

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



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Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

Rudd ALP Govt. Stabs Workers in The Back With "Revamped" Work Choices & Building Industry Watch Dog Committee!



NEW RUDD GOVT. IR LAWS; GLOBAL CREDIT CRISIS; NSW RAILWAY NEWS; SUPERANNUATION & THE FINANCIAL CRISIS; STATE TRANSIT NEWS; SYDNEY MARITIME NEWS; VICTORIAN RAIL NEWS; BRITAIN TODAY; BRAZILIAN LABOUR NEWS; NZ TRAM NEWS; ITALIAN SYNDICALISM; BOOK REVIEW CORNER ON ANARCHISM IN THE UK; DEATH OF AN OLD MILITANT; NEWS & NOTES

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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ing funny money to keep the whole rotten system ticking over. The more funny money printed, the greater the risk of hyperinflation and the middle classes seeing all their illusory wealth wiped out overnight. When governments faced with economic calamity and their own demise begin printing money the value of which they can't meet, the writing is on the wall for the death of an economic system based on the creation of over increasing profits irrespective of the human, social and environmental costs that has not only caused the current economic calamity but has brought the human race and the planet to the brink of a calamity of unparalleled proportions.

BAILOUT OF PRIVATE BANKING

I'm pretty excited about the open ended trillion dollar bailout of the private banking and financial sector. It is wonderful to see that the folk who got the world in the current financial mess are the very same people who will be rewarded, courtesy of the American taxpayer. The wonderful thing about the United States government is they're always willing to lend a hand to folk in need. Take the banks and financial institutions that have just had their bad debts written off.

We wouldn't want those poor men and women to do without their multimillion dollar salaries, would we? Take all those poor investors whose greed brought the world to the brink of financial annihilation, we wouldn't want these nice folk to lose their money, would we? Successive United States governments have always had the interests of the rich and powerful as their first responsibility. Where would the world be without the rich and powerful?

When taxpayer's money is at stake the movers and shakers always come first. United States citizens are proud of the fact they pay taxes to help the rich and powerful in their time of need, when the shit hits the fan in the United States you can be reassured that taxpayer's money will be used to help the rich and powerful. It would be a shame to bypass all those rich folk in the financial and banking sector and use that trillion dollars to help Americans feeling the pinch of the current economic downturn pay their mortgages or provide universal health care for all Americans or improve Americans wages and conditions. It has always been un-American to help the poor at the expense of the rich. Why have government if you can't use it to help your rich mates when they run into trouble? On behalf of the rich and powerful, I

would like to thank the poor and marginalised for being so understanding and kind. Just in case you get radical ideas in your head like using taxpayer funds to help the poor, dispossessed and disenfranchised, we have laws to deal with scum like you. If these laws don't work we can get the media to denigrate you. If that doesn't work the National Guard can deal with your type. If that doesn't work the United States spends a trillion dollars a year on a defence system that can send your type to Kingdom Come. It is wonderful to be a citizen of the greatest nation on earth. Where else can you help the rich and powerful? I know, the land down under - AUSTRALIA.

RUDD's REVAMPED "WORKCHOICES"

It seems the Rudd led Labor government is singing from the same song sheet as the Howard led Liberal/National government when it comes to workplace relations. The Rudd government's new workplace relations bill is a stab in the back for all Australian workers. Mr. Rudd and his parliamentary colleagues seem to have forgotten that Labor was elected to power as the consequence of a vigorous was conducted by both the trade union movement and community activists.

To support legislation that financially penalises and criminalises workers for withdrawing their labour outside recognised enterprise bargaining periods, reduces workers to the role of wage slaves. A worker's ability to improve their pay and conditions is directly related to their ability to freely withdraw their labour if they are unhappy with their pay and conditions.

For a Labor government to actively promote legislation that removes the fundamental right of workers to withdraw their labour goes against everything the Labor Party has ever stood for. Rudd needs to remember he is Prime Minister because Australians rejected WorkChoices. To alienate the government's most loyal and dependable supporters to curry favour with the very people who championed WorkChoices, highlights how out of touch the Rudd Labor government is with the concerns of Australian workers. If he continues to champion the interests of that small section of society that owns the means of Production, distribution and exchange above the people that have supported his government, he and his government run he very real risk of being one term wonders.

Thanks to the Anarchist Age

National News

FUNNY MONEY?

I must be stupid, I'm having a great deal of trouble working out where all this money is coming from to bail out the greed is good crowd. Every day we hear stories about Reserve banks around the world pumping billions of dollars into the privately owned banking sector to provide liquidity for world markets. In the United States, the government finds itself in the invidious position of funding a trillion dollar war while bailing out some of the biggest investment banks, mortgage funds and insurance companies in the world. I can't help asking myself where is all this money coming from?

Billions of dollars of taxation revenue have been diverted from public infrastructure, public health, public education and social security benefits into the coffers of some of the world's largest privately owned corporations, forcing the public to pay a huge price for the incompetence and greed of the private sector.

As the financial retreat turns into a rout, governments will be tempted to start print-

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

EBA Update

By *Crimson Coconut*

Final voting for the RailCorp EBA has taken place across the state. As expected a majority of voters, who are in desperate need of a pay rise, have sanctioned the Agreement for a 4% PA increase over the next 2 years.

Many rail workers had not seen the contents of the Agreement and there had been little or no discussion before or after the unions gave their approval. In previous years copies of agreements had been mailed to workers homes for perusal. In the case of EBA 2008 things were played very close to the chest, although there were copies for viewing on the RailCorp Intranet and a few booklets were delivered to the Station Masters office at the various locations.

Despite this, RailCorp and the unions gave joint presentations across the state on the virtues of the agreement despite there being little or no actual discussion or debate on the changes contained therein. It still doesn't sit right with me seeing union and management singing from the same hymn book on the virtues of the agreement during their joint presentations. Surely there are some disagreements and differences of opinion or would they have us believe that it is all rosy and harmonious in RailCorp as things stand?

EBA 2008 marks another stage of the "award modernisation" process that is required by the Workplace Relations Act which continues under the Rudd Labor Government. The new EBA is allowed to contain only the basic award conditions. Elements of our old conditions of employment are now contained in a separate deed between the custodians union and management. This part of the EBA has seen little or no change.

The new award contains a clause that spells out a commitment to "station reform" and "station cleaning reform" by April 2009. Changes to Train Crew rostering is also highlighted. I personally could not vote in favour of the EBA while RailCorp refused to list their intended reforms. If such a clause referring to the reforms was contained in the EBA and didn't give us the details of them, we should ask why was it inserted in the EBA at all.

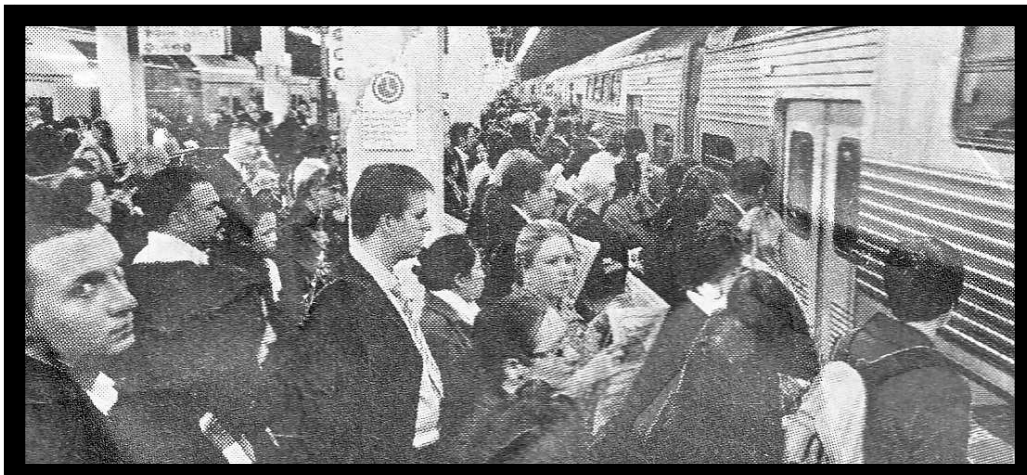
If and when the planned reforms go ahead the "no extra claims" clause contained within it will ensure that no compensation productivity pay rises will be forthcoming from the improvements envisioned. Even if they had been promised, we still have fresh in our minds the lack of action over the share of the productivity savings which were to come out of the "Job and Work Re-design" project from 10 yrs ago. They never eventuated.

The usual platitudes about "management prerogative", management's right to use staff reviews in consultation with the unions over any reforms also begs the question as to why the clause was included at all. Once the EBA is ratified by the commission a timetable will be formally set in

did RailCorp go to the expense of doing a mass mail out of Federal Government propaganda telling us what a Workplace Agreement is?

The whole voting process has been carefully stage managed in case there was any dissent along the way to the vote. This may have had something to do with the ballot to go on strike in the middle of EBA negotiations. The ensuing vote ended in almost unanimous support for industrial action. This was rescinded at a later date by the unions without any consultation with members. Was there fear and uncertainty about the result of the EBA vote because of the previous rejection by rail workers?

Backdating the agreement to April and ap-



place for the reform process to begin. Issues of consultation make a mockery of trade union representation within RailCorp, so we can seek no satisfaction on being consulted there.

Except for an extension of paid and unpaid maternity leave, none of the demands made by the unions or shop floor workers in the log of claims succeeded in being included. Many of the anomalies such as those that exist in the areas of family leave and "absence control" which rail workers raised as issues earlier in the process were still not addressed satisfactorily. Areas such as "shift work" which needed to be looked at remain as they are.

My main concern though is over the voting process. The fact that rail workers had to attend a briefing session to be able to vote is rotten.

What was wrong with the way votes were carried out for previous EBA's when ballot papers were sent to people's homes? If the cost of mail outs was an issue then why

proving the full 4% during negotiations with the State Government paved the way for general acceptance of the agreement. It was a hollow victory of sorts since we had given little away and have lost little, though the 4% pay increase is not enough for us to keep up with the high cost of living. The government by comparison had been seen to have backed down from confrontation and acquiesced. At the time Transport Minister, Watkins, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald warned that all the conditions for achieving the 4% were conditional on the planned reforms and that the Government had certainly not backed down.

Since then there have been big changes in the composition of the NSW Government amid charges that NSW finances have fallen in a hole. Big business on the other hand is openly calling for heavily pruning the rail workforce. EBA 2008 opens the door to staff reviews which can expedite that process.

