "Genetic evidence does not support the theory of separate waves of migrating people and the tribes are nothing more than a fraction of the population that has refused the state." (p. 183)

The South East Asian Highlands have similarly been a vast asylum for individuals and peoples from Indic and Chinese Empires. The ethnogenic history of the Miao/Hmong (Montagnards) population that inhabit the S.W. mountain periphery of the Chinese Empire (p. 154) being the longest running and most extensive example of this "routine extrusion of belea-

guered subjects" (p. 142) into the hills. And "far more egalitarian settlements were founded by runaways than by revolutionaries" (p.218).

Scott follows Kropotkin by suggesting that the interaction and co-evolution of Statism and Barbarianism/Ethnicism represents a set of near-universal, discontinuous or distinct secondary social-evolutionary processes/series of events leading to widespread tribal ethnogenesis. This later stage of social evolution can't be confused with prehistoric aboriginal cultures or populations (that are generally approached through archaeology because they had mostly disappeared even in ancient times).

Scott's thesis contributes to a lively contemporary debate in academic anthropology concerning whether groups such as the Australian Aborigines and Sth. African Bushmen can or could ever have been realistically "depicted as a wild Stone Age remnants from the dawn of human history" (p. 394 fn. 61). With respect to the Bushman Scott is unequivocal in his rejection of the primordial remnant or "social fossil" thesis. But Scott makes his assertion upon the basis of a single authority (E.N. Wilmsen) out of the thousands of published academic books and articles concerning the Bushmen. Moreover, *See Page 18*

Ours to Master and to Own: Workers Control from the Commune to the Present Edited by Immanuel Ness & Dario Azzellini Published by Haymarket Books

The worsening international economic/financial crisis has led to ever more savage Government austerity programs, company restructuring, and associated staff cuts and job losses, increased privatisation and factory closures, highlighting ever more the importance of workers' control to tackle this intensified employer offensive.

The publishers of this volume and most contributors come from a Trotskyist party background/affiliation and consequently see some role for the "vanguard party" in facilitating workers' control and the overthrow of the capitalist set up.

The contributors to Part I "Workers' Councils: Historical Overview and Theoretical Debate" fail to clearly differentiate between the two different types of "workers' councils" – political assemblies consisting of instantly recallable and mandated delegates from workplaces and barracks on a regional basis such as the workers and soldiers councils during the German revolution of 1918-19 and the early soviets in Russia during the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, and workers councils engaged in management and co-management in industrial enterprises. The former type of council was formed to organise strikes and later on often became "micro parliamentary" local powers which have called into existence "a central power". Most significantly being the emergence of the Bolshevik ultra centralised state in Russia via a coup in October 1917.

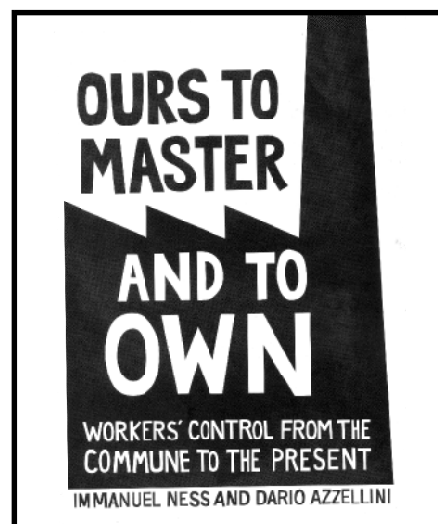
The rest of the book provides a survey of different "workers' control" experiments under State Socialism, the 3rd World and the advanced capitalist world from the late 19th Century to the present, focusing on reasons for the emergence of workers control initiatives and problems confronting these experiments and future prospects.

Contributors to this section of the book show that major reasons for the extensive mushrooming of workers councils and workers control initiatives have been the weakening of state power due to military defeats, failed military coups, the collapse of colonial regimes and neo-liberalism.

An important example of councils appearing due to a military defeat is discussed in "From Unionism to Workers' Councils: Revolutionary Shop Stewards in Germany 1914-18" by Ralf Hoffrogg. This interesting essay examines how the workers and soldiers councils emerged from official shop steward conferences of the Social Democratic unions and the role of the shop steward, Richard Muller in this ini-

tiative. The author shows these councils initially became involved in organising strikes against WWI. However, due to Social Democratic influence, the councils supported the holding of elections to a Parliament, rather than consolidating a system of workers' councils. Subsequently, existing workers councils became integrated in the Weimar Republic industrial relations system on the enterprise level.

In Part III "Workers Control under State Socialism", the volume examines so called Self Management in Yugoslavia



and the struggle for workers' control in Poland 1944-81. In the Yugoslav case, the contributor shows how the emergence of workers councils was very much a top level Communist Party Government initiative to counter the influence of unions and enforce the Government incomes policy. The plant management structure was very much controlled by the Communist Party elite with workers councils having a very limited role in factory management. The Polish case throws some light on an anarcho-sindicalist approach to fostering workers' control. In particular, it examines the emergence of the Solidarity union movement and how it was initially committed to workers control of industry or "Self Management". It looks at when it was intending to impose "workers' control" via occupations of workplaces leading into "work-ins", martial law was declared by the Polish Communist Party Government. Resulting in the mass arrest of Solidarity militants disrupting the campaign of "work-ins" and forcing Solidarity to go "underground".

In the essay "Workers' Direct Action and Factory Control in the United States" by Immanuel Ness, the author examines the

history of occupations and various forms of on-the-job direct action since the mid 1930's to the present. Particularly, he analyses the successful "sit down strikes" of 1935-39 in the context of expanding manufacturing industry in the USA. A successful factory occupation which the author discusses in recent years is the "Republic Windows and Doors" in Chicago occupation from 4th to 9th December 2008. An important reason for the successful outcome of the occupation involving the defeat of the employer's move to close the factory and winning back pay and severance entitlements was the support of a more grass roots friendly union UE (United Electrical workers).

Another workers control experience which is close to the Australian situation is the British experience discussed in "Workers' Control and the Politics of Factory Occupations, Britain, 1970's" by Alan Tuchman. This analysis focuses on the upsurge in factory occupations and work-ins in the early 1970s. The author sees this emergence in the context of the flowering of the new left which had an orientation toward fostering workers' control, particularly via the Institute for Workers' Control and the example of massive factory occupations during May 1968 in France, together with high levels of militant workplace organisation in the shape of shop steward committees. The author goes on to show how this upsurge was defeated via sabotage of the union bureaucracy and clever manoeuvres by the Labour Government. It provided funding for the transformation of the occupied enterprises into cooperatives but inadequate in comparison to the funding provided to orthodox companies. So that subsequently all these coops went bankrupt. The author shows that the Caterpillar occupation in Uddingston, Scotland in 1987 which occurred due to the desperation of the workforce, rather than high levels of militant workplace organisation is a pointer to the motivation for the next wave of factory occupations and work-ins.

A much more extensive workers councils and work-in movement which also became diverted onto the "cooperative road" is discussed in "Argentine's Worker Taken Factories: Trajectories of Workers' Control under the economic crisis" by Marina Kabat. The author looks at how the upsurge in factory seizures and mushrooming of workers' councils occurred as a response to the bankruptcy and closure of many factories due to the Argentine economic crisis in late 2001. With the overcoming of the crisis and state repression the plant seizures had been obliged to be "legalised" as cooperatives. Like in the British example, this road led to the adopting by the more economically viable of these experiments of orthodox capitalist

firm ways and becoming more bureaucratic in regard to the role of the role of workers assemblies. Whilst the less economically viable became bankrupt.

The importance of the anarcho-syndicalist movement to workers' control was highlighted in the case of the Spanish revolution, where workers' control achieved its most extensive development. This experience is examined in the essay "Workers' Democracy in the Spanish Revolution 1936-37" by Andy Durgan. The author shows the key role of the anarcho-syndicalist union confederation, the C.N.T. (National Confederation of Labour) in the workers control upsurge in large parts of urban and rural areas, involving millions of workers and peasants in what became the Republican zone in Spain following the collapse of Governmental power with the defeat of the rightwing military coup in July 1936.

The author shows how lacking a political strategy, the C.N.T. was unable to develop a revolutionary alternative based on a system of workers councils to the re-emerging bourgeois state in the republican zone. Associated with this restoration of the centralised state was its sabotage and repression of workers control initiatives. However, the author fails to take account of the turmoil and climate of hysteria within the C.N.T. and waves of state repression affecting the labour movement in the early 1930's which prevented any serious discussion of a political strategy within the C.N.T. It stemmed from the wild slandering and subsequent purging from the organisation of other more coherent anarcho-syndicalist tendencies such as the revolutionary syndicalist committees later known as the BOC (Worker Peasant

Bloc) and the Treintistas by the Catalan FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) and its role in encouraging a cycle of insurrections leading to massive state repression against the C.N.T. and other labour organisations and a rightward shift in the ruling class. Leading eventually to the Francoist Military Coup in July 1936.