Superannuation - A Rational Alternative Needed

As workers slowly see their hard earned retirement savings squandered away in speculative deals by big capital they despair that they will never have enough money to retire on. For many impending retirees the credit crash in the US this month has had its effect on pension funds, it brought into focus the ridiculous situation regarding retirement pensions. Workers' hard earned cash is being shuffled around the world in a lottery that benefits only a small global elite.

The loss of retirement savings coupled with rapidly rising prices for transport, fuel, food and rents will see many retiring workers poor and desperate. Many will be homeless, forced onto the streets and into parks where they will be forced to live on the scraps of the working throw-away society.

The traditional trade union movement has provided dubious financial impetus to a flawed retirement scheme that it holds up as beacon of success for the Australian trade union movement. Its real success though is to continue to position Labor union spin doctors at the head of the lucrative superannuation feeding trough in a jobs for the boys scheme that is neither moral nor politically progressive.

The huge size of the industry super funds (now worth over \$1 trillion and quadrupling in size every 10 years) has dire consequences for working people if and when they fail. The need for a safer and more socially responsible method of self funding for retirement is absolutely necessary. Not that self funded retirement is the ideal method for providing for our non wage earning years. Events show that we could and never will be able to rely on the market to ensure that we have a comfortable retirement.

So, what is the solution to all this gloom and doom for retirees?

A national pension (superannuation) scheme is what we, unions and pensioner groups should be advocating. All contributions to such a scheme would be consolidated into one large national pool controlled and guaranteed by a government agency inside Treasury. It would be similar in scope to the original Medicare scheme before it was emasculated and broken up.

There should be watertight guarantees that contributors could never lose their invest-

ment, something that the private sector could never do. That's how things were 15 to 20 years ago State Super was once guaranteed by the State Government, as were savings in the Commonwealth Bank which were guaranteed by the Federal Government. Re-regulation, or should I say deregulation, since then, has exposed workers savings to the chaotic vagaries of the international financial system which is itself flawed.

Government's borrow heavily on the open money markets at international interest rates to fund large projects. Quite often much of this borrowed money is advanced for start-up projects in the private sector, for example, the new Clyde train maintenance facility or the \$700+ million that



was advanced by government for the construction of the Airport Line and the M5 motorway which is still attracting subsidies. Government interest on this borrowed money flows out of the economy and the country and eventually becomes a burden for all taxpayers who are the real underwriters of such projects.

This adds to our balance of payments problems as no goods are exchanged for this repayment of interest. That's why the NSW State Government is so concerned with its AAA rating. Any lower international financial rating than AAA would mean higher interest rate charges for government loans and action taken by the World Bank and IMF to open up the economy further to reforms which benefit private capital.

If there was a large national pool of retirement funds, governments could use these funds to create jobs at home, rather than exporting them overseas. New and bold conservation projects could be undertaken, such as funding and extending public transport services throughout the country. Also privatisation of government assets such as electricity generating plants could be avoided because governments could no longer use the arguments about funds not being available to build new ones.

Other major environmentally friendly projects such as water conservation infrastructure and construction of solar power alternatives could be undertaken on a massive scale with money from the readily available retirement funds. The funds would also become part of our social capital as it would add to our quality of life through completed projects.

In return for adding our contributions to the funds a guaranteed interest rate payment equivalent to what would be paid on the open money markets for borrowed money should be returned by government. This naturally adds to the value to the funds. Superannuation benefits could be paid as it is now (i.e. according to the amount contributed) or preferably as a pro-rata retirement pension that is universal, but, based on the level of contributions and needs. Government funded pensions and top-ups should never be dispensed with and are essential for promoting equity in our communities.

If the existing private funds failed it would be catastrophic for the government and people alike. In a worst case scenario of a substantial financial meltdown the provision of government pensions for all would add a further burden to tax payers and retirees that is unjustified and yet is completely avoidable. If the government was unduly exposed financially then maybe no pension would be paid out at all as a retirement safety net.

With a National Superannuation Scheme that excludes the private sector we could have had some small measure of control through the ballot box. With the present self appointed union, Labor Party hacks and merchant bankers presiding over our nest eggs any talk of democratic control over our own funds is classed as heresy. We won't hear the call for a National retirement savings scheme from them or any of our present elected representatives. But we should raise our voices loudly despite their opposition for a superannuation scheme that's owned by us all and that we take responsibility for. A better world and a better retirement system is only possible if our representatives have the vision and they govern in our interests.

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

STATE TRANSIT FREE FALL OLYMPICS!

Did you know the STA bosses are running an Olympics without STA workers knowing about it? Their own Olympics!

The corporate athletes will be wearing slightly bizarre sports outfits in the shape of business suits. That sounds like the ideal cover for these corporate athletes. Their "physiques" will be also somewhat unusual for the usually thin and trim sports people in the form of massive beer guts and expansionist waist lines achieved during many merry STA Corporate lunches and dinners. However like many Olympics contestants the high octane STA bosses will be reliant on performance enhancement drugs which are apparently legal.

The usual suspects, the ALP and Liberals power brokers who like them cut each other's throats and strive for the most "gold" through insulting each other will be sponsoring the "games". Together with the Business Council of NSW, the RTA, Veolia Transport, Taxi Council of NSW, the boss of Cabcharge and the Coach and Bus Owners Association. Like the many suspect characters in the business world, these sponsors don't expect to get something for nothing. No matter what, they expect huge amounts of return. They outbid each other in who does the worst job. How far they can go. The Forbes 500 billionaires will also have a considerable finger in the affair.

According to a reliable source, Olympics merchandise will include plastic steering wheels, bongos, Turkish water pipes, and cubes of crack cocaine all tastefully inscribed with the STA snail logo.

Whilst the Olympics toys will include STA Corporate Gorilla suits and cowboy hats with dollar sign patches and stamps and coins with Bill Gates of Micro Soft profile.

I have found out that like the IOC (International Olympics Committee), the STA consultants will dictate the holding of events such as the bus route and budget "axeman" competitions where routes such as the 311, 360 and others across the city will face the chop. Whilst the finalist of the most incompetent boss in State Transit competition will be awarded by Sparks a gold plated medal. With this medal and 10c, he will be able to buy a cup of coffee.

For the STA boss razor gang paranoid about spiralling overtime costs for urgently required bus maintenance - silver plated medals.

What was the score? I have no idea, as we weren't invited. However, we know the severe impact in regard to STA staff, the community and bus routes.

In place of such corporate events, a genuine peoples Olympics needs to be organised free of corporate racketeering open to all people.

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Rebel Worker: What's happening with the routes?

Waverley Busie: An important development on this front is the proposed shorten-

ing of the 311. It's proposed that it terminates at the park outside St. Vincent's Hospital. The shortening of this route is of concern to us, as there are no facilities for drivers to have ablutions at the new terminus. Whilst there is a likelihood of trouble with drug users in the summer. It's definitely not a safe place at that time. The shortening of the route will inconvenience a range of groups such general passengers, elderly people, tourists and those visiting Elizabeth Bay House, as they will now have to change buses to get to their destinations. There is now much less buses going through the area. Particularly given the elimination of the 312 during peak hour which used to service the area. Whilst drivers will lose runs and have shifts reduced. In taking this highhanded action,

the STA bosses are showing their inability to be open to drivers and passengers concerns. The STA architect of the route shortening was invited to attend a community meeting to discuss the change to the route. However on learning he would be facing a hostile reception, he declined to attend the meeting. The elimination of the second loop in the route in a likely move by the STA bosses to sabotage the entire route and discourage commuters patronage. So later on, it can be completely abolished. Another route facing cuts is the 360.

RW: What are your thoughts on drivers' health?

WB: We need to encourage self help programs to help tackle the health problems which we suffer due to the job. One important problem we often face, is excessive body weight. A good way to reduce the ki-



los is via taking advantage of alternative Chinese medicine. A likely flow on effect of this therapy and drivers' improved health particularly in regard to diabetes, control of your body and self esteem will be better relations with passengers. Currently some drivers are having difficulties with the bosses over this issue.

RW: What's the latest on the Global Warming crisis?

WB: Is the STA looking down the barrel of a gun? Will the bosses and the Govt take measures to massively increase the number of passengers on buses to curb car usage? The build up of atmospheric green house gases is the biggest issue confronting us in a lifetime. It's just as important as WWI and WWII combined to other gener-

ations. There are a range of different ways for the STA to become environmentally friendly and reduce green house gases and budget expenditure. By taking such measures, the STA can adopt the slogan, "Take a ride with us. We are taking cars off the road and reducing your carbon foot print!" Is the STA going to do it? No. They are still caught up in the old management model of survive and fix it, lack of relatedness, withholding information, not working as a team, being manipulative and defensive. Is your union executive also doing these things on this list?

There are several ways to tackle the problems of reducing green house gases and wastage in the STA.

One simple way of tackling green house gases and general waste is improved plumbing so as to eliminate leaky taps and blocked toilets requiring 2-3 times to flush which are at chronic levels. At Waverley the men's toilets are in an appalling state. The STA bosses are totally oblivious to the whole issue. I recently spoke with the manager of the Captain Cook Hotel near Moore Park, who told that he had improvements to the plumbing in his pub and was able to completely eliminate leaky taps. As a result he was able to reduce his water and electricity costs by \$50,000 pa. The scale of water wastage in the STA is on a much greater scale and the savings from plumbing improvements such as electronic taps which stop running when you remove your hands would be enormous. Solar panels could be installed on the roofs of all STA installations to provide electricity for hot water systems and massively reduce power costs. It has recently come to my attention that an environmental shop in the new Westfields complex at Bondi Junction successfully negotiated with the complex management to have solar panels installed on the roof to power the shop.

There is great wastage in the STA in regard to tissues. Instead of the usage of 6 tissues now when washing your hands, a better quality paper towel could be introduced. Requiring the usage of only a single paper towel. The STA currently wastes considerable sums on fumigating buses with poisonous chemicals to counter cock roaches in the buses. This expenditure could be drastically reduced and harm to the environment eliminated with the usage of cockroach baits sold at shops in China Town. You can get two boxes for \$5. One box would be sufficient for each bus and its effects would last for years.

By the STA putting its corporate physique behind such ideas it could win an award from environmental groups for the most innovative in adopting power saving measures.

RW: What's the latest with the inspectors?

WB: There is a move afoot by Strawberry Hills to eliminate over 40 inspectors. Why? Is this just another cost cutting measure. Where is the STA's vision? They are an extremely valuable group in the STA, given their extensive experience in tackling on the job issues

RW: What are your thoughts regarding the issue of "communication" on the job?

WB: This issue has been highlighted to me recently involving several incidents. When off duty I boarded a Pt Botany bus and tried to get into a conversation with the driver. I mentioned that I was a driver like him. However he remained unresponsive. At terminuses during the cold weather, I have noticed that drivers keep the bus doors closed while they wait for their run to begin. Rather than opening the doors to allow passengers to get on and so be able to establish a rapport with them. This indicates to me a failure of communication with passengers. Involving some drivers lacking confidence in dealing with passengers. To change this attitude, re-training schemes introduced by the bosses are inadequate. Drivers need to be encouraged to see passengers to be people just like themselves and relate to them appropriately and so be comfortable with them on the job.

The STA has refused to open lines of communication with drivers as illustrated with the problem of the bendi bus brakes. They refused to take any action when drivers raised concerns on the issue. Eventually a crisis occurred involving the problem which got on the TV. Here again we have a case of the STA taking a defensive and unresponsive stance on an issue, until it explodes into a major crisis.

RW: What's the latest with the mechanics?

WB: STA corporate axemen have their eyes on the workshops. Are the bus workshops being looked at for privatisation? Whilst the overtime budget for the workshops has been further tightened up. Only 100 hours per month is now being provided which is grossly inadequate given the need for urgent bus maintenance.

RW: What's happening in regarding to the union at Waverley?

Waverley Driver: Phil Hope, our assistant union rep who was injured on the job and is now on workers compensation is facing the sack. Nobody should be sacked for being on compensation. When I was a clerk in Rail Corp from 1973 to 1979, I never came across an instance of someone being sacked for this reason. With this high-handed and draconian approach, I consider the STA bosses are definitely going in a neo-nazi direction.

RW: What's the latest with the depot fleet?

WD: 255 buses are being introduced into the STA fleet. The new gas buses and Volvos are being sent to Ryde, Leichhardt and in particular Pt Botany. Whilst as usual Waverley is receiving no new buses, only hand me downs. On a separate note, Waverley has for the second time been nominated as depot of the month. However there has been no mention of this accomplishment in Transit Times. Any other depot would have had article on the front page regarding such an achievement. The STA bosses must hate Waverley!

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the latest at the depot?

Leichhardt Busie: The bosses are continuing with their onslaught over drivers who have 3 accidents. I have noticed lately that Drivers with 10 and 20 years experience on the job and who have had accidents are being sent to retraining. This seems to me a waste of resources. A more appropriate way of tackling the problem would be for the bosses to sit down with drivers who have been having accidents and give them a lecture. They are also continuing with their rampage in regard to damaged bus mirrors. They fail to take into account that due to the location of the mirrors on the gas buses that, there will always be a likelihood of damage which is out of drivers' control and we should not be held responsible. Why isn't the union organising a petition on the issue to get some action?

Another worrying development is drivers who are scabbing on each other. I've noticed on weekends drivers who are running a few minutes late on their runs back to the depot, having their next run pinched by other drivers.

On a positive note, a certain worker who has engaged in racist abuse of others at the depot has disappeared from the scene for some strange reason. Construction work in regard to the depot enlargement and renovations is continuing. It's expected that the depot fleet will be expanded from 110 to 260 buses. An underground car park for drivers' vehicles is currently being dug. It's likely that the renovations won't be completed for years. I've noticed lately we are having a lot of Burwood buses at the depot, pointing to the eventual move of the Burwood fleet to Leichhardt with the completion of the renovations.

RW: What's happening on the road?

LB: We are continuing to have problems in regard to Loftus Street. We now are not allowed to drop off passengers in Loftus Street as occurred in the past. Consequently we are facing considerable complaints and swearing from passengers over

the issue. The passengers are particularly unhappy about having to walk in the rain to the Quay. Many drivers are unhappy over the issue. Action needs to be taken urgently to remedy the problem such as a sign at the corner of Bridge and Loftus Streets that advises this is the last stop before the Quay and we don't terminate in Loftus Street. There is great chaos in Broadway near the shopping centre, due to buses on different routes stopping there. Its urgent that a series of bus stops say 1,2 & 3 is created for buses on different routes. Like which exists at Railway Square. Currently we even have situations of buses blocking Bay Street.

RW: What do think of the moves to eliminate many inspectors?

LB: When you need one, you can never find one. They always in their vans driving around. I have noticed over the years a dramatic reduction in their role in regard to bus operations. In the past they would be located at quite a few locations, checking

buses i.e. Market Street, Railway Square, Johnston Street, Leichhardt Town Hall, amongst other places. Now you only see them at Victoria Rd Rozelle and Druitt Street in the city checking the Ryde buses.

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

RW: What's the latest at Burwood?

Burwood Drover: There has been a major management shakeup which the bosses have been very secretive about. The position of Depot Operations Manager is being replaced by two duty managers and three staff managers. The operations manager positions are to be performed by those who held CSC's 2 and 3's positions which has now been abolished. The 3 staff manager positions are being created which will be filled by existing management. However, their role in operations has not been up to expectations and so their management role has been changed. Associated with these changes the shed

drivers will be removed from operations work which will be taken over by white shirts who have lost their positions in other parts of the STA.

RW: How are things with the union rep?

BD: It seems we'll be seeing less and less of him and he will be doing less and less in the position, as he has put out the word that he won't be running for the union rep position when the next elections occur.

RW: What is happening with the workshops?

BD: I've noticed constant outsourcing of mechanical work which was in the past done in the workshops. It has involved body work and air conditioning. This outsourcing has led to considerable delays in getting buses back on the road. In one recent case, so far it has taken 3 months for maintenance to be completed on one bus. It's still not been returned to the depot.

SYDNEY MARITIME NEWS

Rebel Worker: I understand that your last Sparks article has caused a bit of a stir at DP World Port Botany?

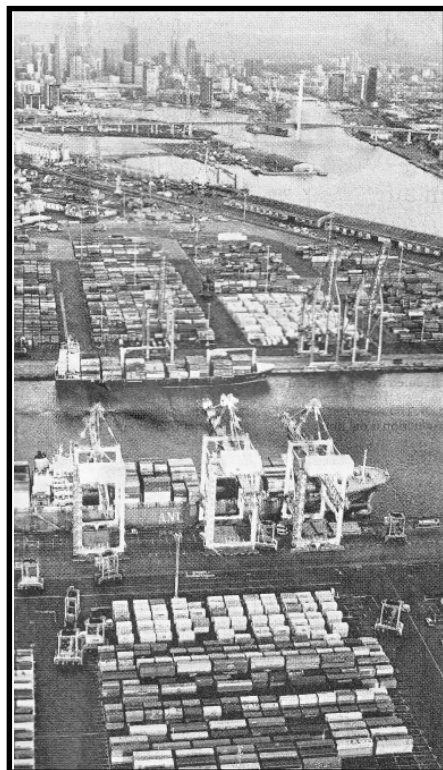
Port Botany Wharfie: It certainly has. A handful of people took offence to the part of the article that, when referring to the few permanent jobs on offer (including a health, safety and environment facilitator position) stated: "some of the more cynical among the workforce think that members of the union site committee will end up with these jobs for "services rendered" to the company. But only time will tell".

The article clearly did not take an opinion on this question one way or the other. It merely reported the existence of this sentiment among the workforce. But that was enough to get me accused of causing "disunity", "undermining elected committees" and everything else under the sun.

The stupidest part of all this was that I was accused of photocopying and putting on a noticeboard only the portion of the article that contained the offending paragraph. Why would I stick up only one of three pages on a noticeboard when I distribute copies of Sparks with the whole three page article in it?

I should at this point explain who the "Port Botany Wharfie" is. I am Shane Bentley and I have worked on the waterfront for over nine years. Not that I thought the identity of the "Port Botany Wharfie" was any real secret. I regularly and openly

leave copies of Sparks in the lunch room. I even put my name to the article I wrote



about the planned privatisation of Sydney Ferries in the March issue of Sparks.

Yet some have accused me of writing "anonymous shit sheets".

As I have explained to workmates, the only reason I chose to write under the moniker of "Port Botany Wharfie" was to fit in with the general approach of Sparks, where contributors use pseudonyms to avoid victimisation in the rail and bus industries. Nothing more.

I am so anonymous that local delegates and officials knew exactly who to ask about the Sparks article -me. The whole saga is more than a little ridiculous.

RW: Last time you filled us in on the state of EBA negotiations at DP World? Have negotiations progressed at all?

Port Botany Wharfie: Yes, they are drawing to a close. In principle agreement was reached on September 10. The new EBA at Port Botany will be put to the vote in the next few weeks.

In June I told you about how I thought the Maritime Union's claim for a 20% wage rise over three years would most likely get whittled down to a 5% per year wage rise. Unfortunately, I was spot on. That is the exact figure that the national negotiators have decided to accept. With inflation currently running at 4.5%, 5% per year isn't exactly hitting home runs.

The sweetener in the deal this time around is the company agreeing to pay back pay back to July 1, something it hasn't done in the last few EBA agreements.

But as always - what they give with one hand, they take with the other. The company want to outsource the first aid position, which has traditionally been a job for MUA labour. In fact the position is nothing short of a waterfront institution. What has got people's backs up even more is the fact that the latest Maritime Workers' Journal reports that the MUA held on to

the first aid position at Patrick / Toll in their recent EBA - and still got the new health & safety facilitator position. We are being told we have to lose the first aid position to get the health & safety job!

The system of upgrade payments for higher skilled jobs is also under attack. The company seems to have got its wish, with the proposed EBA making it so we have to work for 2 hours in an upgraded position before getting paid for it. In the case of a workthrough (working 45 minutes while most people are on a break), the full shift upgrade will now be halved.

Maintenance workers are also going backwards. For instance, the company plans to change the general maintenance roster from 33.6 hours a week to 35.48 hours per week. I am unsure if these workers will be fully reimbursed for the extra hours they will have to work.

RW: Is there anything else to report about the DP World EBA?

Port Botany Wharfie: Yes, we had a two hour yard meeting on Tuesday September 16. The most interesting thing was the local MUA branch secretary's response to a comment from the floor. A member asked why the union isn't taking action for better conditions - now that John Howard is gone and we now have a Labor government in power. After all, the Liberal government has been the excuse for the not taking action for the last ten years.

MUA Branch Secretary Warren Smith's response was interesting. It was certainly passionate. In essence, he said that if we are willing to take action, the MUA Branch is 100% behind you. But he then warned that it was not his job on the line, it was ours.