"Workers' Control and Australia Today"

What light does this volume throw on the problems of building a workers' control movement in the Australia situation? Certainly, in the context of the likelihood of many plant closures and massive job losses due to a recession and privatisation – workers may carry out workers' control initiatives due to desperation and extreme alienation from their bureaucratic unions such as in the British case discussed. However, such initiatives are likely to be isolated due to the sabotage of the union hierarchy. As occurred in the case of the last major example of workers control during the tramway lockout in Melbourne in 1990 over moves by the Vic. Govt. to remove conductors from trams. In this case which moved from a work-in on 1st Jan.1990, to depot occupations, following the cutting off of power, the union hierarchy was able to isolate the trammies. Despite their attempts to acquire industrial solidarity of workers in other sectors and generalise workers control/direct action. Such measures as the picketing by militant trammies and their supporters of the Jolimont rail yards on 31st January, stopping many morning suburban train services, to overcome this industrial isolation

proved too late and insufficient.(1) It certainly emphasises the importance of establishing the transitional steps leading toward the formation of a confederation of anarcho-syndicalist unions such as the early "Solidarity" in the Polish case and the role of the C.N.T. in the Spanish case, discussed in this volume. So as to conduct a coherent and widespread "workers' control" strategy when the time is ripe. Particularly important is the need for strategic organising by anarcho-syndicalist groupings/networks to assist achieving raised morale amongst workers to build grass roots opposition movements in unions in sectors which have massive industrial muscle and can defy repressive industrial relations legislation via direct action. Thereby being able to assist and inspire workers in other industries in taking direct action. Rather than the normal aimless activity involving "tail ending" of workers struggles by leftist sects or "training" of militants without any consideration of their strategic situation and need for massive day to day outside-the-job support, due to the difficult organising conditions in many industries today.

In the case of widespread work-ins, an important task for anarcho-syndicalists would be agitation amongst the grass roots to move across the boundary of "legality" involving the sale of goods produced and the coordination of work-ins across various industries.

Mark McGuire

(1) See "Anarcho-Syndicalism in Practice: Melbourne Tram Dispute & Lockout January to February 1990" Edited by M. McGuire on the Internet.

Continued From Page 16 the Bushmen exist as a complex mosaic of people spread over a vast geographical area and subject to a wide range of different historical influences. A more considered overview of the vast literature upon the Bushmen in relation to primitivism and evolutionism can be found in Alan Barnard's article Primitive communism and mutual aid: Kropotkin visits the Bushmen. Barnard concludes that Kropotkin thought these remnants of: "primitive communism were fast disappearing as a result of foreign influence". But, rather than suggesting (as Wilmsen and Scott have done) that racial intermixing and integration among Bushmen has long-since destroyed any vestige of "primitive purity" Kropotkin focuses upon cultural inheritance of "sharing practices" rather than the ethnic or racial lineages and composition of any particular

group. Barnard argues that Kropotkin is essentially correct in this regard. "Food sharing" and the "foraging mode of thought" persisted culturally among the Bushmen despite considerable racial intermixing and integration of foreign ideas.

Kropotkin in Mutual Aid bases his assessment of the Australian aborigines on one of several collections of essays on the Natives of South Australia published by E.S. Wigg & Sons in Adelaide during 1879. Despite being written by rulers and colonizers these essays contain some insightful and sensitive passages, most relevantly the observation that the effects of colonization (epidemics, loss of traditional hunting grounds, escape to marginal habitats on colonial periphery) had severely damaged their cultural integrity and led to an increase in abhorrent practices (e.g. infanticide) because of starvation or desperation. Scott is correct in citing recent work claim-

ing that the "Australian aboriginal population was originally located more densely in the most productive regions of the country and was driven into drier areas the Europeans didn't want" (p.367 fn. 6).

Scott boldly asserts that: "Tribes and states are mutually constituting entities. There is no evolutionary sequence; tribes are not prior to states. Tribes are, rather, a social formation defined by its relation to the state." (p.208). But, the Australian Aborigines are clearly the exception that proves Scott's rule. They contradict his claim that all indigenous cultures were destroyed long prior to the modern age in some universal evolutionary path to statism and barbarianism. Australian Aborigines divided, identified and defined themselves into some 7-800 tribal nations and language groups each with their own name and specific geographical location. *To be continued*

News & Notes

Some of the most important news lately was the mass rally and march by public service workers on NSW Parliament House on 8th Sept to protest O'Farrell Government attacks on their jobs and conditions. Certainly, the progress of the O'Farrell Government attacks are being watched closely by Big Business and the Abbott Liberals. (See article Page 4.)