The purpose of the speech was twofold - retain an air of militancy while in effect scare off the ranks from actually taking action.

Many took his speech as good coin. Others saw through it. But it might just backfire - for some are starting to see that the only way to make gains is precisely by taking action on the job. It's becoming increasingly obvious that the EBA process - in its present form - will never deliver solid gains in the wages and conditions of the waterfront workforce.

[Shane Bentley produces "Vigilance", a socialist bulletin for MUA members in Sydney. See www.vigilancebulletin.org].

Victorian Rail News

In the last issue of Rebel Worker we touched upon the alleged corruption in the Human Resources area of V/Line Passengers. In this issue we interview two people who currently applied for new conductor/supervisor positions within V/Line. Names have been changed to protect the people.

RW: I wish to know what made you to apply for these jobs?

Marla: I applied for a position of Conductor Services Manager as the job description said it was a career path for Conductors.

Melvin: I applied for a training position for Conductors.

RW: How long have both of you people been on the job?

Marla: I have been on the job for just two years. I was in the teaching profession and was looking for a career change and promotion.

Melvin: I have been a Conductor for over three decades and before that I worked on the stations.

RW: I understand that quite a few people applied for the positions.

Marla-Melvin: Yes it was like a Melbourne Cup Field. There were five positions in Melbourne for both jobs and there were about 40 applicants.

RW: I understand that V/Line had supervisors already doing these jobs. What was the reason for the change?

Melvin: They want to create an empire so some manager will have to justify his job.

Marla: Yes they do but what we did not know was that in Country Locomotives such as Thewelyn and Seymour, the acting on the job supervisors were automatically given their jobs and the positions were not advertised.

RW: This is contempt. If they want to create new positions, then all jobs should be open for all comers. Not automatically give these O.T.S. people the jobs.

Melvin: Correct! These OTS people have an unfair advantage over other people who have applied from within V/Line as management has trained these people and sent them to training seminars. Thus they have the qualifications.

Marla: So much for equal opportunities.

RW: Who got these jobs?

Marla - Melvin: They were filled by existing OTS persons and their supervisors. In other words No Conductors obtained the positions. So much for Conductor Career Paths.

RW: In other words the interviews were conducted so as to keep Human Resources in a job. What a sham.

AUSTRALIA POST Vs CPEU Via Union Solidarity?

8 October 2008

The AIRC has rebuffed an attempt by Australia Post to establish a connection between the CEPU (Postal workers Union) and left-wing community protest group Union Solidarity.

Australian Post applied to the AIRC for orders to stop unlawful industrial action

on September 18 after it discovered Union Solidarity was organising a picket for later that day to prevent mail trucks entering or leaving its Dandenong Letters Centre.

Commissioner Dianne Foggo made the order prohibiting all Australia Post workers employed at, entering or leaving the DLC, and four named employees who were CEPU delegates at the DLC, from participating in the picket.

Significantly, however, she rejected Australia Post's argument that the CEPU should also be bound by the order.

Australia Post barrister Chris O'Grady told the Commission that a principal/agent style relationship existed be-

tween the CEPU and Union Solidarity which meant the union could be held responsible for the picket even if it wasn't directly involved in its organisation.

Australia Post presented what it argued was evidence of a historical connection between the two organisations, including:

- * the listing of CEPU postal and telecommunications branch Victorian secretary Joan Doyle as a contact on Union Solidarity's website;
- * references to each other on their websites;
- * personnel from both organisations attending union rallies;
- and * the CEPU's failure to publicly advise Union Solidarity not to participate in industrial action.

BRITAIN TODAY

London Buses Strike

October 4th, 2008 by Ed

Unite members at a further eleven bus garages in London are set to join the 3,500 bus workers who have been taking strike action on Friday 10 and Wednesday 22 October.

The 2,500 Unite members who work for Metroline voted 88.5 per cent in favour of strike action in a recent ballot by the union. Unite submitted a London wide claim to all bus operators in March of this year to challenge the current system whereby drivers (and other grades) performing identical jobs within the TfL regulated industry, receive hugely varying pay and conditions. Bus workers at First Capital East, First Centre West and Metrobus have already been out on strike during September.

Unite members at Transdev Sovereign, which covers North and North West London, have just voted in a consultative ballot by 98 per cent in favour of strike action with a full postal ballot now set to proceed.

Unite is calling for a single rate of pay for drivers of £30,000 a year, based on a 38 hour week. Currently the eighteen London bus companies all operate with different pay structures, with pay inequalities of up to £6,000 a year.

Peter Kavanagh, Unite Senior Regional Organiser, said, "There is a startling disparity between bus drivers pay in the capital, with rosters in some companies seeing many drivers' complete nearly 60 hours per week.

"Not only is this unsafe, it is unfair to have bus workers across London doing the same job for less money or having to put in much longer hours.

"Our members will continue to strike and we will continue to ballot further bus companies until Boris Johnson listens up and engages in serious discussions for equal pay for all London bus workers."

Arriva South and North, and East London and East Thames buses are being balloted this week in time for strike action planned on Wednesday 22nd October.

London: Thousands of Bus Drivers Strike

October 10th, 2008 by Steven.

5000 bus workers with Metroline and First Group walked out at 3 a.m. This morning in a row over equal pay causing massive disruption across the capital.

The drivers will be out on a 24 hour strike to protest at the huge pay disparity between the 18 London bus companies.

Several sources report solid support for the action, with very few drivers crossing



picket lines, many routes completely cancelled and others running only minimal services.

Unite the union submitted a London wide claim to all bus operators in March of this year to challenge the current system where drivers (and other grades) performing identical jobs within the TfL regulated industry, receive hugely varying pay and conditions.

1000 workers at Metrobus were due to join the strike, but the employers were granted an injunction against the stoppage at the last minute.

Unite is calling for a single rate of pay for drivers of £30,000 a year, based on a 38 hour week. Currently the eighteen London bus companies all operate with different pay structures, with pay inequalities of up to £7,000 a year.

Arriva South and Arriva North, and East London Bus Group and East Thames Buses (owned by Boris Johnson's TfL) were balloted last week in time for further strike action planned for Wednesday 22nd October.

RMT activist suspended for union activities

by Alan 11 October, 2008

Andy, a track worker at Metronet has been a rep for over 12 years. He is known for his complete dedication to the health, safety and welfare of all workers; Metronet employees and agency staff alike. He was instrumental in the RMT's recent successful campaigns in September last year which stopped management from devaluing Metronet staff's pensions by 10% and halted mass job cuts, and in April this year opened up the Transport for London pension scheme, free travel on TfL and subsidised travel on Network Rail to new starters, all previously denied to them by Metronet.

METRONET MANAGEMENT HAVE DECIDED TO SILENCE ANDY, USING A FIT-UP DISCIPLINARY THAT WOULD EMBARRASS THE SPANISH INQUISITION COME SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AND DEMAND THAT METRONET DROP THE FAKE CHARGES AND REINSTATE ANDY LITTLECHILD NOW!

Local Government Pay Dispute: Unions Cave In

September 24th, 2008 by Steven.

Following a sham "consultation" exercise UNISON negotiators, backed by Unite and the GMB, have called in government arbitrators ACAS to make a binding agreement which members will be unable to vote on.

Following one of the UK's biggest strikes in years, when half a million council workers walked out for two days against a sub inflationary 2.45% pay offer, unions have blocked further action.

Blaming a poor vote for further action in a recent consultation exercise, which UNISON half heartedly undertook while many workers were on summer holidays, officials decided there would be no further strikes, but instead to call in ACAS and hope for the best.

Any decision made by ACAS is binding on both parties - unions and employer - regardless of the wishes of the unions' members.

One local government worker and UNISON member told us:

"This latest blow to workers follows a series of attempts to sabotage the dispute by union officials. UNISON's leadership, while talking militant in public, sent out initial consultation documents on the pay offer giving the employers arguments.

"When surprised by a significant vote in favour of strike action, they responded with almost no preparation for the national strike, very few and very poor publicity materials, and no future dates for strike action for workers to prepare for or to be used as leverage against the employers.

"Instead, following the first strike workers were told to go back to work and wait for the professional negotiators, while their morale ebbed."

The demobilisation of local government workers could hardly come at a worse time for other public sector workers opposing their pay cuts.

Despite UNISON claiming to be leading the fight for co-ordinated action across the sector, it has now called off further action before a proposed national cross-union demonstration, and before teachers and civil servants are due to begin new waves of strikes.

Brazilian Labour News

Wave of strikes in Brazilian car industry

October 5th, 2008 by Ed

Workers at major car industry plants in Brazil went on strike during September in support of their demands for improved pay.

On September 1, workers at the Volkswagen-Audi factory in the city of Curitiba began a one-week strike. Workers at the Volvo and Renault/Nissan plants in the same town also went on strike on the same day.

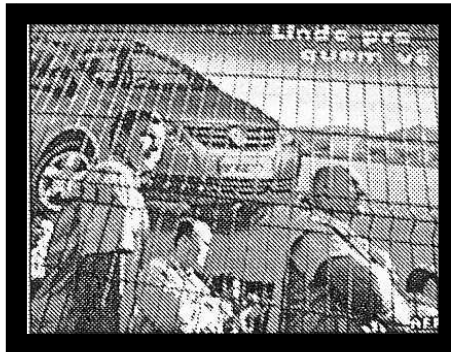
During that week, 24-hour strikes occurred at Ford, General Motors, Toyota, Mercedes Benz and Scania in cities in the interior of Sao Paulo state.

The first workers to reach an agreement were those at Volvo, on 4 September and Renault/Nissan, on 5 September. The unions accepted a 2.66 per cent real increase in pay plus 7.15 per cent in line with the increase in the National Consumer Price Index (INPC) over the last twelve months, making a total pay rise of 10 per cent. They also negotiated a one-off payment of R\$ 1,500 (about US\$863).

Meanwhile, the dispute continued at VW-Audi in Curitiba where workers demanded a 12 per cent pay rise. On September 9, workers ended the strike after accepting an 11 per cent pay rise starting

in November (3.6 per cent real increase plus 7.15 per cent in-line with inflation). Workers also negotiated a one-off payment of R\$ 2,000 (about US\$ 1,150).

The strikes forced the companies to improve their offers, which were initially very low. The increase in real wages in ad-



dition to the inflation-linked pay rise, together with the one-off payments, represent a major victory for metalworkers. "This is why we say it is worth putting up a fight. Now we are going to get ready for the next round of pay negotiations, for auto parts in October and metalworking and machinery in December," said Sergio Butka, President of the Curitiba Metalworkers' Union and of Força Sindical in Paraná state.

The CUT-SP Federation of Metalworkers' Unions reached a good agreement for all auto workers in the state on

September 6. The ABC Metalworkers' Union, representing workers in the country's main auto industry centre, had threatened to call a strike, but this was not required, with workers accepting the employers' proposal two days before the date set for the strike. The Taubaté union also accepted the proposal after bringing Volkswagen and Ford factories to a halt.

The São Paulo federation agreement consisted of an 11.01 per cent pay rise (3.6 per cent real increase plus 7.15 per cent in line with inflation) for workers on wages of up to R\$ 7,500.

Workers with above R\$ 7,500 received a 7.15 per cent pay rise in line with inflation plus a fixed amount of R\$ 289.30. The minimum wage for the sector was increased from R\$ 1,110 to R\$ 1,250, an increase of 12.6 per cent.

Similarly, ABC and Taubaté auto workers received a one-off bonus of R\$ 1,450 (US\$ 845) on September 22. Including this payment, the pay rise was five per cent, a historic victory for the union.

The President of the ABC Metalworkers' Union, affiliated to CNN/CUT, Sergio Nobre, said that after 18 hours of meetings, an agreement was reached "worth a significant amount". He added that the growth of the auto industry in recent years created the conditions for workers to seek these pay rises.

N.Z. Tram News

Wellington Tramways Union rejects Go Wellington Pay offer and elects union exec

05 Sep 2008

At Wednesday's stop work meeting The Wellington Tramways Union rejected Go Wellington's latest inadequate pay offer and elected a new union executive.

According to company figures, drivers in Wellington had their annual income re-

duced by 19% in 2007 as a result of shift changes desired to restrict access to penalty rates. The company's current pay offer stands at only 6.2% and in addition the company wishes to introduce a draconian complaints procedure for drivers. This offer was rejected by 208 votes to 23 and drivers also voted to take limited industrial action if the company didn't come up with an improved offer.

The stop work meeting also elected a new executive for the Wellington Tramways who represent drivers at Go Wellington, Valley Flyer in the Hutt Valley and Mana Newlands buses out in Porirua and the Kapiti Coast.

Kevin O'Sullivan was elected the new Wellington Tramways Secretary. The former secretary Phil Griffiths passed away suddenly in June of this year. Kevin worked alongside Phil for 15 years as the Wellington Tramways President.

"Wellington bus drivers have held onto conditions such as double time on Sundays which most other drivers lost after the employment contracts act and deregulation of the bus industry in the late 1980's", said Kevin. "I hope to continue to good work of the Wellington Tramways Union that happened under Phil's leadership".



Interview with Italian anarcho-syndicalist

For part of the last year, South London Local of SolFed (Solidarity Federation – British Anarcho-Syndicalist grouping) has had Cesare, from Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI), the Italian section of our International, as our comrade and guest. As he is returning to Italy, we took the opportunity to interview him about USI, and the situation for workers organising in Italy.

SLSF: What is the size of USI and how is it broken down by region and industry?



Cesare: We have about 1000 dues paying members and about 500 more who are in arrears. We are concentrated in the north of Italy, particularly Lombardy and Emilia. At our last Congress we had new sections join from Genoa, Fiat workers from Portense and health workers in Tuscany.

We have a problem in the south, only having sections in Portense and Naples and scattered individual members. The north is where most of the work is, while the south is very poor with high unemployment.

The attraction of USI is that we are federalist - this is what attracts new sections. Sometimes they have split from Cobas (Confederazione dei

Comitati di Base - Confederation of Rank and File Committees) because we offer autonomy for every section and are not a centralised organisation.

Our biggest national union is in health; we also have national unions in the post office, local councils, education and engineering. In addition, there is a small national union which groups together workers on the land with retail workers, such as some in an organic food shop in Milan.

Most of our membership is in the public sector as it is very difficult to organise in the private sector. There is a strong co-operative sec-

tor and we also organise there. The co-ops often employ workers who are not co-op members so they are like a normal employer.

SLSF: How has the USI growth been over the last 20 years?

Cesare: In 1991, USI called a strike against the first Gulf War with two of the Cobas. This was the first time there had been a strike that wasn't called by one of the big reformist unions. It proved that we were a union and not just a propaganda group. It was from

this strike that the Milan Healthworkers union joined. My section joined in 1994, because USI was the only union that was federalist. The difference between USI and the other unions is the internal organisation - we stress federalism and autonomy.

Since the split in 1994, we have grown because people see us as the real USI. We were left with only one national union, in the Post Office, after the split. We have had to rebuild credibility by our activities in the workplace. For example, the section in San Raffaele hospital in Milan has a majority of workers, but was only set up 2-3 years ago. The anarchist movement has decided in the last two or three years that we are the real USI, for example in Genoa and Parma, FAI (Federazione Anarchica Italiana) members have joined.

At our next congress we will discuss pushing the union in places where we don't already have a presence, learning from the experiences of the Spanish CNT.

SLSF: How do you relate to the other unions?

Cesare: There are four big reformist unions who decide everything. The bosses prefer to deal with them. For example in

Milan airport, where Alitalia is about to be sold, the bosses talk to the big unions but the majority of workers are in the alternative unions.

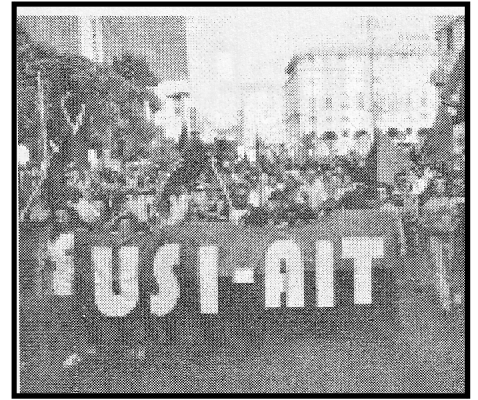
There are seven or eight Cobas; each has a different political position, usually related to which left group set it up. The biggest alternative union is the CUB (Confederazione Unitaria di Base - Unitary Rank and File Confederation), but it is close to Rifondazione Comunista, the reformed Communist Party. There is not much difference between the various Cobas, but the political differences make it difficult for them to take action together.

USI is in a similar position to the Cobas, but is the only union that stresses its federalism, and its sections' autonomy and has a very distinct internal organisation. It can be very difficult to change the National Secretary of the Cobas - one of them has had the same guy for 20 years - even though they are libertarian. USI has difficulty in rotating tasks at times, but at least we try to change mandates regularly.

Workers, not bureaucrats, should run the union.

SLSF: Can you tell us about the split with the USI-Roma? What caused it?

Cesare: When the split happened in 1994, Rome had many national



mandates in the unions for schools engineering, and councils. They decided to make an agreement with another union to get union rights. This other union was in a different international. Their approach to this alliance was authoritarian. They claimed thousands of members but it was all just a fake. The same few people held lots of positions. For example the person who was national secretary of the education union was also deputy national secretary of the engineering union. This goes against all of our practice. The Rome people also had a strong relationship with Rifondazione. They have a big office in Rome, but it was not clear who had paid for it. Now, they only have 2 sections, in Rome and a very small one in Milan. The statistics branch they had, which was quite strong, has joined CUB for the negotiating rights

SLSF: How do they operate and how is it different to USI?

Cesare: The Rome people are better at press releases, the Internet and so on. They use the name USIAIT to confuse foreign readers that they are part of the International Workers' Association, even though its initials in Italian are AIL. There have been times when we have called a strike and they have written to the government saying that the USI is not striking. This happened in education where the headmaster



BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Anarchy in the UK # 3 by Graham Purchase Concluding Second Part of a book review article critiquing B. Franks' "Rebel Alliances: The Means & End of Contemporary British Anarchisms".

In the UK the rich get richer whilst it's misguided peoples whatever their income, gender, race or sexual orientation are obsessed with wealth, sport and aping celebrity lifestyles. Meanwhile a handful of British 'anarchist' intellectuals with university positions do little more than engage in sophistry.

Toying with meaningless but impressive sounding new words acquired from across The Channel. All recent UK liberal academic philosophical studies of anarchism display an unappealing and depressing similarity of method, discourse and presentation. These books start discussing anarchism before rapidly moving on to post-modernism and then "post-structuralisms" without ever attempting to explain or define either of these academic monstrosities or how to distinguish between them.

I couldn't tell you what Franks' means by "activist post-structuralisms". Is intellectual fog an active force in the world? Franks remarks that "post-structuralisms" are equivalent or "consistent with ideal type anarchism" (p.159) and the "anarchist ideal subject" (p.153). If anarchism in 'ideal and subject' is more or less the same as post-structuralism why not just use the plain old term anarchism? Anarchism is already an intimidating, poorly understood and often ill-defined word. Postisms add unnecessary or unhelpful semantic complication and confusion. Mark Leier in his highly recommended new book, *Bakunin: A Biography* (2006) suggests postism is an "elitist" and "banal liberalism" (p.204) enabling and representing "the flight of intellectuals from radical politics" into "identity politics and resignation". Leier further observes how posties believe "the working class" has "somehow failed in its pre-

scribed historical mission" and can "now be abandoned, ignored or explained away" (p.273). Franks' is found guilty of every charge levelled by Leier.

Escapism, class-denial, pseudo-radicalism, glorification of minor-



ity or lifestyle identification, do-nothing-ism and academic egoism—these counter-revolutionary fantasies and fallacies infect every page of Franks' Book. Franks explains how identity groups oppress each other in a myriad of ways. This realization or insight necessitates and allows for abandonment of old-style class analysis and its outmoded and simplistic solutions. We are told that the industrial working class in post-modern societies is a small incohesive group among populations whose individual members primarily identify themselves with particular age-sets, sexualities, lifestyles, ethnicities, cultures or places rather than, according to their position in traditional economic class hierarchies that are now blurred, transformed or disintegrating. It is suggested that the idea of the working class being the

revolutionary class has long been out-classed, re-classed and de-classed by Black, Women's, Green and Gay Liberation Movements. A working class 'identity' is just one among a great diversity of 'identities' with corresponding oppressions and social hierarchies competing for revolutionary importance and public attention.

Contemporary Anglo-American philosophical anarchism (British postism and Bookchin in U.S.A.) attack hierarchy instead of class in order to illustrate and integrate their belief in the existence and need for resistance to a multiplicity of oppressive hierarchical structures, relationships, traditions and institutions that they consider are equally if not more important than fighting capitalism and economic class division.