It's likely the Rightwing ALP faction controlled Unions NSW which is running the campaign will use it as a replay of their campaign against the Howard Government's Work Choices legislation, which focused on getting the ALP elected to Government. The Gillard ALP Federal Govt. "Fair Work" IR legislation has of course proven to be as draconian in many respects as "Work Choices" with many restrictions on the right to take industrial action. Certainly the Unions NSW campaign involving token industrial action and symbolic protests and rallies is similar to their previous Anti-Work Choices campaign. Its most unlikely to force the O'Farrell Govt. to back down on their attacks.

Consequently, it's important that the initiative is seized by the grass roots involving organising on the job for direct action and in particular the need to combat O'Farrell plans for the privatisation of public transport. (See article Page 3.)

The advent of the O'Farrell Government in NSW has seen increased efforts by management in the public sector to flex its muscles on disciplinary issues. In State Transit, some of the most important news is a new draconian accidents policy. Designed to further spread a sense of insecurity and fear on the job. (See article Page 5.)

The hierarchy of the NSW Fire Brigade Union has been engaging in all manner of "smoke and mirrors" tricks so as to assist the bosses' attacks on fires and the likely machinations of the Rightwing ALP machine. Whilst, at the same time, creating militant and marxist illusions amongst the tiny leftist subcultural fringe. What is the reality? (See article Page 7.)

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

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Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name

Address.....

General Secretary

PO Box 532 Newcastle 2300 NSW.

WHAT IS SYNDICALISM?

A short explanation of revolutionary syndicalism and industrial unionism as well as some notes on their histories.

Syndicalism refers to the practice of organising workers into unions to fight for their interests. Originally, the term comes from the French work for Trade Unionism (Syndicliste), but in English the term specifically refers to rank-and-file unionism.

There are two major tendencies: Revolutionary Syndicalism, typified by the French CGT, and Industrial Unionism, typified by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). A related tendency is anarcho-syndicalism, but its specifically anarchist politics differentiate it from syndicalism, which is purely economic, or 'non-political'. The idea behind syndicalism is to create an industrial, fighting union movement. Syndicalists therefore advocate decentralised, federated unions that use direct action to get reforms under capitalism until they are strong enough to overthrow it.

Revolutionary Syndicalism has its roots in the anarchist movement, and can be traced back to the libertarian tendency in the First International Workingmen's Association, when prominent Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin argued that: "the future social organisation must be made solely from the bottom up, by the free association or federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international and universal." Industrial Unionism has its roots in the Marxist tradition, with the IWW's famous 1905 'Preamble to the Constitution' quoting Marx's dictum "instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system.'"

This is obviously in deep contrast to the current reformist unions who are filled with layer upon layer of bureaucrats who can call off industrial action regardless of the wishes of the membership. This kind of union democracy puts control of workers' struggles where it belongs: with the workers themselves.

Both Industrial Unionism (as per the 1905 IWW constitution) and Revolutionary Syndicalism (as per the 1906 Charter of Amiens) are non-political, aiming to build unions for all workers regardless of political persuasions. However, this doesn't mean syndicalists are indifferent to the great social and political issues of the day. Rather syndicalists argue that only by building democratic, workers' power at the point of production ('industrial democracy') that social ills can be addressed:

When the industry of the world is run by the workers for their own good, we see no chance for the problems of unemployment, war, social conflict, or large scale crime, or any of our serious social problems to continue.

A short explanation of revolutionary syndicalism and industrial unionism as well as some notes on their histories.

Syndicalism refers to the practice of organising workers into unions to fight for their interests. Originally, the term comes from the French work for Trade Unionism (Syndicliste), but in English the term specifically refers to rank-and-file unionism.



There are two major tendencies: Revolutionary Syndicalism, typified by the French CGT, and Industrial Unionism, typified by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). A related tendency is anarcho-syndicalism, but its specifically anarchist politics differentiate it from syndicalism, which is purely economic, or 'non-political'. The idea behind syndicalism is to create an industrial, fighting union movement. Syndicalists therefore advocate decentralised, federated unions that use direct action to get reforms under capitalism until they are strong enough to overthrow it.

Revolutionary Syndicalism has its roots in the anarchist movement, and can be traced back to the libertarian tendency in the First International Workingmen's Association, when prominent Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin argued that: "the future social organisation must be made solely from the bottom up, by the free association or federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international and universal." Industrial Unionism has its roots in the Marxist tradition, with the IWW's famous 1905 'Preamble to the Constitution' quoting Marx's dictum "instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system.'"

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