Franks is haunted by a Kafkaesque world where all people are exploited or oppressed to some degree in some context or another. But everyone in turn oppresses someone or some other group in some other context or situation. Franks characterizes our 'hierarchical society' (displacing the term 'capitalist society') as a complex interactive mish-mash of pervasive oppressive ideologies, traditions, practices, attitudes, habits, beliefs and structures in which differing individuals and identity groups exist within a nexus of exploitation and discrimination such that: All are simultaneously victims of oppression and guilty of having exploited and oppressed

"The Other": "An individual or group in one social position may be subjected to forces that place them in a subordinate position, yet in another context they may wield oppressive authority. Oppression does not have one ultimate source, so consequently there is no vanguard or universal agent whose liberation ends all oppression (p. 154-5)".

"Examples are unemployed people who intimidate their gay neighbours, or businesspeople that face domestic violence or racial prejudice in other aspects of their life (p. 159)". "The essentialist hegemony in which all subjected positions are unified under production and class is rejected. In its place there exists a multitude of subjugated positions, based upon class, race, age, sexuality, ethnicity or gender. There is no irreducible single contra-

diction, such as that between Worker and Capital, just as there is no revolutionary subject. Forms of power and their intersections are in continual flux, often responding to countervailing forms of resistance, so too arenas of antagonism and identities of radical subjects are also altering (p. 192)". "There is no objective position from which to predict precisely which categories of people will be oppressed by the expansion of free market practices and what subject identities will be created. Neither is it possible to foretell what forms of resistance will be adopted or which groups will coalesce in networks of solidarity (p.243)". Franks says it isn't clear who are the oppressors or who will become revolutionaries. Also, situations change so rapidly that it is pointless seeking answers to these questions and the attempt to do so is futile or an authoritarian exercise in 'essentialist vanguardism'. The only thing we can know for sure is that we don't know against whom and with whom to organize the revolutionary transformation of society. Franks is telling us nothing whilst providing unprincipled recipes for doing nothing.

The concluding two sections of Frank's long book discusses Jean Baudrillard's "alluring pessimism" (p.341). Baudrillard's banal, silly and dangerous theory of "hyper-passivity" and "total disengagement" claims the French are only interested in "football" so radicals should consume more until the capitalist system "bursts" (p.344). We may have a barely habitable planet long before this undesirable eventuality and we should question why Franks' book subtitled "contemporary British anarchisms" concludes with a long discussion of Baudrillard's hyper-stupidity.

"British anarchisms" is a subject matter that Franks exploits as a launch-pad for discussion of French postism which has little to do with British anarchism. The British people don't need advice from French philosophers suggesting they do nothing and consume more as they have no problem managing that for themselves. One can only hope for a mass-migratory return to substantial issues; an end to post-radical dispersal flights to nowhere or the far-flung outposts of identity politics and remote academic islands of post-what-ever-ism.

Group Identities and Racist-Nationalism: Marx, Bakunin and Kropotkin all thought in nationalist terms sometimes expressed in ways now considered offensive or racist-nationalist. The inherent dangers and destructiveness of racist-nationalist-statism was realized and illustrated by two terrible world wars last century. It is generally agreed by all but the far right (as Rudolf Rocker sug-

gested in his masterpiece *Nationalism and Culture*) that, nationalism and racism involve mass collective group passions that can be so disadvantageous to progress that we must seek to keep them in check whilst developing new cultural identities, economic relationships and human ideals. Ongoing ethnic or nationalist violence throughout the world shows us how nationalism is not something that can be reformed as Kropotkin and Bakunin supposed. It is often overlooked that Kropotkin thought that mutual aid rarely extended beyond the group and that hostility and aggression was the norm towards outsiders. Kropotkin thought that the biological tendency for animals and humans through the practice of mutual aid to create strong group-psychologies fostered intolerance and hatred that had led to catastrophic conflicts between different peoples such as World War 1. The negative side of the human individual's tendency to develop strong group identities can be readily observed in gangs, religious fundamentalism, nationalism and hatred toward foreigners. The group has allowed for collective economic survival but also manifests itself in opposing xenophobic tendencies to ridicule, humiliate, distrust, suppress, oppress or destroy The Other. This fact of nature is something that the biological right and left can agree upon. Richard Dawkins and Kropotkin both understand the dangers of group psychology. Franks is right to point out that the traditional left neglected racist-nationalist beliefs and conflicts that continue to dog the human quest for social-environmental peace and harmony. But, Franks promotion of identity groups explicitly includes (along with gays, children etc) minority racial and ethnic struggles against oppressive or dominant national states or cultures.

Franks is a confused or straightforwardly contradictory position because it is not possible to solve the problem of racialism whilst encouraging strong minority ethnic identity grouping. The attempt to construct the New Society around identity politics that includes racial or ethnic identities reinforces regressive and divisive group psychologies that anarchism (and any ideally perfect future world vision) should be fighting to overcome.

B. Obama is not riding on a Black Presidential platform but on a Post-Racial one. The modern and progressive meaning and values associated with post-racialism has become apparent to a large number of Americans whom have rejected Franks Pre-Modern politics of racial grievance, polarisation and identity group ghettoism. The waxing of the American liberal party political circus gathers momentum with a black and greener presidential candidate but we are unlikely to see any waning of

the local and global capitalist assault upon the US working poor who lost their health cover and "well-paid" auto-jobs to Mexicans who now risk losing them to Chinese slave labour.

Identity Politics and Revolutionary Inertia:

Elderly women are consistently among some of the poorest people in many societies. Gays fear the spectre of the death penalty in some states.

Immigrants and minority communities frequently face oppression and discrimination. I don't wish to minimize the importance of the struggle for women's, gays and immigrant rights. But, that said, these movements have little to do with anarchism in particular because they impact upon all political and cultural outlooks and movements. In the newspaper I am reading right now I learn that a closet gay Gangsta Rappa has felt compelled to 'come out' and, how Al-Qaeda and similar Jihadi websites are receiving anonymous posts from frustrated Muslim women pleading for these men-only organizations to accept and enable them to fight or become terrorists. Although gay or immigrant rights groups practice self-help and may sometimes engage in direct "externally undirected self-organized" (p.211) actions of one sort or another they remain essentially minority interest or lobby organizations with the goal of expanding the premises of liberal-capitalist democracies to include and protect groups identified or identifying themselves as disadvantaged or oppressed in a variety of ways and contexts. In the USA a black and women candidate compete with one another in the presidential race. An Indian immigrant women heads Coca Cola Corporation. Just this week Cuba nationally celebrates sexual diversity whilst public monuments are unveiled commemorating a gay politician in California and victims of Nazism in Germany. In the UK Lesbian couples won the right to have children by artificial insemination. Such everyday achievements of liberal reformism, involving 'victories' and expanding personal liberty for Gays, Blacks and Women in the USA and elsewhere don't alter the fact that 47 million Americans don't have health cover. The 'working poor' in the richest country are denied basic healthcare whether they are gay or black or anything else. In South Africa scores of 'foreign' black immigrants have recently been brutally murdered in a 'spontaneous' eruption of black on black violence causing 100, 000 people to flee their homes. In contrast to this shameful rabble the initiative by South African Dock-Workers a few weeks before these tragic events had successfully prevented

the unloading of a Chinese arms shipment bound for the Mugabe dictatorship of neighbouring Zimbabwe. Sth. Africa's inept Imbeki government endorsed the ban several days after the worker's had already directly acted and focused the global spotlight upon the issue. Only an international workers movement that fosters de-racialised non-nationalist solidarity against WalMart-ization, off-shoring and dictatorship can conceivably overcome racism and nationalist hatred between the World's peoples. That the workers' movement has failed to prevent two world wars is no more relevant than the likelihood of the U.S. Government failing to prevent Iranian nationalists from making a nuclear bomb.

Oscar Wilde spoke very highly of Kropotkin but in both contemporary and historical terms the gay lib movement has always been a minority group interested only in gaining acceptance, normality or liberal-individual freedoms. Gays have not in any general sense or way sought to end oppression. In India urban male gay sex mostly consists of middle class married men buying sex from working class rent boys. Sex is about getting your rocks off and not about organizing or creating a fair society. Along with sexuality, gender and ethnicity environmentalism is another refuge for Francophile post-radicals on their flight-paths away from economic class confrontation to who knows where. The idea that the present environmental crisis can be decoupled from the global consumer capitalist monster is a dangerous lie.

Group Identities and Inter-Group Hierarchies:

Franks slots human social dynamics into two basic categories: Groups and Hierarchies. Individuals identify themselves and are identified and stratified by others according to race, place, ethnicity, gender, sexuality. In his view the goal of contemporary anarchism is to breakdown hierarchies that place one of these several identity groups higher than another such that male heterosexual whites are considered better or more normal than women, gays or blacks. This is nothing but the liberal-democratic notion of tolerance, respect and legal protection for 'other' individuals, sexualities, religions, peoples, nationalities, ideas, views and "experiments of living".

Liberal-western democracies through a process of legislative reform and cultural change are addressing many gender and sexual minority concerns upon a daily basis. The liberal state can't control environmental destruction and nationalist forms of racism because their resolution is partly

or wholly dependent upon the dissolution of nation-states and the overthrow of the global capitalist system. Social animals from Meerkats to elephants also treat foreigners, women, young, the old and men differently. The treatment or categorization of people according to age, gender or group membership is pre-human and pre-capitalist. Franks is suggesting that 'anarchism' as he redefines it should pay less attention to working-class politics and concern itself more with the cultural expression of these elemental or underlying bio-social sets around which animal societies and human cultures evolve.

Before agriculture the specific status, role, function and treatment of these natural sub-communities and within-group identi-



ties varied from culture to culture and place to place, much as it does today. Age and/or gender hierarchies may have been prominent in one early culture but not in another. The lack of economic classes and the extreme economic interdependency of the close knit extended family and/or clan and tribe meant that, natural gender groups and age-sets typically performed specific essential but complimentary roles often balancing one another by carrying similar power or value. Homophobia is more an invention of authoritarian religion than of historical practice. Brothers and Sisters were told by Muslim and Christian conquerors and missionaries that they were sinners. In Greek civilization homosexuality was tolerated but ambiguously situated. India has always had large transvestite communities whom prior to colonization were not discriminated against and in some places revered. Indian Tirunangais (trannies) now occupy a lowly but recognized niche in society visiting every marriage ceremony in expectation of alms. The Thais whom escaped colonization have traditionally accepted sex-as-it-comes and applied no stigma to different sexualities. Transves-

tite beauty pageants attract large national TV audiences whilst their winners become presenters and advertise beauty products. The idea of parity or equity (not equality) between elemental social-biological groupings or minority sexual expressions and identities is associated with liberal, socialist, anarchist and 'modern' thought in the broadest sense. But liberalism only asks that foreigners and members of other natural classes be accorded universally applicable and legally enforceable individual human rights and freedoms whilst providing no solution to the gross exploitation of poor people, resources and environment by global capitalism. Liberalism seeks only to reform or humanize nationalism and capitalism through NGOs or legislation outlawing or preventing such things as the neglect, abuse or enslavement of children. These are big and important issues but liberalism is addressing the social-environmental symptoms of gross economic inequality and nationalism rather than attacking its root capitalist causes.

Franks "post-anarchism" can be differentiated from 'banal liberalism' only in terms of the emphasis placed upon the need or practice of "unmediated" and "direct action" by members of these "oppressed subject groups themselves" (p.210) rather than, reliance upon local politicians or liberal legislative reforms. NGO's of all political hues that conduct protests and pranks or emphasize and facilitate 'self-help' and independence among disadvantaged or neglected groups are modern liberal-activist tactics that approach anarchist notions of local and direct action. Franks falsely conflates and confuses contemporary liberal-activism with anarchism by arguing that because, some of these many and various "non-workplace" (p.196) identity, protest, local single-issue or minority "micro-political" activist groups that he champions, sometimes or often use "anti-hierarchical and participatory tactics" (p. 351) paralleling methods and approaches traditionally used by or compatible with anarchist theories that, anarchist and the myriad of micro-political liberal-minded activist groupings existing in the world today somehow amount to the same thing because, identity groups rather than economic class divisions are what really matter and concern people. This may be true but it doesn't turn anarchism into liberal-activism. Anarchism is not changing or expanding.

Anarchism is being diluted by UK posties to include the burgeoning catalogue of left-liberal activist and marginal or local interest groups representing an ideological scrambled egg or dog's dinner the ingredi-

ents for which are readily obtainable from the life-style or identity group super-market. Kropotkin saw the flourishing of global mutual-aid and interest groupings as a distinctive feature of the late 19th century that he predicted would evolve as intellectual tolerance, technology, education and communication improved. It was the vast potentiality for liberal mutual aid and interest networks that Kropotkin saw as an organizational fact of recent human social evolution that concretely supported and illustrated the possibility of a global civilized anarchy. But, unlike Franks, Kropotkin didn't confuse and conflate the growth and increasing sophistication of liberal mutual aid, interest and activist networks with the political and economic goals and practices of anarchism as an organized international worker's liberation movement.

Nature, Anarchy and Hierarchy:

Kropotkin, Bookchin and Franks all agree that "at the heart of anarchism is the rejection of Hierarchy" (p.156). Appeals for anti- or non-hierarchical tactics, organization, social-relationships etc., occur in every section of Franks book because opposition to social hierarchy is the One and Only principle that is shared by All movements inspired by anarchism (however misguided or degenerate) or of interest to anarchists. Moreover anti-hierarchical ideology differentiates anarchism from All other major alternative political philosophies and practices. Unfortunately anti-hierarchical approaches provide a convenient intellectual flight path for Bookchin and UK posties to bypass the workers.

The idea that hierarchy can simply be wished away is simplistic and based upon an absolutely false notion of animal and human collective social behaviour that Kropotkin first introduced in *Mutual Aid*. Social animals do not live in egalitarian communal groups as Kropotkin supposed. With the exception of goldfish, cockroaches and other lowly animals that naturally live in small non-hierarchical groups, All social animals above this level (seasonally) collectively compete for mates and/or territory in the creation of economic and/or reproductive hierarchies. Hierarchical and egalitarian forms of collectivity coalesce and coexist in animal and human groups and societies. All the Meerkats in a colony will collectively defend their territory as an egalitarian group but females aggressively compete with one another for exclusive dominance of a single reproductive female hierarchy. All primate groups collectively construct reproductive and economic hierarchies and

networks. Observations of groups of wild chimps, baboons and bonobos reveal very different and highly complex structures of interacting hierarchies and networks regulating the behaviour of individuals and sub-groups in relation to one another. In the light of these broad and indisputable biological or evolutionary antecedents we should be less demoralized when formally ever-so radical students or union shop stewards appear to so readily and rapidly ascend the organizational or political career elevator and abandon their former fellow workers. The social-behaviour of animals suggests an innate tendency in the very structure of our brains responsive to status symbols and one's position on social ladders. Anarchists following from Kropotkin's original analysis assume that hierarchy and status are unnatural or recent in human evolution. But we were hierarchical before we were human. Age-hierarchies are a natural outgrowth or inherent/integral feature of the family and primary teaching/learning experience. The trainee is necessarily at the bottom of a natural hierarchy until the candidate learns or masters the job or trade. The hierarchies of a boy's gang or girlie clique are naturally, universally and collectively elaborated by children themselves upon the street or in the school playground/locker room (read *Lord of the Flies*). We mustn't despair of eradicating (economic class) hierarchies.

Among animals hierarchy is collectively constructed by the social group rather than determined genetically. Similarly, human economic-class, sex or racial hierarchies have been collectively and culturally constructed rather than genetically determined. Humans have a strong genetically inherited innate preference for sweet fatty foods known to be unhealthy.

We try to moderate our natural obsessions with junk food and TV dinners to lessen the social epidemic of obesity. Contraception is unnatural but beneficial to social health and women's liberty. Economic class hierarchies of state-capitalism cause global social, environmental and individual psychological harm. Anarchism says that: It is necessary to moderate our natural obsession with celebrity, money, status symbols and trashy Las Vegas culture; to liberate the economically enslaved and save the planet by the self-organization of the working poor according to town, city, trade, industry and ecological region in opposition to capitalism and state. Anarchism uniquely and in contrast to the left-liberal-capitalist or communist party political state seeks a society that goes beyond capital's formula of co-existence where formal equality exists alongside cavernous and self-defeating economic or

political inherited or accumulated) inequities maintained and expressed in class hierarchies and upheld by national or international forces of Law and Order.

Conclusion:

Rebel Alliances though philosophically inept is a competent survey of the hopelessly ill-organized, messy, uninspiring, ineffective, misdirected, silly or degenerate assortment of marginalia and fuzzy thinking that has characterized what passes for Anarchy in the UK for the last quarter century. Franks concludes his study by voicing "misgivings" about membership of an "elite institution" and, how his "cultural and social background" may have led him to inadvertently commit errors in his analysis of the importance of working class (p. 351).

Apology accepted. Please don't re-offend. Anarchism requires Anglo-Francophile Post-Structuralism like a fish needs a bicycle. Franks is a confused intellectual product maintained by an institution whose offices, side-walks, halls, bathrooms, rose gardens and coffee outlets are serviced by workers whom ensure a pleasant venue for educating his undergraduates about how economic class divisions aren't so very important these days. What more can one say to a generation of students that may perhaps find capitalist info-tech companies exciting or cool and, socialism boring, old-fashioned and probably dead? Over the last decade serious, book-length published Anglo-American anarchist theory has been conducted, can be characterized or has consisted of Bookchinism V. Primitivism (Watson et. al.) in the USA and, in the UK an exclusively scholarly effort conducted by liberal academic post-modernists working independently of each other but whom all positively contrast their individual post-modern conceptions or interpretations of '21st century anarchism' with 'traditional anarchism' which they see as on par with boring old discredited rationalist workerist-Leninist essentialism (p.260) blah, blah.

In reality, Bookchin doesn't take us beyond Kropotkin and post-anarchism doesn't take us anywhere. Bookchin's huff and puff and UK postism's fluff and guff, it is all duff. Kropotkin's social-ecological vision remains as valid today as it did more than a century ago. It is really about how one fights, argues and most effectively realizes post-capitalist bio-regionally integrated autonomous green-cities serviced by local and global workers and interest associations struggling towards a happy, peaceful and sustainable world of health and plenty.

DEATH OF AN OLD MILITANT

George Hristov (Kartalsky)

What can be said of a lifeless body of a man, whose lips are irrevocably sealed by the macabre dance of death, and who cannot respond, since his voice is voiceless? Eulogies! They will bury the real George in the debris of illusions? No! To save George from superficiality of rituals and religious ablutions, it is necessary to put his image in proper perspective.

George was an anarchist as well as a comrade of mine. Authentic anarchist comradeship means an infusion of ethical relationships, ethical values and reciprocity. Neither hierarchies nor slave master syndrome. His praxis was a paradigm case of anarchism. His own place was a microcosm of harmonious existence of many nationalities.

For him the present day society not only was deceptive but also suffered from an acute authoritarian malady. It had suppressed many facets of life by creating fear, anxiety, hate, competition and phobias. The struggle for freedom has been a metaphor for conquest, domination and exploitation. The quality of life has been translated into drudgery existence, high mortgages, dysfunctional relationships and dysfunctional families. Humans are reduced to commodities.

In George's mode of thinking, the rebellious spirit of Prometheus has remained enchained while the vultures of the corporative sector continue to tear the flesh of the workers and the carcass of community. At the same time the death's instinct has become a symbol of life and democracy a psychedelic parade of sacrificial gifts to Molock.

George was born in Western Bulgaria in a family of seven: two sisters and five brothers. It was his mother who had nourished the flame of rebellion. The father was a religious bigot. When he died the religious relic was thrown out of the window to let the light of freedom shine in the house. The tyrant, the patriarch, the father figure were destroyed but the tyrant embedded in the State remained and the struggle for freedom continued. The defeat of fascism opened the floodgates of anarchist resurgence and the latter spread like fire but not for long.

Since anarchism negates the State in favour of free associations, since it is

anti-hierarchical in favour of horizontal organizations and since it stresses the importance of direct action as a tool to changing society it is spurned by the establishment. As soon as the Communist Party, for which the Popular Front was a paravant, captured the government its first task was to crush the enemy of the State, the anarchists. Seven months after the collapse of fascism in 1945 the first anarchist conference took place. In the middle of the conference the police burst into the building and arrested all delegates. Many were tortured and dispatched to concentration camp. This was the beginning of the anar-



chist Odyssey: Gaols, out of gaols, arrest, incarceration, tortures, back in gaol etc. Finally to break the anarchist resistance the government ordered the arrest of all known anarchists in 1948. Thousands were rounded up and domiciled in various labour camps. Many fine men and women who survived the fascist hell were now destined to enter the dungeons of the communist proletarian 'heaven'. George's brother was not spared either. He ended in Belene, an island in the Danube River, the camps of death.

His brother, an ex-partisan, with George and his other brother organized a brilliant escape to Yugoslavia, which in that time broke from the Eastern European Bloc. They were held in Yugoslav's gaols but later were allowed to work. However the

escape was not an easy task. Nevertheless, one of the government's policies was to assemble them in groups and let them escape to Italy. Perhaps to appease the Italian government many were sacrificed to this political game. In groups they were escorted to the border to cross it. Some of the groups were completely wiped out but George was lucky. Then from Italy, he arrived in Australia in 1950 or 51.

George was one of the founders of the Bulgarian Anarchist group and then Sydney Anarchist Group. Later he sided with Bill Dwyer an egocentric anarchist. George was involved with Liberty Hall trying to work with libertarians. Many initiatives had taken place there. There were discussions on Reich, Freud, and Marx. There were many papers on sexuality, freedom and many other socio-political issues. It was an excellent place and very central. But the libertarians also made it a regular Thursday party's place. As a result it had to be closed. George had short contact with

the Sydney Push ditto the Libertarians. They had the gift of the gab. Promiscuity was their motto. They talked of sexual freedom and argued about clitoral or vagina orgasms but in fact they remained very conservative socially and have no impact on social issues whatsoever. They shun marriage. They refused to proselytize. Instead they proselytized among themselves. Only at one point did they forsake their principle and some of them got involved in the green ban movement in 1970's, associated with the militant NSW B.L.F. (Builders Labourers' Federation).

Nonetheless George continued his struggle as an anarcho-syndicalist in the transport union. But he knew that the official unions were not interested in the emancipation of the working class. They shun direct action and instead supported the delegation of power. In other words the workers lost their self confidence as a factor of social transformation. By delegating their own decision making to the bureaucrats they pave the way for the aggressive assertion of corporative capitalism. George died with the hope that one day the workers may refresh their brains by washing out the established values of hierarchy and take in their hand their economic and political destiny.

The last time I saw George he was suffering from excruciating pains. It was the agony of existence versus the inevitable orgy of death. Watching the despair engraved in his face, despair of resignation and not a twinkle in his

See Page 20

Factory committees in the Russian Revolution

The idea of revolution in Russia had been growing since the general strike of textile workers that shook St. Petersburg in 1896. The Russian anarchists argued that Russia would not have to have a bourgeois revolution similar to those witnessed in Germany and France and that the way forward was the revolutionary general strike. Mass strikes continued throughout the next two decades up to the beginning of the First World War.

The repression in Russia and the growth of Zubatovian (state controlled) unions meant that independent mass workers organisations and trade unions which were common in Britain and Germany during the same period did not develop. In the revolution of 1905 the unrest was sparked and co-ordinated not by the political parties, but by factory committees elected directly in the workplace. Strikes were called spontaneously and often spread beyond a single factory to become local or regional general strikes. This level of action proved its worth and workers began to elect delegates from local factory committees to co-ordinate action within the locality. These committees became the embryo from which would grow the Councils of Workers' Deputies, which were later to become known as the Soviets.

At the outbreak of the 1917 revolution factory committees sprung up and mass assemblies came to full maturity as many workers, instead of staying out on strike, took their workplace over and carried on producing for the community. They did not look to any central planning but began organising production and distribution themselves. The factory committees took responsi-

bility for everything from production, distribution and the acquisition of raw materials to the payment of wages (or payment in kind) and the organisation of workers' militias. Anarcho-syndicalists were gaining more influence as they urged the development of these committees and assemblies in the direction of workers management over all industries.

Both the anarcho-syndicalists and the Bolsheviks successfully resisted attempts by the moderates to absorb the factory committees into the trade unions. Although the influence of the anarcho-syndicalists increased, and was disproportionate to their actual numbers, it was the Bolsheviks with their centralised organisation and leadership that gained the most ground. The factory committees had been initially rejected by the Bolsheviks but when Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917 he realised the mood and feeling was definitely libertarian and the Bolsheviks rallied behind the anarchistic slogans of 'factories to the workers' and 'all power to the soviets'. At the 1918 All Russian Trade Union Convention Lenin declared that "the factory is a self-governing commune of producers and consumers". This was sheer opportunism in order to gain support until they were able to seize power and use the state to enforce their will on the committees and soviets.

Before the workers had time to establish a federation of producers and consumers, the Bolsheviks asserted central control over industry under the banner of 'war communism'. They stripped away piece by piece all expressions of workers management until the factory committees became nothing more than an appendage of the state.

Only in Ukraine did a sizeable free federation of soviets and committees appear. Even though Ukraine was signed over by Trotsky to Austria under the treaty of Brest-Litovsk a guerrilla army, organised by the anarchist Nestor Makhno, beat back the invaders. This enabled over two million workers to take part in the first test of libertarian communism through free soviets and factory committees under the direct management of the workers and the community. Initially the Bolsheviks allied themselves with Makhno in his fight against the Tsarist White Army but once the time was right Trotsky marched the Red army against Makhno to suppress the revolution and bring Ukraine under Bolshevik rule.

With the defeat of the revolution at the hands of the Bolsheviks, their implementation of the 'workers state' and dictatorship of the proletariat revealed the true face of bureaucratic despotism.

The factory committees during the Russian revolution showed but a glimpse of the ability of the working class to be masters of their own communities, workplaces and lives.

Thanks to Direct Action

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news lately in NSW, has been the defeat in the NSW Parliament of significant aspects of the ALP Govt's plans for the privatisation of the electricity industry. Latest news is that the Govt will still be proceeding with the privatisation of the retail aspects of the electricity industry.

In other Govt. Owned industries in NSW similar privatisation moves are afoot. In the case of the NSW railways, the recently approved RailCorp Enterprise Agreement will open important doors for the restructuring of CityRail for privatisation. It involves workers and the rail union's compliance with so called "rail reforms" which will see massive station staff cuts and steps toward the removal of guards from trains. The union hierarchy worked closely with management to manipulate approval amongst the grass roots on the job for the EBA. (See article Page 3.)

In State Transit in NSW, there are similar restructuring for privatisation moves in the pipeline. These initiatives by management include plans to cut out many bus routes they regard as unprofitable, the elimination of a layer of low level management comprising inspectors and the privatisation of bus workshops. (See article Page 5.)

Rebel Worker has an internet web site. Its address is www.rebelworker.org

Many articles from back issues of Rebel Worker are available in the archive section on the site.

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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.

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POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

Continued From Page 18 eyes, a thought of Schopenhauer. He wrote something to the effect that the nuances of colours, lights and shade that make the sunset so beautiful are an indication that God exist. But George was a living refutation of it. In his face I read Dante's quotation: 'You who enter here give up all hopes'. And remember the fable of Lazarus who rebuked Christ for preaching life after death. It goes something like that: 'Verily, verily said Lazarus I have just come from the shadows of death and verily, verily I am telling you

Christ that in the Kingdom of shadows there is nothing but death!' Christ cursed him and Lazarus becomes the Wondering Jew.

The fable is symbolic and especially in the face of a dying atheist? Why it is that god is hiding behind cloudy assumptions? After death there is no life but immortality of matter. But it raised an ethical question: If god is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent and at the same time a paradigm case of virtue why creates the agony as a passage to death? Why false illusion of life? Why curse Satan for everything that is dysfunctional in nature and life.

Anyhow George is not any longer among us and many people will miss him. Emotionally he will mostly be missed by Mary, Tina and Louise and, by many others. As for me I am a depopulated island. George was the only comrade to whom I could relate and only Bulgarian with whom I could have a rational dialogue. But the message George left is the message of Joe Hill: Don't mourn but organize and carry in your heart the world of anarchy.

Comrade and friend,
Jack.

Cont From Page 12 came and talked to our members and tried to undermine their action with it. Sometimes Cobas use the USI-Roma to undermine us as well. We have a proposal at our Congress to change our name in the light of these activities, but our history is important to us and I don't think it will pass. We have also considered taking this to court, but it would have to be in Rome, where we don't have a section. USI-Roma want the name for the historical credibility, but their actions undermine this claim. For example they claim to be anarchists but recommend a vote for Rifondazione.

SLSF: What is USI's attitude to the Italian state's industrial relations machinery?

Cesare: The RSUs (Rappresentanze Sindacali Unitarie - unitary trade union representation bodies) are against the interests of workers. They are about mediation. The RSU gives union rights, which include facility time for reps, meetings in work time and the ability to call meetings with the boss. We don't have this, so we have to strike to get it. In the private sector, the reformist unions are guaranteed one third of all seats on the RSUs, regardless of whether they have any members in that industry.

Our approach was to leave the attitude to the RSUs up to our sections, because of our federalism. Most of our sections have now left the RSU and I think those few still using it will leave in the next cycle. It is only a bureaucracy - in the Post Office in my town there has been one meeting of the RSU in three years. The benefit of this approach is that the workers decide for themselves, rather than national congress.

The Health workers union were in the RSU before they affiliated. The alternative unions measure their size by the number of votes they get in the RSU elections. We are the only union that has any critique of them.

SLSF: Has the USI done propaganda against the RSUs?

Cesare: Not that I know of. The smaller sections who are only propaganda groups may do so, but generally we find it difficult to do propaganda.

SLSF: What are your relations with anarchist organisations?

Cesare: Most Italian anarchists take Malatesta's view that all unions are reformist, so are spread across all unions. For example the Federazione di Comunisti Anarchici (FdCA) have members in CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro - Italian General Con-

federation of Labour, one of the big four) and Cobas. The National Secretary of Education in CUB is in the FAI; the National Secretary of Unicobas is an anarchist. Unicobas has a magazine called *Socialismo Libertario* but its structure doesn't reflect this. There is not much reflection on the unions in the anarchist movement and no differentiation between unions. This has recently begun to change, as USI shows the difference with federalism and autonomy. As well, younger workers are becoming interested. There is a group of young workers in my town who may affiliate at some point, because we have approached them on practical issues and shown principles. I am the only anarchist in my section where I work.

SLSF: What issues are coming up for you?

Cesare: Our next congress will debate the law on strikes, which is becoming more difficult, especially in the public sector. For example, bus drivers in Milan recently went on strike, but their alternative union stitched them up by denying they had called it and the drivers were fined. We are also discussing our identity as a union, rather than being a propaganda group.

Thanks to Direct Action